

Recherche littéraire Literary Research





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To propose book reviews and review essays, and for inquiries about back issues, please contact the Editor.

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Reviews and essays are written in French or English, the two official languages of the ICLA. Book reviews should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words. Edited volumes and journal issues will also be considered for review. Review essays about the state of the art, about several related books, or about a work of major significance for the field will be allowed to exceed 3,500 words. Scholarly essays should count between 6,000 and 8,000 words and follow the Chicago Style sheet (parenthetical bibliographical references in the body of the text as well as a final list of Works Cited).

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EDITORIAL

The Manifold Itineraries of Comparative Literature

As I am writing these introductory lines to the 2021 issue of *Literary Research*, I cannot help recalling the mood of hope for a swift resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic I conjured up in my 2020 editorial. Even though the prospects of vaccination seem promising, too many regions of the world are still experiencing the woes of this infectious disease. Although I now realize my over-optimistic attitude, I feel the time has come for us to imagine how the post-pandemic world could be reconstructed. Surely, comparative literary poetics will offer some of the intellectual stimulus required by this herculean task. This issue of *Literary Research* therefore explores the multifaceted, indeed rhizomatic, research methodologies through which our discipline could help reconfigure our world, thus inviting us to look at it through different lenses.

The scholarship section of the journal comprises five essays highlighting the complexity of the itineraries enabled through our field of research. In his timely opening essay, “Irrecoverable Histories,” Robert J.C Young examines how the diasporic issues of our century are reflected in literature. He claims that, in the last decades, “migration novels and autobiographies, memoirs, oral histories [...] have typically been less concerned with the physical event of migration as such than its aftermath, of encountering a different, unfamiliar culture, of being regarded as an alien to it, and as a consequence negotiating the turmoil of dislocated or split identities” (33). In “Dramaturgies of Erasure and Returns: On Exile, Nostalgia, and Homecoming,” Yana Meerzon focuses on similarly urgent topics, analyzing “how Milan Kundera’s novel *Ignorance* (1999), Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), and Olivier Kemeid’s play *Furieux et désespérés* (2013) stage parallax and erasure as paradigms of exilic displacements, nostalgia and returns” (63). The subsequent essay by Hubert Roland sheds new light on the German phase in the development of magical realism. Through a close reading analysis of works by Hermann Kasack and Anna Seghers, Roland argues that the magical realist mode of writing has too exclusively been associated

with postmodernism and postcolonialism. In her contribution, Danielle Perrot-Corpet foregrounds the link between comparatism and queer thought, an intersection she regards as the source of what she terms an “*esthétique du trouble*,” a phrase in which the last word is endowed with positive connotations of ambivalence. In the concluding essay to this section, “Diachronic Narratology and Historical Inquiry: Strategies, Principles, and Metaphors,” Kai Mikkonen submits that “it is highly justified to ask how historicizing narratology could benefit from a comparative study of narratives across language areas and literary traditions, given the fact that narrative devices – indeed kinds of narrative – travel across borders and develop through intercultural relations” (157). He thus invites scholars to engage in further research on the theory of narratology.

Echoes of the rhizomatic potentialities of comparative literature resurge in the two pieces collected in the “review essays” section. Taking her cue from Susan Bassnett’s notion of the “outward turn” of translation studies, i.e. their growing interdisciplinarity, Marlene Esplin surveys recent methodological tendencies in the field. As she contends, “this outward turn in translation studies or ‘post-translation’ studies is somewhat less comparative and less text- or language-centric – it, rather, emphasizes how problems of translation are already at interstices of other disciplines and brings methods of translation studies to bear on the major questions and polemics of our moment” (169). In my own review essay, which echoes Hubert Roland’s scholarly essay, I examine two recently published critical anthologies on magical realism: Christopher Warnes and Kim Anderson Sasser’s *Magical Realism and Literature* as well as Richard Perez and Victoria Chevalier’s *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century*. In contrast to Hubert Roland’s focus on early magical realism, the two volumes analyzed here emphasize the contemporary global ramifications of this mode of writing.

The 2021 issue of *Literary Research* contains a new feature: a forum on literary historiography, guest-edited by Karen-Margrethe Simonsen, in which members of the ICLA *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* research group (CHLEL) discuss their ongoing research. This forum, comprising contributions by Musssnug, Fusillo, Helgesson, Neumann, Van Hulle, Beloboradova, Das, and Simonsen, carefully documents the innovative work carried out by CHLEL.

As always, the book reviews section of the journal is quite substantial. It is framed by Jenny Webb’s review of Outka’s *Viral Modernism. The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature* and Marie Laureillard’s

review of Gaffric's *La littérature à l'ère de l'Anthropocène : Une étude écocritique autour des œuvres de l'écrivain taiwanais Wu Ming-yi*. While Jenny Webb reviews a timely book for our COVID-19 pandemic times, Marie Laureillard examines a monograph dealing with the ecocritical concerns central to our age. Thus linking Modernism and the Anthropocene, these pieces aptly introduce and conclude the entire section. This part of the issue further contains numerous book reviews on such wide-ranging topics as European literatures, hispanophone, Latin-American, and Brazilian literary works, African and Indian literary studies, translation, literary theory, performance and cosmopolitanism, literary transnationalisms, postcolonialism, and feminism. The issue's epilogue comprises the obituaries of two eminent scholars in the field, Steven Sondrup and Wladimir Krysiniski.

This editorial would not be complete without expressing my gratitude to all those who made this 2021 issue a reality: my dedicated editorial assistants Jessica and Samuel, Mr. Thierry Waser, Peter Lang's commissioning editor in Brussels, as well as the publisher's production team. I also thank the anonymous members of our advisory board who peer-reviewed the scholarly essays collected here; guest editor Karen-Margrethe Simonsen for her brilliant proposal of including a forum in the journal; and, Dorothy Figueira, the immediate past editor, who kindly suggested the name of potential book reviewers. The publication of this Open-access journal would not be possible without the constant financial support of ICLA, whose board I wish to thank for kindly extending my editorship until 2025. I shall certainly look forward to further consolidating the scholarly strength of the journal in the years to come.

Marc Maufort
Brussels, June 2021

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

As of 2023, *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research*, which is now a fully peer-reviewed journal, will publish unsolicited scientific research articles. They will be submitted to a double-blind peer review. Research by early-career comparative literature scholars will be particularly welcome. All submissions for the 2023 and later issues can already be sent to the editor at this stage. The submission deadline for the 2023 issue is **April 1, 2022**.

Such articles should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words and should follow the Chicago Style sheet (parenthetical bibliographical references in the body of the text as well as a final list of Works Cited).

Please send all submissions to: Marc Maufort, Editor, *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research*, email: Marc.Maufort@ulb.be

ÉDITORIAL

Les multiples itinéraires de la littérature comparée

Au moment où j'écris ces lignes introductives, je ne peux m'empêcher de repenser à mon espoir que l'épidémie de la Covid-19 trouve une résolution rapide, espoir exprimé dans mon éditorial du numéro de 2020 de la revue. Bien que la vaccination laisse entrevoir des perspectives prometteuses, encore trop de régions du monde demeurent sous le joug de cette maladie infectieuse. À présent conscient de mon attitude par trop optimiste, je pense néanmoins que le moment est venu pour nous d'imaginer comment le monde post-pandémique pourrait être reconstruit. Il est certain que la poétique comparatiste littéraire nous apportera le soutien intellectuel nécessaire pour accomplir cette tâche herculéenne. C'est pourquoi ce numéro de *Recherche littéraire* explore les facettes multiples, à vrai dire quasi rhizomatiques, des méthodologies de recherche grâce auxquelles notre discipline pourrait contribuer à ce processus, tout en nous invitant à porter un regard différent sur le monde.

Les cinq articles de recherche de ce numéro mettent en lumière la complexité des itinéraires rendus possibles par notre domaine de recherche. Dans un premier article très à propos, « Irrecoverable Histories », Robert J.C Young examine comment les problèmes diasporiques de notre époque se reflètent dans la littérature. Il affirme que, ces dernières décennies, « migration novels and autobiographies, memoirs, oral histories [...] have typically been less concerned with the physical event of migration as such than its aftermath, of encountering a different, unfamiliar culture, of being regarded as an alien to it, and as a consequence negotiating the turmoil of dislocated or split identities » (33). Dans son article « Dramaturgies of Erasure and Returns: On Exile, Nostalgia, and Homecoming », Yana Meerzon se concentre sur des sujets d'une urgence similaire, dès lors qu'elle analyse « how Milan Kundera's novel *Ignorance* (1999), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), and Olivier Kemeid's play *Furieux et désespérés* (2013) stage parallax and erasure as paradigms of exilic displacements, nostalgia and returns » (63). L'article suivant, écrit par Hubert Roland, offre un éclairage nouveau sur

la phase allemande du développement historique du réalisme magique. À la faveur d'une analyse en « close reading » d'œuvres de Hermann Kasack et Anna Seghers, Roland argumente de façon convaincante que le mode d'écriture réaliste magique a été trop exclusivement associé à l'étude du postmodernisme et du postcolonialisme. Dans sa contribution, Danielle Perrot-Corpet met en avant le lien entre comparatisme et la pensée « queer », un croisement qu'elle considère comme la source de ce qu'elle appelle une « esthétique du trouble », expression dont le dernier mot possède des connotations positives d'ambivalence. Dans le dernier article de cette section, « Diachronic Narratology and Historical Inquiry: Strategies, Principles, and Metaphors », Kai Mikkonen affirme que « it is highly justified to ask how historicizing narratology could benefit from a comparative study of narratives across language areas and literary traditions, given the fact that narrative devices – indeed kinds of narrative – travel across borders and develop through intercultural relations » (157). Ce faisant, il invite les chercheuses et chercheurs à s'investir davantage dans la théorie de la narratologie.

Des échos du potentiel rhizomatique de la littérature comparée refont surface dans les deux essais critiques publiés dans ce numéro. S'inspirant de la notion de Susan Bassnett du « tournant vers l'extérieur » de la traductologie, c'est-à-dire de son interdisciplinarité croissante, Marlene Esplin nous offre un panorama des tendances méthodologiques actuelles de la discipline. Comme elle le suggère, « this outward turn in translation studies or 'post-translation' studies is somewhat less comparative and less text- or language-centric – it, rather, emphasizes how problems of translation are already at interstices of other disciplines and brings methods of translation studies to bear on the major questions and polemics of our moment » (169). Dans mon essai critique, qui fait écho à l'article de recherche de Hubert Roland, j'examine en détail deux anthologies critiques sur le réalisme magique récemment publiées : *Magical Realism and Literature*, ouvrage dirigé par Christopher Warnes et Kim Anderson Sasser ainsi que *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century*, qui comprend des textes assemblés par Richard Perez et Victoria Chevalier. Alors que Hubert Roland met l'accent sur la première période du réalisme magique, les deux volumes analysés ici soulignent les ramifications mondiales de ce mode d'écriture.

Ce numéro de *Recherche littéraire* contient un nouveau type de publication : un forum sur l'historiographie littéraire, dirigé par la rédactrice invitée pour la circonstance Karen-Margrethe Simonsen, dans lequel des membres du groupe de recherche de l'AILC *Histoire comparée des littératures en langues européennes* (HCLLE) présentent leurs recherches actuelles. Ce forum, qui rassemble des contributions de Mussgnug, Fusillo, Helgesson, Neumann, Van Hulle, Beloboradova, Das, et Simonsen, met en lumière le travail novateur de ce groupe de recherche.

Comme par le passé, la section de la revue consacrée aux comptes rendus de livres est très substantielle. Elle est encadrée par le compte rendu que fait Jenny Webb du livre d'Elizabeth Outka, *Viral Modernism. The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature* et celui rédigé par Marie Laureillard au sujet de la monographie de Gwennaël Gaffric, *La littérature à l'ère de l'Anthropocène : Une étude écocritique autour des œuvres de l'écrivain taiwanais Wu Ming-yi*. Tandis que Jenny Webb se penche sur un livre fort à propos en ces temps de pandémie mondiale, Marie Laureillard examine un ouvrage faisant écho aux inquiétudes éco-critiques de notre temps. Liant ainsi le Modernisme et l'Anthropocène, ces contributions introduisent et concluent parfaitement la section entière. Cette partie du numéro rassemble par ailleurs de nombreux comptes rendus de livres traitant de sujets aussi divers que les littératures européennes, les littératures hispanophones, latino-américaines et brésiliennes, les études littéraires africaines et indiennes, la traduction, la théorie littéraire, la performance et le cosmopolitisme, les transnationalismes littéraires, le postcolonialisme et le féminisme. Enfin, l'épilogue de ce numéro contient deux hommages posthumes à des chercheurs éminents, Steven Sondrup et Wladimir Kryszynski.

Je ne pourrais conclure cet éditorial sans exprimer ma gratitude envers tou-te-s celles et ceux qui ont rendu possible la publication du numéro de 2021 : mes dévoué-e-s assistant-e-s de rédaction Jessica et Samuel, M. Thierry Waser, directeur du bureau de Peter Lang à Bruxelles, ainsi que le département de production de l'éditeur. Je remercie également les membres anonymes du comité consultatif de la revue qui ont expertisé les articles de recherche publiés dans ce numéro, la rédactrice invitée Karen-Margrethe Simonsen pour sa brillante initiative d'avoir proposé l'inclusion d'un forum dans la revue et Dorothy Figueira, l'ancienne rédactrice, qui a aimablement suggéré des collègues susceptibles d'écrire

un compte rendu. La publication de *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research* en « open access » ne pourrait avoir lieu sans le soutien financier pérenne de l'AILC. Je tiens à remercier le Bureau de l'Association d'avoir prolongé mon mandat de rédacteur jusqu'en 2025. Je me réjouis à la perspective de pouvoir travailler à consolider la qualité scientifique de la revue dans les années à venir.

Marc Maufort
Bruxelles, juin 2021

APPEL A CONTRIBUTIONS

À partir de 2023, *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research*, qui est d'ores et déjà une revue soumise à une évaluation par des pair-e-s, publiera des articles de recherche scientifique non sollicités. Ils seront soumis à une évaluation par des pair-e-s en double aveugle. Les travaux de jeunes chercheuses et chercheurs en littérature comparée seront particulièrement bienvenus. Toute soumission pour les numéros de 2023 et pour les années suivantes peut dès à présent être envoyée au Rédacteur. La date limite de soumission pour le numéro de 2023 est le **1er avril 2022**.

Ces articles compteront entre 6 000 et 8 000 mots et suivront les règles de présentation bibliographique du « Chicago Style » (références bibliographiques entre parenthèses dans le corps du texte et bibliographie complète en fin d'article).

Veillez envoyer vos soumissions à : Marc Maufort, Rédacteur, *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research*, email : Marc.Maufort@ulb.be

ARTICLES DE RECHERCHE / ARTICLES

Irrecoverable Histories

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I. Introduction

If exile was the mode, and the condition, of much twentieth-century writing, migration has emerged as that of the twenty-first. Already by the last decades of the twentieth century, the first was shifting into the second, the pivot marked by Edward W. Said's justly famous essay, "Reflections on Exile," originally published in 1984 (Said "Reflections"; Brah 178). Exile in the twentieth century was particularly prompted by the politics of nation-state fashioning and refashionings: the Russian Revolution, the re-organization of European states after 1919, the rise of Nazi Germany, and then the restructuring of much of Europe all over again in 1945, followed by the gradual often violent reconfiguration of a good deal of the rest of the world with the partitions that marked the early years of the ensuing decades of decolonization and the creation of new nation states (Marrus; Nasaw). The terms of that decolonization were in turn transformed by neo-liberal globalization in the twentieth century's last decade; both provoked transformative movements of populations around the world, by no means only from South to North, that are still ongoing. The exemplary situation shifted from the exile, forced to dwell apart and endure a permanent inertia, living out his or her life elsewhere in perpetual separation from a homeland forever out of reach, to that of the migrant from the global South. As with the literature of exile, migration novels and autobiographies, memoirs, oral histories – the different genres or forms of writing here often merge into each other – have typically been less concerned with the physical event of migration as such than its aftermath, of encountering a different, unfamiliar culture, of being regarded as an alien to it, and as a consequence negotiating the turmoil of dislocated or split identities. Writing of this kind has appeared in distinct

forms in different countries in non-synchronous phases, depending on the particular temporal patterns of migration to each place. Europe, for example, has seen diverse sorts of migration literature develop according to the multiple temporalities of different sources of immigration – Maghrebian, Antillean, West Indian, South Asian, Turkish, West African, Middle Eastern, and so on – which then in turn morph into new forms and preoccupations in succeeding generations, as portrayed, for example, by Alice Zeniter in her powerful novel *L'Art de perdre* (2017).

Some migrant writers, such as Romesh Gunesequera or Atiq Rahimi, just like the Modernists, prefer to write stories about their homeland, or, as in the case of V.S. Naipaul, write about their personal migration rarely and belatedly. But many focus on the experience of displacement itself. In 2004, Jacques Chevrier coined the term “migritude” to describe the contemporary conditions of African migration to Europe, by analogy and by contrast with the earlier writers of *négritude* of the 1930s, such as Césaire, Senghor, Diop, and Paulette and Jean Nardal, whereby the great African diasporic search for African identity and dream of a “return to the source” is itself put in question by Africans who have precisely migrated out of Africa.¹ While the Francophone novel of migritude stages some of the pains, and joys, of cultural assimilation, it also, rather more than with Anglophone examples, stages the yearning, the sense of loss, the many forms of alienation that come with leaving your homeland, as in the Senegalese-French Fatou Diome’s 2003 novel *Le ventre de l’Atlantique*. Just as all colonial and postcolonial literatures have been associated with the metaphor of migration (Boehmer), so in novels such as this, the term “exile” is invoked frequently to describe the writer’s sense of being away from home, even if he or she for the most part is able to return home if and when they wish to. Migration novels typically recount the discomfiting experiences of moving into an alien space into which migrants inscribe their alterity at the same time as they voice their unease and ambivalence about returning, whether in imagination or in reality, to the abandoned homeland. In doing so, they create new forms of authority and validity as they construct a distinct social, cultural, and political space for themselves out of this dichotomy. As Chevrier himself notes: “les écrivains de la migritude vont donc rechercher leur légitimité littéraire en se désengageant simultanément de la culture d’origine et de la culture d’accueil,

¹ The term has since been appropriated by the Kenyan-Indian anglophone writer Shailja Patel for the title of her poetic memoir, *Migritude*.

en vue d'inscrire leur démarche dans un nouvel espace identitaire dont les frontières font éclater les cadres ordinaires" [the writers of migritude will therefore seek their literary legitimacy by simultaneously disengaging themselves from the culture of origin and the host culture, with a view to inscribing their approach in a new space identity whose borders burst the limits of the ordinary] (Chevrier 15–16). As a noun evoking situation, migritude compares directly to exile. Both describe and analyse states of being in different modes of non-being. But whereas exile involves loss and lack, anguished unfulfilled longing, migritude focuses rather on the discomfort and strangeness of cultural assimilation in the northern country of arrival, where, even if he or she has to some degree settled, he or she lives out her days and nights ambivalently, a state not of simply living life unselfconsciously or "naively" in Schiller's term, but of feeling constantly aware of being psychologically in two places at once. These cultural (mis)encounters, or narratives of painful, anticlimactic returns home, such as Dany Laferrière's *L'énigme du retour* (2009), or Marji's in Satrapi's *Persépolis 2* (2001) or Biju's in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), in their own way continue the paradoxical rejection of and longing for home that is distinctive of Modernist writers. As migrants who have typically decided to leave but can also return, their situation may be compared to what James Baldwin described with some precision as his own "self-exile" in France (10).

Exile, migration: what is the relation between these two literary themes and genres so close as existential situations, at times veering so near that they touch and cross each other? How can we conceptualize the relationship between the literatures of exile and those of migration? What is it that escapes such comfortable and established categories? In practice, in the literary sphere both are singularized: exile typically carries the aura of individuals, particularly of famous political radicals and intellectuals excoriated by the state, with exile defined primarily in terms of a political identity or refusal, while migration fiction tends to be associated with the stories of individual migrants who have moved of their own volition for economic or other reasons. While they may speak of their condition as a form of exile, it is not what we might call exile proper, where an individual is banished, or unable to return, to their homeland just as Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden to which humanity was fated never to return.

The philosophical version of the Biblical myth, so enduringly influential in Western thought, voiced the Platonic dream that humans, doomed

to the world of appearance, might get back in touch with that ultimate Reality from which they had become estranged. That spiritual exile took a new turn at the end of the eighteenth-century when it was secularized or rephrased as the alienation of the unhappy consciousness. "Romantic exile," in this situation, becomes almost a tautology. This exile registered the painful other side of Immanuel Kant's definition of Enlightenment as man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity (*selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit*), the *selbstverschuldeten* implying perhaps with its suggestion of fault and indebtedness that Enlightenment offers as a redemption for the Fall, even as it exiled the bulk of human beings living on the earth from their own humanity. Some of those who had escaped their immaturity, however, were consumed with nostalgia for that "primitive" naïveté that they had lost, to which they were condemned never to return, and from which they were to remain in perpetual exile. Even before Kant, in fact, the paradigm had been flipped by Rousseau and Romantics whereby "enlightened" human beings had become alienated and exiled from their own natural existence and fell in love with so-called "primitive" indigenous people and their more "natural" ways. The narcissistic fantasies of DH Lawrence, Alejo Carpentier, or Bruce Chatwin, are simply late examples.

Unlike Ovid, who languished in exile on the shores of the Black Sea reduced as he tells us to the company of barbarians but rarely managing in his *Tristia* to transform his state of mind into a condition for which we are overwhelmed with sympathy (unless it be its evocative, palpable recreation by David Malouf in his 1978 novel), twentieth-century political exiles thus arrived with the intellectual parameters of the discursive field of exile already well laid out and established for them. The problem became rather how to escape it, so as to register with more immediacy the pains of exile once again as experienced by Ovid rather than the cultivation of exile as the congenial mental state of choice to take up vis-à-vis the contemporary world. This is the immediate issue addressed in Said's essay "Reflections on Exile," whose personal significance he foregrounded by using the title again for his collected essays published in 2000.

II. Irrecoverable Experiences

Said opens with the arresting observation that "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (Said "Reflections" 137). These antithetical elements are not *ipso facto* contradictory, and

can feed off each other, as was clearly the case for Said himself. His complaint, however, is that they can also be invoked discretely: the first can be indulged in without the experience of its real equivalent. This uneven dichotomy between mental and physical exile, between theory and experience one might say, organizes the essay: Said's first strategy is to dismiss the status and validity of all forms of merely intellectual exile, which are characterized as self-indulgent, as a theoretical notion which, unlike experience, one can always reject and step outside. The singular self-absorbed alienation experienced through a reactant subjectivity, or even the transcendental homelessness of someone in his natal city such as Kafka, is banished.

The exile, as Said suggests in his autobiography, exists in a permanent state of being "out of place," not simply because he or she doesn't fit in wherever they happen to be living, but because they are indelibly defined by the place which they are forever out of, away from, and to which they cannot return. The exile, blocked in and out, lives a life of stasis, inertia, and immobility, of being here rather than there, a "fundamentally discontinuous state of being" (140). He or she exists in a state of permanent lack, not quite the zone of non-being that Frantz Fanon described as a migrant suffering racism in 1940s France, but of half-being, unfulfilled and incomplete. This dichotomy, Said suggests, can be both creative and destructive. His first examples come as personal anecdotes: of hearing the great Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz recite his poems and by doing so "overcome his sense of constant estrangement [...] it was an enactment of a homecoming expressed through defiance or loss" (138), or of the great Palestinian poet Rashid Hussein, who died in a fire in his New York apartment, his life in ruins, subjected to the destructive force of exilic half-life. Only a few intellectuals such as these or the South African writer Nat Nakasa, "native of no where," who committed suicide in New York in 1965, can articulate their exilic situation. The exile must find his or her own way out of the loneliness of their condition or perish. What is so moving about Said's essay is that for anyone with even a minimal knowledge of the man, the whole subject is obviously so deeply personal, and yet his own experience is never mentioned overtly even once. His own particular situation of exile from Palestine since 1948 explains why his concerns are so very different from those of Migrantude or most other more recent representations of migration. Exile, for Said, takes the form of a tragedy, above all for him the tragedy of the Palestinian people. Faced with the aporia, the impasse, the occlusion of his own predicament, Said

must find a creative exit out of his desperately negative situation. He therefore stages his own anagnorisis, a recognition scene that Said pulls out of his own tragic experience by turning the aching dichotomy of being and non-being, of being here and not there, into the exile's special ability to see things from a double perspective, to see both his own culture and that of his adopted country with a double consciousness each drawn from the other. As with the double consciousness of W.E.B. Du Bois, such a state of mind is at once painful and enabling. Said's double consciousness, or the contrapuntal vision as he would later describe it, is nevertheless very different from Du Bois'. Despite his many indictments of the racist stereotyping of Arabs in the West elsewhere, Said's dialectical vision here seems to have nothing to do with the way that he is seen and characterized in the U.S. according to a pre-set racist stereotype, but rather relates to his own spatialized consciousness of being simultaneously there and somewhere else at the same time, and it is this dislocated existence that enables him to see each from the perspective of the other.

In many ways, Said himself was one of the last of the great exiles. The expulsion of a people in order to create a nation for another people, such as Said, Mahmoud Darwish and a million other Palestinians experienced in 1948, was the last of the vast inhuman exercises in population engineering that took place with the re-organization of Europe in 1919, the division of Ireland in 1922, the establishment of the Turkish state in 1923 whereby Greeks and Turks intermingled all over the Eastern Mediterranean were divided up, the "repatriation" of German communities spread all over Eastern Europe after World War II, and the partition of India in 1947. What was unique about the Palestinian case was that it was they alone who were forcibly driven out of their own lands but without a new country having been created for them elsewhere. Painful and murderous as other historical partitions were, Ireland, India, Greece/Turkey, Cyprus, at least everyone had somewhere, some designated land to go to. This is why exile, and the demand for the right of return, remains a unique, particular, and perennially urgent Palestinian condition.

Said himself, however, does not try to make a claim for his situation as unique, for he connects it not to the century's earlier forms of political exile, but to present political realities, to the fact that we are living in the "age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration" (138). This, he argues, shifts the whole situation into something entirely new:

you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself. You must first set aside Joyce and Nabokov and think instead of the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created. You must think of the refugee-peasants with no prospect of ever returning home, armed only with a ration card and an agency number. Paris may be a capital famous for cosmopolitan exiles, but it is also a city where unknown men and women have spent years of miserable loneliness: Vietnamese, Algerians, Cambodians, Lebanese, Senegalese, Peruvians. You must think also of Cairo, Beirut, Madagascar, Bangkok, Mexico City. As you move further from the Atlantic world, the awful forlorn waste increases: the hopelessly large numbers, the compounded misery of “undocumented” people suddenly lost, without a reliable history. To reflect on exiled Muslims from India, or Haitians in America, or Bikinians in Oceania, or Palestinians throughout the Arab world means that you must leave the modest refuge provided by subjectivity and resort instead to the abstractions of mass politics. Negotiations, wars of national liberation, people bundled out of their homes and prodded, bussed or walked to enclaves in other regions: what do these experiences add up to? Are they not manifestly and almost by design irrecoverable?

(“Reflections” 139)

How do you represent the unrepresentable? How do you recover the irrecoverable? This powerful paragraph has received little attention from commentators, even from Lyndsey Stonebridge in her excellent discussion of Said’s essay in *Placeless People*, which focuses on precisely this issue of stateless refugees (Stonebridge 11–13). Perhaps this is because it is so hard to answer the terrible questions with which he concludes. But this is what we shall attempt to do here.

This paragraph which leaves us, it feels, at an absolute impasse, is a key to Said’s argument, to his making a distinction between political exile and its condition of non-return, the romantic or metaphorical exile of Modernists, and even of contemporary migrant writers who rarely formed part of the uncountable mass of undocumented people on the move. Those with whom Said identifies are not people without histories: they have their own histories, each one of them. The problem is that their experiences are “irrecoverable,” they constitute “uncountable masses” whose numbers are too vast even to be represented, whose “territories of experience” cannot be mapped, people who have become no more than “awful forlorn waste.” Some of these may make it to the West, as in Said’s list of immigrants from distant places who have ended

in Paris.² But the vast majority, as he correctly suggests, never make it to the West at all, many of them finding themselves in the formal or informal camps that proliferate around the great cities of the South. It is here that he emphasizes not migrants, nor even refugees in general, but those forcibly exiled from their homelands: “To reflect on exiled Muslims from India, or Haitians in America, or Bikinians in Oceania or Palestinians throughout the Arab world means that you must leave the modest refuge provided by subjectivity and resort instead to the abstractions of mass politics. Negotiations, wars of national liberation, people bundled out of their homes and prodded, bussed or walked to enclaves in other regions: what do these experiences add up to? Are they not manifestly and almost by design irrecoverable?” Literature, Said suggests, cannot even begin to map the “compounded misery” of modern mass forced exile. For the most part, these kind of exiles, sometimes whole populations, suffer in silence, such as the inhabitants of the Bikini atoll, who were forcibly relocated en masse in 1946 to Rongerik Atoll, where they subsequently suffered starvation, so that their home could become the site of 23 ensuing atomic tests (Niedenthal). These “undesirable,” excluded, abandoned people appear only as numbers in UN Reports, or at best in anthropological or sociological accounts, such as those by Eric Wolf or Zygmunt Bauman or Michel Agier (Wolf; Bauman; Agier). They have become objects of study, no longer human subjects whose subjectivity can be represented in literature but at best cases for advocacy for humanitarian intervention by governments and NGOs. What Said is pointing to here is the unrecorded catastrophe of ordinary human lives, so memorably articulated by Hannah Arendt in 1943:

We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings.

(Arendt 264)

While Said very powerfully and sympathetically also evokes the situation of such people, he too finds himself here at an impasse: their histories and experiences are irretrievable. Going well beyond those of the

² Said’s list of migrant workers in Paris makes sense, though I am somewhat puzzled and intrigued by his including Peruvians at the end of the list. Was he perhaps thinking of Mario Vargas Llosa?

individual exile, they involve rather those unmapped territories of suffering that cannot be charted. Some parts of Said's description evoke the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948: while he links their exile to the contemporary forced emigration and mass immigration that, as he observes, defines the current age, Said also raises the tragedy to another level – their experiences are also lost: “irrecoverable.”

By linking forced exiles such as the Palestinians to the forced migration of mass movements of exiled peoples and contemporary undocumented migrants, Said broaches not just their human reality but also an important aesthetic issue of representation. With diaspora or migration, with crowded lines of streaming human beings, with boatloads of anonymized people who may be fleeing war or terror, the question of representation itself becomes a problem. Perhaps photography has been the form that has best succeeded, for example Margaret Bourke-White's images of Indian Partition in 1947, or more recently Sebastião Salgado's *Migrations* (2000), though even here, the subjects of the photographs are always objectified – we never encounter their own forms of subjectivity and experience directly. Historically, the novel, even cinema, has always found it easier and more effective to focus on individuals than on groups, examples of singularity rather than the modes of generality that make up anonymous statistics and reports. Neither aesthetic form, particularly the novel or the memoir, can represent large numbers, whether of strikers in nineteenth-century fiction, or migrants in the twenty-first century. Those who may be defined by geographers or sociologists by the millions, cannot be represented en masse in literature. As soon as we hear a personal voice, such as Said's himself, they become a person and disconnect from the mass, which is why it remains so hard for Said to connect his own individual situation of exile with that of the contemporary forced migrations of which he formed a part. He is them, but by speaking, he is not them. The “hopelessly large number” of those subalterns cannot speak, because in speaking they are no longer uncountable.

Said's immediate solution to this intractable problem is to move quickly on to the individual figure of his compatriot, contemporary and friend Mahmoud Darwish, whom he describes as driven by a “need to reassemble an identity out of the refractions and discontinuities of exile” (142). Darwish himself physically experienced the expulsion of 1948 as Said did not, his home village al-Birwa being razed by the IDF, thereafter living with the identity of being, according to the cruel official Israeli category for Palestinians who had been forcibly displaced from their

villages, a “present absentee.” Just as Said remained riven with anguish at his inability to return to his homeland, but transformed that impasse into his contrapuntal vision, Darwish also produced a creative response to his predicament – cleverly inverting his official designation to focus on what he called “the presence of absence” (Darwish 2006). Over the course of his life, realizing that he was never going to return to the original paradisaical state that he had lost, Darwish therefore began to invent new imagined homelands, imaginary paradises such as Al Andalus, and beyond that even the domain of poetic language itself, the homeland to which he could return and live within and through his imagination in his greatest poetry. For both Said and Darwish, therefore, the response to the physical impasse of exile was to employ creative ingenuity to find and open a door that would lead out of the aporia with which they were faced.

Said’s discussion of Darwish is surprisingly and tantalizingly brief, however, before he turns not to other Palestinian writers or artists, or even to other contemporary migrant writers in his concern to recover the experiences of the masses of migrants around the world without a tellable history, but to a story by one of his favourite writers, one of the great literary exiles of the early twentieth century, Joseph Conrad’s “Amy Foster.” This tale, written in 1901, narrates the history of a nineteenth-century emigrant from Poland’s Carpathian mountains who, destined for America, gets shipwrecked on the southern coastline of rural England. The story does not focus so much on the anguished longing for home, of not being there, but the pain of the journey, Yanko’s reception by the baffled and generally hostile local inhabitants, and the continuing dislocations of non-understanding and cultural difference in his eventual marriage. Conrad evokes the yawning cultural alienation between the couple with their different cultural backgrounds with an intensity that foreshadows that portrayed so tellingly by Albert Memmi in his moving first novel *La Statue de sel* of 1953. In both novels, it is only in the years after marriage that the cultural, ethnic and religious differences between the two, exactly the same differences that had originally led the couple to be attracted to each other in the first place, gradually supervene as the grounds of a profound alienation between them, in Conrad’s case ending in Yanko’s tragic death. Here, too, cultural memory is presented as unshareable, never fading, but perpetually disruptive and destructive. While Conrad’s story follows rather closely an earlier narrative by Ford Madox Ford published the previous year, Said interprets it biographically to represent the pain of Conrad’s own exile and social alienation.

Reading it today, it is hard not to be struck by how different yet at once how similar the world that the story evokes is to our own. In the context of the contemporary migrations that Said has evoked, what is remarkable about “Amy Foster” is that its account of migration tells the story not only of nineteenth-century migration to settler colonies (which was what was supposed to happen before the shipwreck changed the narrative) but could equally well describe a late twentieth-century story of illegal migrants being smuggled into Europe. The bogus emigration agencies in Poland which charge an extortionate amount for Yanko’s fare, so that his family virtually ruin themselves to raise the money while he promises to send money home when he arrives in the promised land, has been the story of probably hundreds of thousands if not millions of families in Asia and Africa over the last decades. The degrading conditions of his journey, his difficulties on arrival, the racism that greets him, and the ambivalence of his acceptance into the community all echo immediately with contemporary migrant experiences. One thing, however, is dramatically different and a stark indication, and indictment, of the greater inhumanity of our own era: despite the initial hostility of the local villagers, no one ever thinks of calling a policeman, no one ever asks for his papers or his passport. He is not sent to a detention center for illegal migrants and put straight on a ship back to Poland. The bureaucratic power of the modern state surveilling and controlling its citizens’ lives down to every last detail is extraordinarily, wonderfully absent. Today, what is so remarkable about the story is its vivid representation of the freedoms that we have lost forever. Since Conrad’s day, it is the emergence of the nation state itself, with its bureaucracies and identity cards, visas, its redefinitions of citizenship away from those who simply live in the state, that has created the tragic human situation not only of mass migration but of unending statelessness and permanent dislocations.

But this, of course, was hardly Said’s point. Although it is clearly the emotional distress that Yanko experiences with which Said identifies, in the story Yanko’s anguish stems largely from his reception in his host country rather than the heartache of being in exile as such, if the two are indeed entirely separable. This puts the story closer to those of more recent migrant writers. Whatever the trials of migrating from one country to another, such migrancy is not the cruel and unwanted product of the political force of circumstance that is so excruciatingly painful to experience; it does not involve the impasse which leaves the exile in the space of a permanent aporia, blocked, irresolvable, unnegotiable, with no way

out. That exile's impasse, مأزق, which Said himself experienced, mirrors that at which he had arrived in his own essay, of his inability to represent the subjectivity of uncountable people forced to migrate in the modern age. He finds a way out by first turning to Darwish, who began as one of those faceless people but who as a poet became their voice, and then diverts by tracking back to Conrad, before sublating the impasse of his own exile into the double consciousness of his distinctive contrapuntal vision. Faced with the impossible, these exiles, therefore, used their creative ingenuity to manoeuvre their way out.

III. In the Tank

Darwish's own restless, nomadic journeyings from al-Birwa in Palestine to the Lebanon to Deir al-Asad in Galilee to Haifa to the Soviet Union to Egypt to the Lebanon again from which he was expelled after the Israeli invasion to Cyprus, then to Tunisia before moving to Ramallah in the Occupied West Bank where he had never been before and which he did not feel was in any way his homeland, was typical of the constantly shifting peripatetic situation of so many Palestinians and forced migrants. The instability of his exile formed the shifting uncertainty of the world of his poetry, and it is with the flux of this unpredictable, insecure agitation from place to place, that we can begin to approach something of the irrecoverable subjectivity of the forced migrants and refugees of which Said speaks which cannot be encapsulated in conventional narrative form.

For Darwish, in the context of Said's remarks, points us to a literature not of being caught in one place and wanting to be in another, of an enforced and permanent discontinuity, but of movement, of crossings and chance, of unending change and disruptive, juxtaposed temporalities, disconcerting interactions within flows of other peoples, cultures, languages and customs. Against the agony of the enforced stasis of the exile, forever unable to return home, this exile involves process: the journey is continuous, permanently in transit, which paradoxically makes its very form intermittent and broken; any place of rest must always remain in a profound sense temporary in an ongoing unfolding of progressions and regressions, cycles and successions, a nervous condition of unsettlement. This was not Said's experience, but something very close to Palestinian writing, as he well knew.

Other than Darwish, one of the curiosities of Said's essay in the context of his identification with "irrecoverable" forms of subjectivity and the impasse of contemporary forms of mass exile among those subjected to forced migration are the Palestinian texts that he does not refer to. For much Palestinian writing focuses on the cruel experiences of the stateless migrant which Said invokes and you do not have to look far to find it. Perhaps the best-known example of Palestinian literature, Ghassān Kanafānī's renowned 1962 story *رجال في الشمس* *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, "Men in the Sun," could be said to be emblematic of this literature at its most bleak, arguably offering a foundational example not just of Palestinian literature but of a distinctive aesthetic form that can stage and present the experiences of the uncountable, dehumanized peoples that Said laments as being inexpressible and irrecoverable. As a writer, Kanafānī faces exactly the problem which Said invokes, namely the relation between the subjective account of experiences of Palestinian exilic migration and "the abstractions of mass politics" (139), as well as the technical aesthetic problem of the literary representation of the collective mass experience which Palestinians underwent and continue to live out. In this story, Kanafānī addresses the issue directly, generalizing and universalising the particular situation by focusing his narrative on three diverse protagonists rather than the consciousness of one; they each have their own particular stories and memories, but as the detailed histories of each proceed, their narratives become fused, just as the story repeatedly recalls the spatial and geographical image of the two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, that flow into the one Shatt al-Arab. When we meet them, the protagonists have all already left home, though for them that home is already not actually home. It is nothing but a refugee camp that encapsulates their homelessness and hopelessness and which forces them, primarily for economic reasons which are not separable from their own sense of self-respect in their own family and social setting, the pressure to fulfil the social requirements of masculinity, to migrate in search of work: "In the last ten years you have done nothing but wait" (Kanafānī 26). What we experience through the almost hallucinatory temporalities of interweaving memories of the characters that irrupt into the evolving present involves a phenomenology of their day-to-day experiences of that extended process, the painful consciousness of arduous movements from place to place, of the migrants negotiating with various fixers who offer to take them to Kuwait for inflated prices and with no guarantee that they are not going to be tricked and dumped in the desert, as in fact

has already happened to one of the characters, Assad. The tragic ending, in which the men are asphyxiated in the hot tank of the truck as they cross the Kuwaiti border, is distressingly similar to any number of contemporary news items in which migrants are found dead in the back of trucks that cross the English Channel or relate how they were smuggled across borders in petrol tanks.³ The continuity of the migrant's appalling experiences risking death across time is disconcertingly evident. At the same time, smuggling yourself in a fuel tank shows the ingenuity of undocumented migrants, their willingness and ability to improvise and take risks to move on, to negotiate themselves out of the dead-end of the apparently insuperable barriers of modern state frontier regimes.

This is not a story that is directly about homelessness, transcendental or otherwise, as such, though it is true that the characters find themselves existentially homeless. Nor is it about exile as such. Exile has only one narrative, which is already over; its focus is exclusively that of retrospect, the becalmed exile locked in an impasse who has been cruelly deprived of a future. The exile's only dream is of a second narrative, to return home, but as for Said, that never occurs, it is a future permanently cut off. Kanafānī's story on the other hand is driven by the migrant's dream of a future. This migration novella is accordingly indelibly wrapped in futurity, prospects and prospectiveness, towards which it conveys the movement, the chance opportunities, and the ingenious ways in which the initiative has been seized once more along the route, the migrants' lines of flight. The migrant here looks and moves forward into the future, despite its total uncertainty. The future will always be mediated and mirrored through memory, as these protagonists may at times look back, remember the past, but as migrants on the move they are necessarily also always looking forward, resourcefully finding their way out of blockages and impediments on the road as they journey towards the beyond, the place of aspiration which provides the mental imago that can be called a destination, even if it often turns out to be simply another stage on a longer journey.

³ For one example from 2015, see Syrian refugee Said's interview with the BBC (Said "24 hours" n.p.).

IV. Translation as *Mētis*, Cunning

When facing a blocked exit or entrance or frontier on the road, such migrants find their way through. This is rather a different situation to the conventional idiom that has developed to discuss migration in literature, which is to invoke the trope of translation, which may seem particularly appropriate because the migrant often must learn a new language on arrival. But Kanafāni's story challenges this, in the first place because the story is set in Arabic speaking countries where language is not an issue, though the Palestinian accent and dialect would have been obvious to the characters' interlocutors and immediately implicitly betrayed their own strangeness, their vulnerability and their unvoiced narrative. At the same time, some of the implicit assumptions of how translation works do not fit either. As has been frequently recalled, the root origin of the English word translate is the Latin *translatio*, meaning to transfer. It emerged in English via the French, almost simultaneously being used to describe the removal of a bishop from one episcopal see to another, or the dead body of a saint from one burial place to another, or a saint's assumption directly from earth to heaven, and to turn a text from one language into another. In each case, translation by-passes the journey – of the body, through burial, decay, and of the soul, before it arrives in heaven, or of the process of turning a text from Latin into medieval English. This idea of translation implies a simple relocation, from language A to language B, as if they were equivalents, just as the migrant flies from say, Mumbai to London.

The idea of understanding migration by mediating it through the mode of translation was an aspect unknown, perhaps even incomprehensible to Said who, because of his background, was in a sense already born translated. Nevertheless, for decades now the metaphor of translation has been employed in relation to narratives of modern migration where the journey itself was the least challenging aspect, hardly worth noting in itself, a few days on a boat or hours on a plane and the migrant has arrived. It was perhaps first put into circulation thirty years ago by Salman Rushdie in his observation that “having been borne across the world, we are translated men” (Rushdie 17). Our typical conception of translation, whether used literally or metaphorically, always assumes two bounded and distinct languages, a model developed on the basis of national language systems and their standardized forms modelled on written texts (Young “That Which is Casually Called a Language”). But

these orderly houses of the nation do not represent the chaotic discursive spaces on whose surfaces migration is today played out. While many recent accounts of translation have emphasized its status as a process, metaphorically that only serves to put the migrant's experience on arrival into a sequence in time. But what of the forced migrant who journeys by land and who never arrives at a definitive endpoint of his or her wanderings? Is the metaphor of translation still appropriate? Can you be forever "in translation" and never be translated, never reaching a settled target language? The condition of the irrecoverable experience of forced migration is not arrival but a perpetually continued journey, crossings, movements, repetitions and returns, disappearances and re-encounters, across chaotic undefined landscapes. This kind of subaltern migration, whether on land or sea or both, cannot be associated with a simple relocation from there to here, as was the experience of many migrants to the west in former decades. The ordeal of forced migration cuts across these fixed positionalities and boundaries, just as it inflects its temporal processes through ambient spaces in unpredictable patterns and intersections. If this constitutes translation, it involves a painful process of movement, diversion, divarication and non-arrival, translation as a form of writing, the endless perpetuation of an unanticipated script, eking out its inks over the epidermis of the body of the sentient being who is undergoing the reiterated experience of language deaths, a strange incomprehensible language which only survives when it is written on the skin, on the surface of consciousness. Such migration consists primarily of processes of movement that encompass forms of temporality as well as spatiality: a more appropriate word than translation would be traversal, a cutting across, a passing through (Young "Traversal" n.p.). Those spatio-temporal experiences are relentlessly interminable, unending, reinscribed momentarily in every encounter and at each irruption of self-consciousness, at every instance of uncertainty, confrontation, denigration, or abuse. For the "territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile" (Said "Reflections" 139) are descents into those voids from which the migrant, whether literally or metaphorically, never emerges to arrive. The trajectories of migrancy, unlike the two-way spatial dynamics of the conventional metaphors of translation or of exile and return, are complexly labyrinthine, unpredictable, driven by chance, error, and aberrant encounters. The structure is more that of routes followed whose trajectory is shaped through accidental, random encounters whose touch sends the migrant off in a new direction, as when a tangent touches a circle.

Within the flows of migrations, each punctuated point of rest makes up no predictable pattern any more than haphazard and chaotic dots that have been dropped on a piece of paper. If a conceptual or mathematical web can be woven about any such pattern, if it is reduced statistically to a flow on a map, it means, as Leibniz pointed out, only that any such set of objects in a given universe can be given a mathematical interpretation, not that there is any intrinsic underlying form: so too with the migrant's own understanding, created in discrete sequences across each painful narrative. The dislocation, the delay, the displacement, and disturbance involved and experienced become transformed into a perpetual *décalage* in which there will be an origin but in which any end, completion or finality is always suspended, postponed, stalled, outside the challenges and uncertainties of the temporalizing narrative flux.

In this scenario, rather than a one-way shift from source to target language, the migrant is faced with constant dead ends, impasses, moments of blockage and untranslatability. What is distinctive about this kind of migrant narrative is that unlike the popular representation of migrants in the media, or the statistical analysis of migrant flows among the social sciences or historians, an emphasis on the chance movements of migration trajectories brings to the fore not the passivity of being translated but an active creative ingenuity, agency, and intellectual capacity. The migrant is constantly faced with the standoff of barriers and impediments, with aporetic situations. Aporia is a term well-known in literary theory from the work of Paul de Man in particular, where it marks the moment of impasse, a conundrum whose void leads to a chiasmic reversal that initiates the movement of deconstruction. De Man's version, however, offers a reduced and reductive account of what aporia involves. The Greek term *a-poria*, ἀπορίᾱ, is a negation of πόρος, poros, which refers to a passageway, or entrance, just as impasse is a negation of passing. Although aporia constitutes a dead-end, a blockage, through its negation it also contains and opens up the possibility of being un-negated – into poros, an opening, a way, a means to an end, a journey, especially, in Greek, over a passage of uncharted water. The path of an illegal migrant, as even in Kanafānī's story, is a constant alternation of aporias and poroi, but the migrant does not simply reverse and undo himself when faced with the first aporia like a deconstructive reader. The migrant looks for a way in which he or she can make the aporia porous. It is here that the migrant's ingenuity, his or her cunning and intuitive intelligence must come into play immediately to negotiate a way forward, a work-around, *contournement*. The Greek

term for this kind intuitive intelligence was *mētis*, a word which originated in the mythological figure *Mētis*, a female Titan god, known for her wisdom and cunning, who was swallowed by Zeus in order to prevent her from giving birth to crafty, clever children who might usurp him.⁴ Even though these qualities are also found to some degree in Hermes and Prometheus (Brown), it was doubtless its primary association with the goddess *Mētis* that encouraged Plato to downgrade the importance of knowledge as *mētis* compared with epistemology and *technē*, just as all other forms of women's knowledge have been traditionally relegated to inferior status. Consideration of this kind of wily, adaptable intelligence was banished entirely from the realm of philosophy, surviving only in the realm of literature, until it was retrieved by Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant in their classic *Ruses de l'intelligence: la mētis des Grecs*. *Mētis*, Detienne and Vernant write,

is a type of intelligence and of thought, a way of knowing; it implies a complex but very coherent body of mental attitudes and intellectual behavior which combine flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years. It is applied to situations which are transient, shifting, disconcerting and ambiguous, situations which do not lend themselves to precise measurement, exact calculation or rigorous logic.

(Detienne and Vernant 3–4)

Exactly the kind of spontaneous quick-witted intelligence in the face of unknown, impromptu dangers and opportunities that the migrant needs to deploy on a daily, hourly basis to survive. And exactly the kind of ingenuity that the translator needs when faced with the barrier of the untranslatable, which as for the migrant represents a challenge rather than a fact. The translator needs the inspired ingenuity and quick wits of the migrant to negotiate the impasse of the untranslatable and find a way around it, turning a blind alley into an alleyway.

James C. Scott has used the term *mētis* in his brilliant *Seeing Like a State* as a way of thinking about slowly acquired knowledge that cannot

⁴ There is no etymological link between *mētis* and the French word *méti*, meaning mixed, primarily a mixed-race person, though it is interesting that nineteenth-century racial theorists tended to ascribe *méti* with exactly this kind of “second-order” intellectual capability. *Mētis* was, of course, exactly the kind of cunning that the colonized subject also needed to survive under colonial rule.

be written down and translated into written instructions – his example is the way that ship’s captains hand over their command to local pilots when they arrive at a port, the pilot being the one who knows how to navigate the complexities of the shallows and currents of the confined space of that particular harbour (Scott 293–312). He extends this local knowledge to indigenous knowledges, the kinds of knowledge that have to be learnt through apprenticeship rather than formal methodology or instructional, impersonally codified information that can be written down. While this works nicely in the context of his book, the emphasis here gets entirely placed on experience acquired over the years, which though a component is not quite the whole of the kind of knowledge that the Greeks termed *mētis*. As Sarah Kofman had recognized in her marvellous but strangely overlooked elaboration of the logics of *mētis*, *poros* and *aporia*, *Comment s’en sortir?*, *mētis* involves rather the kind of quick-witted judgement and inspiration in the face of dangers and challenges that also characterizes Odysseus in *The Odyssey*. It is no coincidence that *The Odyssey* forms the narrative of a journey, of a perpetually delayed return: the intelligence that Odysseus displays that allows him so successfully to navigate the unknown perils that he faces is exactly the kind of quick-witted cunning, drawing on polyvalent intelligence, that today’s illegal migrants need in order to negotiate the many hazards of the terrains and situations, modern-day equivalents of the Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis, which they find themselves facing on a daily basis. Unlike Mohsin Hamid’s novel, *Exit West* (2017), there are no magic doors for them to slip through – they must make, create, find their own. Such migration stories, therefore, that like Kanafānī’s are concerned with migration itself, can be defined as the narratives of these modern-day figures of *Mētis* and Odysseus, and it is when we consider today’s forced migrants in the context of such great Greek gods and heroes that we can begin properly to recognize and applaud their Promethean stature, their subtle intelligence, their agency and their heroic daring.

V. Territories of Unsettlement

Kanafānī’s narrative takes us into just this kind of experience of a journey, into the process of risky encounters and dangers on the way, the survival skills, crafty tricks and ruses of on-the-go translations invoked and conjured up, ending abruptly with the characters’ brutal arrival as three corpses that cannot help reminding us of Kanafānī’s own assassination by

Mossad just ten years later. Kanafānī's genius was to compose what might be described as the exemplary forced migration narrative that would become a defining literary form of the next 60 years for non-Western writers, narratives that combine spatiality and temporality in the figure of the wily resourceful migrant on unpredictable, erratic journeys whose only ending may be death, literal or metaphorical. The short story, the novella, the fragmented narrative, works best for such works that have no single thread, no simple developing temporal sequence, no conclusion, no ending, no completion, no closure, that end as they started in the realm of contingency, uncertainty, and chance.

Today, there are several documentary accounts of taking the overland "route of slaves" as it is known in West Africa, across the Sahara, and then on to Italy or Spain, such as Fabrizio Gatti's *Bilal: Viaggiare, lavorare, morire da clandestine* (2016). Gatti's narrative of his journey following the migrant route, from Dakar through the Sahara to Italy, then being returned to Libya, is certainly an extraordinary story: everyone he meets recounts chilling tales of life and death; others are permanently stranded half-way along the journey or turn out to be traffickers and slave-traders. While we hear their voices, Gatti (or even his persona, Bilal) remains always an outsider, as does his aesthetic form, a readable, chronological narrative of his journey with a map provided at the beginning. Gatti's courageous experiences are useful to read against texts such as Omar Ba's entirely fictional but originally claimed as an autobiographical account of his migration from Senegal, *Soif d'Europe: témoignage d'un clandestin*, which comes across as particularly flat and unconvincing by comparison. There are quite a number of such books in which writers or journalists ride "the migrant trail," for example Oscar Martinez, *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail*, but these books betray by their orthodox form and narrative temporality that they belong to a conventional western investigative genre. Though the narrator may present the voices of migrants on the trail, it is always momentary and a fleeting form of witnessing. If one includes graphic novels, such as Don Brown's *The Unwanted* (2018), what becomes remarkable is the number of books and novels about forced and other mass migrations that are written by outsiders on behalf of those who actually fled. It is hard not to recall the quotation from Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* that Edward W. Said places as the epigraph to *Orientalism*: "they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented." In every case, even in *Escape from Syria* (2017), a teenage graphic novel written by someone as

well informed as Samya Kullab, what we are given is the formula that a North American or European reader expects, a linear chronological narrative that begins in the distant place of origin and takes us to salvation at the journey's end in a Western country. A variation on this is the flashback version which starts in the present in the western country of arrival and then takes us back to memories of a narrativized past. A recent example would be Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019), which is based on Lefteri's experiences over two summers volunteering in a refugee centre in Greece. The parts of the novel set in Syria and Turkey are descriptively thin and unconvincing, those set in England are dull: where the novel comes to life is when the narrator Nuri and his wife Afra arrive in a refugee camp in Athens. It is here that we encounter some of the irrecoverable experiences of today's uncountable refugees. Many of those in the camps, as someone in the novel remarks, are never able to get beyond their situation of "stuckedness," of waiting, waiting, waiting in Athens (Jefferson, Turner and Jensen). Fortunately, however, Nuri has the cash handy to pay for a direct flight out and in two ticks he and his wife are magically transported to England, by far the hardest place to get to.

These texts all employ conventional narrative forms to tell a story that has been created explicitly for western readers according to their preconceptions of how such stories should be told: they are all tidy narratives of closure. They attempt to present us with a version of Said's "unrecorded experiences," but like the slave narratives of the eighteenth century, they have already been packaged for western consumption, to deliver what Europeans already expect and want to hear, a terminal temporal-geographical narrative in linear form, where the refugee ends up redemptively in the West. But many more don't. Numerically the vast majority of refugees and migrants remain in Africa and the Middle East. Meanwhile people from the global South voice history and experience in their own, distinctive ways, from their own perspectives and techniques of telling stories, and make them their own. Sometimes these memories may take many years to emerge. When you talk to undocumented migrants, the one thing they don't want to discuss is their journey. When trauma eventually becomes thinkable, how differently it may emerge in its forms, as, for example, in Kim Thúy's novel of poetic, fragmented memories, *Ru* (2009).

How can we distinguish between writings about exile, novels about migration, which involve the protagonist switching between two places, or completed journeys between A and B, and situations like Darwish's or

Kanafānī's which are rather about moving from being in a settled state to being always on the move, unfinished, rather than just substituting one desired or undesired place for another? There is no end point of resettlement here: these are narratives of unsettlement where the end never arrives. These works address the experiences of being forcibly unsettled and then left in a state of permanent unsettlement, of finding yourself in a situation where the everyday assumption of permanence, of living in the place where you have always lived, disappears forever through some series of events such as forced expulsion or war or civil war so that you have to flee your home: you are expelled. You become unsettled as a state of being, with all its attendant anxiety and disorientation which does not go away wherever you happen to find yourself moving to, because in a profound sense you are still on the move, desettled and left in a permanently unsettled state. These are novels, autobiographies, about that physical and psychic instability, novels one could say of unsettlement. And if there is an originary moment of expulsion with which it all began, there is no narrative of arrival, of resettlement, just perpetual arrivals and departures, a continual existential and physical situation of being on the move. For any arrival will be enigmatic, just a staging point, a temporary moment of rest which will always imply a new departure. These can be but are not necessarily novels of stateless people, *apatrides*, more often of placeless people except that there is no absence of place but too much place, too many places, because the lost place, the lost home, and the succession of new places which must be negotiated will always be at the forefront of a restless consciousness. To be unsettled is to be in an always translational state, simultaneously translating and being translated, operating at the very edge of physical and psychic stability.

Much more interesting experientially and significant aesthetically, therefore, are the works that take a very different, radical form, as with Kanafānī's novella. If "Men in the Sun" could be said to constitute a foundational text for a very different kind of narrative, experientially and aesthetically, so much more attuned to the reality of the harsh experiences of so many in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it is not without significance that the story was written in Arabic. Though Kanafānī's realist aesthetic was certainly indebted to the prescriptions of Marxist socialist realism, the story is not simply "European" in form or style, particularly with respect to its complex interweavings, its stuttering juxtapositions, its excursions, repetitions and mediated transitions, its shifts of narrative time that jump us through different forms of

temporality. This chronic atemporality within and across narrative time distinguishes the forced migrant writing of unsettlement of our own era from the early novels of exile or easier migrations. These often meandering, or repetitively structured novels crushing together aberrant and distinct modes of temporality, echo writings from cultures where all fiction has not been constructed on the hermeneutic linear form of the detective story, organized around “the hook” (Gatti’s narrative, so the back-cover blurb tells us, “reads like a thriller”), but rather according to structures of transversality where heterogeneous items are assembled and loosely linked in such a way that they may connect up to a totality formally but they also cut across it, retaining their own diverse varieties of singularity. The unsettled novel of forced migration typically emerges not only in terms of an ongoing temporality and process, therefore, but in relation to spatialized forms of encounters and blockages whose connection is not that of consequential narrative but the irruption of creativity and ingenuity in the face of contingency and arbitrary punctuated movement across different sites. The organization of narrative, in other words, operates differently from the logical, cause-effect-consequence generic chronological structure of European novels, or the frame narrative which opens with a moment in the present to then take us to flashbacks of the past. The unsettled forced migrant novel is about more than the representation of the migrant from the South intruding into the cultural and political space of the North, the difficulties of assimilation in the West, the nostalgia for the culture that has been left behind. The novel itself disturbs the conceptual space of fiction to which Western readers have become habituated. It cunningly traverses its own experiences in a different mode, and it is through that obliquity that it opens up new conceptual and epistemological spaces.

These involve not the punctual anguish of exile but the pain of the process of temporality, the *longue durée* of cultural misencounters experienced on a day-to-day basis. In the more interesting texts the distinction between the novel, memoir, and autobiography has often become blurred, involving not the metaphorical blowing up of the Greenwich meantime in the metropole, the confrontation of cultures, south versus north, but shrewd, crafty solutions to crossing borders, checkpoints, fabricating visas, stories about the invention of narratives to fulfil official requirements and expectations (or not, as in Ibrahim Ahmed’s witty “The Arctic Refugee”). They’re about the literal difficulties of traversing, of crossings that succeed and are also defeated, as in Kanafānī, or crossings

that inevitably fail even when they succeed (as in Mourid al-Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*). Dislocation here is both physical and mental as in Said but it is primarily an experience of disrupted space-times, of an extended living on that tends to have no significant narrative end: as in the *Odyssey*, the emphasis falls on the resourcefulness of the protagonist to solve perilous situations and to survive, be they physical or psychological. This is a zone of non-being, of a violent and temporal undoing of the self, a journey in which the protagonist may have found herself transmuted into a no-one, launched into indefinite non-being, the depersonalization of a non-no-one, with not even a *nemo* for a name. The experience of the forced migrant or refugee is to find that she has become invisible, a non-person, for whom a special grammatical form has always existed, since Aristotle, waiting centuries, millennia for her to find herself occupying that place of abjection, the place of negativity, of the "a," the "im" and the "un," the place of the unwanted (Heller-Roazen).

A brilliant contemporary example of this distinctive kind of narrative can be found in Samar Yazbek's *The Crossing: My Journey to the Shattered Heart of Syria* (2015). The title of the French translation of Yazbek's novel, *Les portes du néant*, the gates of nothingness, while closer to the title of the original Arabic shifts the specificity of the gate of Ard al-Adam in Syria to a Beckettian metaphysical state of being, of nothingness, that follows from passing through what each time may be a gate of no return. The crossings into Syria themselves are literal versions of how when confronted with a blocked aporetic opening, resources of guile and astute sneakiness are employed in order to circumvent the barriers which become magically porous as each small group finds a way through the unnavigable chaos of civil war. It is here that we encounter again the dynamics of the contemporary forced migration novel which postshadows Kanafānī's. Instead of the narrative of the migrant of the South encountering the cities of the North, a form that is now surely exhausted, this novel about the Syrian Civil War puts the reader directly into one of the many places round the world where the numbers of refugees and migrants fleeing war or poverty dwarf those who have journeyed to the west. They are the invisible, the forgotten, the unacknowledged, and here Yazbek recovers momentarily fragments of "unclaimed experience" (Caruth) of individuals who appear fleetingly with each new encounter. Yazbek's restless narrative takes us in and out of Syria three times, as she illegally crosses and recrosses the border from Turkey, stepping at each moment "into the void of meaninglessness" (133) where she negotiates the complexities of the

different groups of fighters, mujahidin, soldiers, mercenaries, civilians, allying with and against each other like the criss-crossing movements of cells under a microscope, avoiding the hosts of foreign fighters with their moneyed equipment and weapons, and befriending unsettled, desettled Syrians who have chosen to live on amongst the chaos, each for their own reasons, and each with their often tragic stories to tell that Yazbek interweaves within her own narratives of constant risk, narratives with which she gradually ceases to be herself and turns into a kind of fictional character, with fake names and fake papers: “I put aside the woman I am in real life and became this other imaginary person whose reactions had to be commensurate with whatever it was she was living for” (6). These kinds of protean transformations of the self are but an instance of the astonishing *mētis* on which she draws at countless points of peril, precarity and danger in order to survive.

In *The Crossing*, Yazbek does indeed bring alive “territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself” (Said “Reflections” 139). It is here that we encounter and are challenged by the experiences of people caught up in the realm that Said feared must always remain unknowable for others: “Negotiations, wars of national liberation, people bundled out of their homes and prodded, bussed or walked to enclaves in other regions: what do these experiences add up to? Are they not manifestly and almost by design irrecoverable?” (139) Almost, we can now say, but not quite.

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Dramaturgies of Erasure and Returns: On Exile, Nostalgia, and Homecoming

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To Edward Said, exile is something “strangely compelling to speak about but terrible to experience” (*Reflections* 1). Whether it is forced or self-imposed, exile can easily turn into an “unhealable rift, forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” (1). A state of living “in-between,” exile is also about nostalgia and impossibility of return. It is the torment of self-doubt about one’s unrealized potential, a conditional “what if,” which informs the exilic subject’s self-searching. The questions of “would-be” opportunities mark their sense of past and present, set off anxiety and restlessness, become the subject of artistic, philosophical and scholarly investigations. What reigns is the *performative nostalgia* of an artistic expression that originates in the trajectory of an exilic artist’s gaze slowly turning from the direction of “over-there” to “here-and-now.” The gaze, however, is never fixed; the view is never complete. It renders exilic art rooted in time, not necessarily in space. It makes an exiled individual contemplate their sense of certainty, their longing for the past and their desire to return, asking what has become of their personal story and their place within the history of others.

This exilic gaze, in other words, is also about forgetting and erasure. It often serves as a trigger for homecoming. But there are as many scenarios of return as there are departures. They include the actual instances of homecoming and imaginary journeys back home, all of them activated by the workings of memory and nostalgia. Nowhere better than in Vladimir Nabokov’s aesthetics of *exilic no-return* are the workings of nostalgia as homecoming and erasure manifested. In Nabokov’s work, *exilic*

no-return appears as the mechanism of mimicry; it becomes the Russian writer's artistic and life strategy. As Svetlana Boym writes,

In a perpetual quixotic battle with deterministic modern ideologies, from Darwin's theory of evolution to Freudian psychoanalysis, Nabokov develops his own conception of mimicry – as an aesthetic rather than natural survival. Mimicry is based on repetition, but an uncanny repetition that entails difference and the unpredictability of imagination. [...] Mimicry does not simply represent, but also disguises and conceals nature.

(Boym *The Future* 265)

In this scenario of exile as mimicry, “the immigrant mimics the natives, sometimes excessively, becoming more European than Europeans or more American than Americans, more desperate in his eagerness to please” (266). Exilic writing becomes a strategy of mimicry as well: since “in the writer's case, the pain of ‘passing’ is transformed into an imaginative play that allows him to criss-cross the borders between his former homeland and the adopted land” (266). And so, exilic writing turns into the ultimate homecoming, the phenomenon that André Aciman calls *parallax*, “a derealizing and paralyzing disturbance in the soul – cognitive, metaphysical, intellectual, and ultimately aesthetic” (Aciman 189).

Understood as the power of a photographic image to represent the past in several temporal dimensions, depicting the instability of the object and that of the onlooker (Aciman 187), *parallax* signifies the exile's state of consciousness. *Parallax* “is not just about displacement, or of feeling adrift both in time and space, it is a fundamental misalignment between who we are, might have been, could still be, can't accept we've become, or may never be” (189). Nowhere better than in the narratives of homecoming is the essence of *parallax* as the mechanism of juncture, mimicry and erasure realized: “To be with others you must be the opposite of who you are; to read others, you must read the opposite of what you see; to be somewhere, you must suspect you are or could be elsewhere. This is the *irrealis-mood*” (Aciman 189, emphasis in original).

Moreover, *parallax* can serve as an artistic device as well. In exile, as Aciman demonstrates, “you see, you imagine, you think, and ultimately write counterfactually, because writing speaks this disturbance, investigates it, because writing also perpetuates and consolidates it and hopes to make sense of it by giving it a form” (189). This exilic writing is often structured as a contrapuntal canon, a technique of musical composition, with a leading melody repeating itself in different imitations and

alterations. These variations are played by diverse instruments, with the follower-melody replicating or transforming the leader. Often these variations, repetitions, distortions, mirror images, echoes, ghosts and doubles take on the uncanny qualities of the encounter; they instigate the exilic subject's recognition of their own self being irreversibly split between the I of their past and the I of their nostalgia for it. Narrative as parallax, I will now argue, turns into a gesture of an exilic return; and it can be differently played out by those who experienced displacement themselves and by those who only learned about it from their elders.

To analyze the dramaturgy of exilic returns, I use three cases of exilic and post-exilic literature. I examine how Milan Kundera's novel *Ignorance* (1999),¹ Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), and Olivier Kemeid's play *Furieux et désespérés* (2013) stage parallax and erasure as paradigms of exilic displacements, nostalgia and returns. To contextualize my arguments further, I briefly look at the philosophical implications of the terminology chosen for this task.

I. On The Paradigms of Exile, Nostalgia, and Returns

Exile

In its primary definition, *exile* refers to one's forced removal from home. A metaphor of existential and social estrangement, exile can be seen as a self-imposed journey of migration, seeking sense of imbalance triggered by one's desire for voyage. Such exilic nomadism often results in a transient state of transnational experience and transcultural art. At the core of an exilic drive, however, is the act of resistance: an individual against the state. Thus, as banishment, exile results in a state of sorrow and personal marginality; whereas as a self-imposed condition, exile can manifest itself as one's choice to resist internally, by staying at home, or externally, as going away. Often exile results in linguistic amnesia, breaking the continuity of one's history and collective mythology, a necessity to come to terms with the values of an adoptive nation. These obstacles do not necessarily deter exilic subjects from mastering a new language or integrating into their host culture. Often, they stimulate one's drive

¹ The novel was written in French in 1999 and published in 2000. In this article, I cite Linda Asher's English translation (2002).

for creativity. Paradoxically, therefore, both involuntary and self-imposed exile can provoke suffering and pleasure, as well as a bittersweet taste of nostalgia for one's home, one's childhood, and one's history. An invitation to grow up, to welcome one's capacity for reinvention of self, the condition of exile can provide a sense of renewal and be experienced as an exercise in alterity, "an immense force for liberation, for extra distance, for developing new structures in one's head, not just syntactic and lexical but social and psychological" (Brooke-Rose 20).

At the same time, Boym warns us against romanticizing exile as a tendency to confuse it with social and spiritual freedoms. She insists that "exile cannot be treated as a mere metaphor – otherwise one could fall into somewhat facile argument that every intellectual is always already a 'spiritual exile.' Rather, it is the other way around: actual experience of exile offers an ultimate test to the writer's metaphors and theories of estrangement" ("Estrangement" 243). To Edward Said, exile produces intellectual-insiders, those "who belong fully to the society as it is," and intellectual-outsiders, those "at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned" ("Intellectual" 53). For such intellectuals, the distancing of the physical self from the phenomenological self suggests the temporality of a life on a road; it "sets the course of the intellectual as outsider" and is best exemplified by "the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives, [...] tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being" (53). This alienation of self leads to theatricalization of the exile's marginality; it also triggers nostalgia that can be as misleading and deceiving as the exilic voyage itself.

Nostalgia

The word *nostalgia* derives from Greek *nostos* as "return to one's native land" and *algos* as pain or "suffering caused by longing to return home" (Hepper et al. 102). As a medical term, it referred to "the condition of homesickness suffered by Swiss soldiers serving away from home. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, *nostalgia* was considered a neurological disorder, in the nineteenth century a psychological disorder involving melancholy and depression, and in the twentieth century it was considered as related to psychosis, mourning and depression" (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 19). Nostalgia, therefore, is tightly linked to the work

of memory, “where imagination and truth may tend to become more distinctly separate” (20). “People develop *nostalgia* because they yearn for positive memories when they encounter difficulties in life,” so a nostalgic person often associates loss with specific time periods of the past, people and circumstances (19). As yearning for one’s youth, nostalgia is related to “what we think we were” to the extent that our perception of the past shapes our present (20). Homecoming, however, does not produce cure for nostalgia – an exilic nostalgic can yearn for home both being away and staying at home.

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym identifies nostalgia as the paradox of homecoming, exemplified through the case of “imagined homelands of exiles who never returned” (8). She differentiates between *restorative nostalgia* of a group aimed at reconstructing the past through its distortion and mythologizing; and *reflective nostalgia* as the work of an individual, the exilic person’s failure at the actual homecoming and one’s artistic rendering of it. Experienced by a group, nostalgia turns into “an historical emotion” that forces one to think of one’s historical condition as longing for time, for one’s innocence, “the slower rhythms of our dreams” (8). *Restorative nostalgia* stems from collective memory; it often leads to the resurrection of nationalist discourses and works as the engine for return: restoration “signifies a return to the original stasis, to the prelapsarian moment” (15). National memory “feeds of individual experiences of people who make a group,” it “makes an ideologically convenient narrative of collective memory”; becomes “a playground of possibilities”; and invites the games of power, history, and imagination, so the restoration and the re-enactment of the monumental history of the state take place (52–53). Historians, however, conclude that the twentieth century nostalgia has become privatized and internalized. Today, our collective longing for home has shrunk to the longing for childhood (53).

At the same time, as one’s personal experience, nostalgia becomes reflective. It “dwells on algia, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance” (Boym *The Future* 41) and it “suggests new flexibility, not the reestablishment of stasis” (49). In exile, reflective nostalgia manifests itself as “a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (Boym “Nostalgia” 7). It focuses on the work of forgetting, deferring the possibility of return. The sense of irony and estrangement drives this nostalgia forward: so it awakens multiple planes of consciousness and it takes into account the experience of an individual

who is inevitably drawn into the macro-machine of the monumental history.

To Boym's typology, I add two more scenarios of nostalgia as return: the first is *homecoming as erasure* exemplified in the works of those exilic artists who realized the impossibility of return by taking a trip home. The second is *homecoming as discovery*, exemplified through the model of "imagined homelands" featured in the works of the second-generation exiles. Intoxicated by the stories of their parents' past, these artists often embark on their own journeys to the ancestral homeland, only to discover that they are treated there as strangers. These homecomings are often prompted by the effects of *post-memory* (Hirsch "The Generation"), which manifests as commemoration and hybrid identity. Reflective nostalgia often spills from exilic subjects to their children: it produces these children's yearning for the future as a reflection of their own longing for the past that they never knew. These emotions as well as the experience of in-between-ness trigger the second-generation exiles' historical curiosity and send them off to visit their parents' home country. Nostalgia, however, always banks on the processes of erasure: "If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (Boym "Nostalgia" 15). It manufactures the longing for return, which can never be a fresh encounter with history, with one's past; since any return can be only a repetition and only a distortion of what has passed. A mechanism of erasure, nostalgia becomes the history re-remembered, whereas homecoming turns into the irony of the proverbial *eternal return*, producing humiliation, frustration, and disappointment rather than the closure of the encounter.

Returns

The concept of *eternal return* rests with the idea of cyclical time, as life's chance for re-emergence and renewal. It appears in the works of Indian philosophy, ancient Egyptians, Stoics, and even Judaism. With the advent of Christian philosophy and its view of life as a linear narrative of creation, the idea of eternal return lost its significance. It re-emerged, however, in the nihilistic traditions of the nineteenth century, specifically in the works of Nietzsche, who in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* presented eternal return as a chance of "having it over again," a man's

wilful acceptance of his fate. This idea, however, did not constitute “a metaphysical claim. Instead, Nietzsche present[ed] it as a psychological test: what sort of person could *will* the eternal return of the world?” (Lacewing n.p.); since to Nietzsche, eternal return does not constitute a change, to him “to will eternal return is to will all the wars, genocide, natural disasters, diseases, torture, mental illness and broken hearts that have ever occurred.” Moreover, “to will something is also to accept responsibility for it,” to be held accountable for “the entirety of human history [and], for the future of the human race” (Lacewing n.p.). In these provocations, Nietzsche, and after him Baudelaire and Benjamin, paved ways to the new forms of reflective nostalgia with its emphasis on repetition of suffering, focus on the individual and his/her place within the cosmos, as well as a promise of escape. Neither Nietzsche himself, nor his critics or adepts, came to any clear conclusions on the purpose of the eternal return. In Boym’s reading of Nietzsche’s proposition, the overpowering presence of nostalgia as self-reflection refers to modernist homesickness. In his romantic gesture of a philosophical retreat in the mountains, “Nietzsche offers a critique of monumental and antiquarian history and presents an argument for reflective history and life’s healthy forgetfulness” (Boym *The Future* 26). Nietzsche’s alternative is a self-reflecting individual, contemplating the fate of the world in Rousseau’s melancholic setting, addressing the fundamental questions of being to fellow animals, in a gesture of alienation and irony toward this self and toward this history (27).

Not surprisingly, the paradigm of eternal return has become one of the central features of twentieth-century philosophy, both as the doctrine of difference and as the trope of homecoming, specifically in the work of Gilles Deleuze. Claiming his heritage to Hegel and Nietzsche, Deleuze, however, theorizes the paradox of return not as a repetition of sameness (as found in Nietzsche) but as a repetition of difference (as later used by Derrida). To Deleuze, *return as being in difference* appears as the phenomenon of re-occurrence based on the intrinsic dialectics of selection and chance, and repetition as distortion, something that will prompt Derrida to suggest a clear link “between that which unites the circle of the eternal return and the movement of difference. It is as *difference*—affirmation and selection—that the eternal return must be understood” (Malabou 22, emphasis in original). The concept of *return as difference*, therefore, rests with the idea of *repetition with variation* inherited in the action of homecoming. Doubling,

mirroring, or ghosting of the original as its distortion turns into a special effect of exilic memory, with nostalgia acting as the mechanism of forgetting and erasure. The encounter with one's past is rarely satisfactory; often these returns bring more pain than happiness; they re-instate the irrevocable working of time, the time that knows only one direction—from past to future.

Erasure

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *erasure* means the removal of all traces of data or documentation (“Erasure” n.p.); a condition of loss and destruction, which can manifest itself both in literal and figurative terms. In the context of exile, the process of erasure begins with one's departure from home to later develop into the condition of “temporizing” (Aciman 62), as the exilic subject's rejection of the present, the experiential time of history, and his/her welcoming of the past demonstrate. “To temporize,” Aciman explains, “means to step out of time's continuum, to put time on hold, to stop time from happening, to open an epochal space” (62). Temporizing is a form of erasure, it renders an exile “operating on two, perhaps more, time zones” (62), constructing one's past, present, and future simultaneously. Erasure can be manifested in literal terms, when an exilic person knows that there is nothing to return to or there is a life threat awaiting him/her back home. In figurative terms, erasure can be manifested as the act of repetition with difference, informed by disappointment and the emotional numbness of homecoming. In this scenario of return, memory plays its definitive role: the original, as Plato had it, is never true to its copy, so the act of remembering turns into an instrument of erasure capable of destroying not only one's memory of the past but also the promise of return we associate with this memory. Nowhere better than in exile does this promise of return become the defining characteristics of one's life search and a device of artistic utterance. In the following, I draw a map of exilic returns as practice of erasure and discovery. In my concluding statements, I come back to this view of erasure as literal and figurative experience, to argue, after Aciman, that it is only on the page of a literary work or on the stage of a theatrical performance, not in the reality of one's homecoming, that the actual act of return can take place, prompted by the work of creative writing as temporizing.

II. Mapping Returns: Nostalgia as Memory and Erasure

Homecoming as Erasure

Milan Kundera left Czechoslovakia in 1975 at the age of 46 to become one of the most prominent French writers, choosing French over Czech as the language of his artistic expression. The novel *Ignorance* continues his philosophical deliberations on departures and returns, which he started in the early 1970s. At the centre is Irena, a Czech emigrant living in Paris, who, in the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution, is prompted to take a trip home, to her native Prague. *Repetition with variation* is the leading principle of this novel's structure: the story of Irena is followed by the story of Josef, another Czech émigré living in Denmark, also taking his journey back home. A charade of mirror reflections, the novel brings these two characters together to help them realize – through the unifying power of a sexual act – that their trajectories of difference have set them onto the journey of no-return. Erasure is in the centre of such encounter: upon their homecoming both characters realize that the home they remember does not exist anymore. If either of them ever felt nostalgic for their native Prague, it was not the Prague they knew but the memory of it, the image of home created by the emotional and artistic power of reflective nostalgia, the means of hospitality and affect. Kundera presents Irena and Josef as typical émigrés, fighting the gaze of a host culture casting them as figures of displacement and suffering. The novel opens with a symptomatic scene, in which Sylvie, Irena's Parisian friend, suggests that it is time for Irena to go back home, to support the emergence of a new democratic state regardless of the last twenty years of her life as a French citizen. This scene stages exile as a performative condition, in which both the stranger and her host perform a cultural stereotype, each of them holding the image of the other as one's mirror and defending shield. Sylvie acts as a representative of the French establishment, who will extend their hospitality only to those exiles, refugees or asylum seekers who can convincingly prove their right for claiming help. As soon as Czechoslovakia turns into the Czech Republic, Irena's status as a Czech refugee in France loses its prominence. In Sylvie's mind, Irena's desire to stay in France makes her uninteresting, someone who has suddenly lost the aura of martyrdom, an exile longing for her roots, in need of empathy and help. In these assumptions and disinterest to the reality of Irena's truth, Sylvie exhibits an ignorance typical to the liberal left of what exile entails and their

often ill-informed although well-intended support of the political cause of Eastern Europe. The scene exemplifies Lambert's claim that it is the "autochthonous individuals [who] determine the status of the stranger. The supranational moves that Irena and Josef make in their return to Prague from Paris and Copenhagen, respectively, do not achieve integration, but further cement their suspension. It is the perspective of the so-called natives that cements [Irena's] permanent position as a stranger both at home and abroad" (Slater 134). The gaze produces an uncanny double: an image of an exile as a suffering and exotic other. It forces Irena to doubt her sense of belonging and instigates her desire for return. Thus, a literary canon with variations, a repetition with distortion or a contrapuntal narrative, Kundera's *Ignorance* invites understanding of exilic homecoming as an exploration of the Freudian uncanny in the light of the Lacanian mirror stage. It stages the irresolvable tension between the I of the exile's present and the I/as/Other of her past. Sylvie's reminder of Irena's duty to her native country plants hesitation and nostalgia in Irena's mind. Chapter 2 reveals Kundera's own philosophical stand on this issue; it infers that nostalgia can lead only to erasure. "Foregrounding nostalgia through both its etymology and through its Greek associations" constitutes Kundera's ironic move. As Michelle Slater explains, "[i]n the novel, nostalgia is nullified; it becomes a *nostalgie manquée* for an empty and emptied place" (Slater 105). When Irena finally takes her trip home, she suddenly recognizes her otherness; Irena's Great Return turns into the great working of the uncanny. The scene in the Prague boutique with Irena purchasing herself a new dress is the ultimate expression of Kundera's take on the issues of return: it reveals his literary technique of constructing the character's subjectivity within the reflecting images of her estranged Self. In the store, Irena "tried on two or three dresses and was uncomfortable. Hard to say why: they weren't ugly, their cut wasn't bad, but they reminded her of her distant past, the sartorial austerity of her youth; they looked naïve, provincial, inelegant, fit for a country schoolteacher" (Kundera *Ignorance* 31). Looking at her reflection, Irena makes an important discovery: "the person she saw was not she, it was somebody else or, when she looked longer at herself in her new dress, it was she but she living a different life, the life she would have lived if she had stayed in Prague. This woman was not dislikable, she was even touching, but a little too touching, touching to the point of tears, pitiable, poor, weak, downtrodden" (31). This moment, I believe, presents the quintessence of the paradigm of

homecoming as erasure: Irena's recognition of herself in the estranged mirror of a new dress functions as the performative gesture of the uncanny, the character's realization of temporal simultaneities that the act of exile and the act of return created for her. Irena's acknowledgement of her own Self as Other unleashes the subconscious fears she has been living with through her Parisian exile, a fear of being a fraud, taking on the life of another. When Irena sees herself in the mirror, she gets a different proof of her "real" life – the one she has been leading in Paris is her true self; the one which this new dress offers creates a moment of estrangement, a deep realization of Self as Other in the performative gesture of the Lacanian mirror stage. The new Irena stepping out of the mirror frame points at the unrealized potential of the first Irena, those possibilities and choices erased by the ones she has already made, the character's realization of her mortality. In this Kundera echoes Chekhovian undertones, the Russian writer's ability to masterfully depict the uncanny realizations people experience approaching the milestones of their life-journeys. However, as many anxieties are somewhat augmented by the act of exilic departure, the exilic returns make such realizations much stronger, both to those who experience the return and to those who read about them. Kundera's character senses the sadness of such a narrative promise: since often the life story we tell ourselves is conditioned not by what we do but by what we want to see ourselves doing. The exilic experience heightens this longing for another story. Informed by disorientation and humiliation, it enhances the doubt in oneself. Kundera's scene with a mirror is a great example of this process. Here, Irena experiences visceral surprise and dissatisfaction with the image of herself: both as her disapproval of the somewhat out of fashion cut of the new dress and as her displeasure with the image of her body, the promise of the past that has never taken place. The act of homecoming acquires a new meaning: it provides Irena with a glimpse into the past that has never happened and into the future that will never take place. The act of return nullifies a soothing promise of nostalgia; it confronts an exile with the naked truth of the only possibility one can ever have – life conditioned by the choices one has once made and the impossibility to re-think, re-write, or re-do any of them. It also serves as an illustration of the formative process of one's subjectivity both in ontological and social terms: "the dress takes on tremendous symbolic value in this passage, as the epitome of Irena's relationship with her country. [...] Until this moment [...], Irena has identified with

'otherness' in her position as an emigre" (Slater 109); the scene reveals Irena's otherness as a Czech subject returning to her home country, so it is her Czech not Parisian double that frightens her (109).

Although Lacan locates the mirror stage in the very early stages of our development, for an émigré coming back home, the first encounter with one's own image upon one's return, often reflected in the gazes cast by one's relatives and friends, can be equated to the making of asymbolic self. This process sets up the Ideal I or the agency known as Ego, an idea of I, a separate image located outside I, which has the power of alienation. This Ideal I takes on the material characteristics of a statue onto which we project the images of our Ideal Selves. To the onlooker the projected image of the Ideal Self appears as "the contour of this stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it" (Lacan 77). These mirror statues prompt the onlooker to recognize one's self outside this self, not as the figure of one's experience but as the figure of representation (77). Kundera is fully aware of the power of the mirror image: his prose contains a typology of looking glasses with many of his characters staring at their flickering reflections. In Kundera's prose, the gaze of the other in which the character recognizes oneself as someone else also acts as a "threshold of the visible world." It forces an exilic subject to establish the dialectical relations between the I and the world anew; so, the recognition of Self as a historical being begins.

The historical self never appears as something unified and finalized; the image of self as fragmented body produces the sense of fragmented time as well. Upon her return to Prague, Irena arranges a dinner – a reunion with her old friends. In an expensive restaurant, she carefully chooses Parisian wine to crown her surprise. The friends, however, disregard Irena's offering, choosing Czech beer instead. The scene functions as a distorted mirror image of Irena's exilic dream, in which "she was in a French village with women drinking beer and speaking Czech" (Slater 108). Here, the drunken women are reminiscent of Bosch's distorted figures, reflected in the "schizoid and spasmodic symptoms" of modern consciousness (Lacan 78). The scene suggests one more aspect of the power of the gaze: rejected by her old friends, Irena's I appears separately from her Self, a part of the social order "mediated by the other's desire" (79), illustrating once again how the act of homecoming can turn into the act of imposition. Much like Sylvie, Irena's Czech friends expect her to be nostalgic and suffering; she, however, resists nostalgia. To Irena, nostalgia

is a tool of self-destruction, the process of giving in to someone else's gaze, someone else's expectations of her life and behaviour. "Like Ulysses, Irena does engage in a reverse amnesia, instead of wanting to efface her memories of being in Paris for twenty years, she engages in voluntarily amnesia of Prague" (Slater 112). When Irena submits to the power of nostalgia and steps through the looking-glass into her past, the irony of Nietzsche's eternal return takes place; it acts as proof of the impossibility of repetition, since in every reprise there is the inherited sense of difference and erasure. Ignorance hovers over the characters' actions, as nobody knows one's true self and nobody knows the true self of the other. In this constellation of nostalgias and returns, Kundera proposes one more scenario of exile. Gustav – Irena's Swedish/French partner – is settling in Prague as well. Unlike Irena, however, Gustav discovers the lost mother figure in the image of a new Prague, where he doesn't feel obliged to speak Czech perfectly passing by in English; and in the sexual misalliance with Irena's mother. In this grotesque form of return, Kundera reminds us not only of the profound weakness of a stereotype, he ridicules the power of nostalgia, and makes the most out of the might of erasure.

A person's life, like a good novel, Kundera writes, assumes the structure of a musical composition; at the end its leading theme and image must repeat themselves once again (Kundera *The Unbearable* 52). *Ignorance* ends with Irena re-enacting the romantic encounter of her youth, the promise of happiness that turns into one more disappointment, a theme with variation. After their passionate lovemaking, Josef is drawn to the memory of his house in Denmark, the place of his wife's rest, whereas Irena is left in the hotel room lying on the bed naked, with her legs spread apart. With this somewhat violent image Kundera leaves the reader undecided, echoing in the uncertainty of Irena's fate (whether she will stay in Prague or not) his own ambiguity as a cosmopolitan exile, declaring his loyalties both to his home and adopted cultures. As he once wrote,

the characters in my novels are my own unrealized possibilities. [...] Each one has crossed the border that I myself have circumvented. It is that crossed border (the border beyond which my own "I" ends) which attracts me most. For beyond that border begins the secret the novel asks about. The novel is not the author's confession; it is an investigation of human life in the trap the world has become.

(*The Unbearable* 221)

The narrative of one's life, however, cannot ever be completed by the writer him/herself. It can only suggest reflections and repetitions.

Homecoming as Discovery

Theorizing the work of memory as forgetting and forgiving, Paul Ricoeur provides a useful distinction between *memory as appearance*, events of one's past presenting themselves to a mind passively accepting them as triggered by an image, an object, a sound, a smell or an association; and *memory as recollection*, an active work of imagination and discovery, the act of creative engagement with the past (Ricoeur 4-7, 21-44). These memories instigate one's desire for return, the wish that can spill over generations. Second generation exiles can experience longing for the unknown past of their parents, the past that can present itself in the disguise of *postmemory*. As Marianne Hirsch explains, a reservoir of emptiness, postmemory "characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created" (Hirsch "Past Lives" 420). A mechanism of identity formation, postmemory functions according to the laws of narrative composition: it is "a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (420). Conditioned by the fact that "none of us ever knows the world of our parents" (419), many second-generation émigrés embark on a new historical search, prompted by the image of a homeland as it appears in their imagination, often as an ideological construct. Such questions as – "How do we regard and recall [...] the 'pain of others'? What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness?" (Hirsch *The Generation* 2) – mark the artistic works of *migrant returns* (Southwood 330). The narratives that the second-generation exiles produce often embrace such scenarios of homecoming as *agricultural return* based on the notions of roots, ancestral soil and family trees (330); the exilic child's search for *grounded attachment*, one's desire to reclaim the sacred sites of homeland (331); and recognizing Self as the subject of *hybrid identity* (332).

For these ancestral return migrants, the search for the homeland is also a search for “ontological security from a world which is otherwise confusing or perceived as moving too fast or in the wrong direction”. That is to say, the second and third-generations may be understood as searching for a final “resting place” in order to ease the cognitive dissonance, or existential anxiety of half-belonging/not belonging. In many ways such an emotion is comparable to the “homeland myth” among first-generation returning exiles. In both cases, the “return” is a loaded nexus of ideas orbiting around an imagined stability and coherence, that is, an attempt to relocate an identity which has been dislocated by experience of exile [...].

(Southwood 333)

Migrant returns, in other words, are prompted by the work of inherited nostalgia. Here the act of return can even become “more devastating than the exile itself” (334).

The 2002 debut novel *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer depicts the story of *migrant return* as discovery and commemoration, in terms similar to Southwood’s. A native to DC, Foer “started writing in college at Princeton, where he took a class with Joyce Carol Oates,” who became his mentor for *Everything Is Illuminated*, a novel he published at the age of 25 (Grossman n.p.). “His second novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, followed three years later. The books racked up a slew of honors and prizes, and both were made into movies” (Grossman n.p.), including a 2005 blockbuster *Everything Is Illuminated*, written and directed by Live Schreiber and starring Elijah Wood and Eugene Hutz in its leading parts. In his 2010 interview to *The Guardian*, Foer extensively reflected on the origins of this novel (Mullan). He emphasized that this book was written by a very young author; it was very personal and autobiographical, reflecting his own journey of return as nostalgia and discovery:

I did not intend to write *Everything Is Illuminated*. I didn’t intend anything – the book was the result of instincts rather than plans. But as I began to fill pages, I imagined that the result would take the form of a non-fictional chronicle of a trip that I made to Ukraine as a 20-year-old. Armed with a photograph of the woman who, I was told, had saved my grandfather from the Nazis, I had embarked on a journey to Trachimbrod, the *shtetl* of my family’s origin. It’s a real place – or was one. And there really was a photograph of Augustine. A young man named Alex did take me around, although we had absolutely no relationship whatsoever during the trip and did not correspond after. He was neither intentionally, nor unintentionally, funny. There was no Augustine. There were no boxes. There was no Sammy Davis

Junior, Junior. The comedy of errors was really a tragedy of errors, and it lasted a mere three days. I found nothing but nothing, and in that nothing – a landscape of total absence – nothing was to be found. (There is such a thing as a rich nothing, of course. But this was no such nothing.) Because I didn't tell my grandmother about the trip – she would never have let me go – I didn't know what questions to ask, or who to ask, or the necessary names of people, places and things. The impoverished nothing was as much a result of me as of what I encountered. I returned to Prague, where I was spending the summer, and sat down to explain, on the page, what had happened. But what had happened? This is always the problem. Was it this way, or that way? Did the wagon flip and sink, or didn't it? Did Trachim B drown, or did he escape? It took me a week to finish the first sentence. In the remaining month, I wrote 280 pages. What made beginning so difficult, and the remainder so seemingly automatic, was imagination – the initial problem, and ultimate liberation, of imagining.

(Mullan n.p.)

I used this extensive quote from Foer's reflection, because it exemplifies how the work of post-Holocaust literature is often created and to what degree in a book such as *Everything is Illuminated* the autographical can be tightly intertwined with the fictional. The book depicts the character Jonathan Foer as the author's alter-ego. Similarly to his creator, this fictional Jonathan Foer embarks on a trip to Ukraine to search for his family roots. An intersection of a family chronicle and a mocumentary of sorts, *Everything is Illuminated* proposes an attempt at a referential and universal reading of the Holocaust (Suleiman 408-11), with an old photograph, a box of memorabilia, a book of dreams, and a figure of an old woman acting as symbolic pillars to this migrant return.

An old photograph of a young woman depicted next to Jonathan's grandfather triggers his trip to Ukraine. Jonathan is determined to find this woman, who, he believes, saved his grandfather during WWII. The photograph is a magic key: it holds Ariadne's thread to his family history and a promise of discovery. As Suleiman explains, reading a photograph taken in the concentration camps can be referential or universal, with *referential reading* asking the fundamental questions of history, such as "which camp? On what day? Who is in the picture?" and *universal reading* recognizing "these pictures as icons of human suffering" (409). These two readings are necessary and complementary: they work as mechanisms of commemoration and erasure, erasure here understood as mythologization of memory. The referential reading of recognition, identification, and creating an archive insists on the uniqueness of each life and each

story, with the universal reading speaking to the fate of humanity. In his attempts to produce both readings simultaneously, Foer works with a more complex structure than just a narrative of return. In his novel, the action unfolds at the intersection of several histories: a chronicle of a small Jewish village (fictional Trachimbrod vs actual Trochenbrod) that Jonathan tries to complete and a report of his Ukrainian trip, written by Jonathan's own alter-ego and Ukrainian guide, Alex Perchov. These stories are linked by the third narrative, the letters Alex writes to Jonathan, in the aftermath of their illuminating experience. The lines cross as a Möbius strip, the visual representation of Nietzsche's eternal return. An illustration to Ricoeur's argument that the history of a nation is made of the individual experiences of its citizens (289), Jonathan's chronicle becomes a product of a narrative effort of a historian. His act of writing – characterized by playfulness and invention – serves here as a testimony of return and becomes Foer's personal act of remembering. As Ricoeur explains, the intermediate position of the act of writing turns a historian – the writer of the living memory – into a philosopher, the maker of a performative narrative (144). In this process, a historical account is transformed into the act of performative re-contextualization, in which "history remains a hindrance to memory" (145). Jonathan's return is driven by his desire to find out the truth about his grandfather's escape. Upon his arrival, he uncovers the traces of a larger history: the tragedy of Trochenbrod is at the same time a story of its neighbours, the Jews and the Ukrainians, for centuries sharing the same land but not the same values. What begins as the author's personal trip along his family's memory lane turns into a discovery of another dark episode of this monumental history. The underlying concern is the mechanism of erasure involved in the working of memory as forgetting, specifically when it comes to the preservation of the European Jews' culture, slayed during the war and slowly destroyed by temporal currents. The novel actively critiques nostalgia as a device of commemoration; irony is Foer's loyal partner. Manifested through Alex Perchov's letters written in a made-up broken English, irony is at its most pervasive when it comes to the chronicle of Trochenbrod. Not only is there not enough evidence of the life of the village left, but the only information the author could use – a box of memorabilia that Jonathan acquires on his trip – gets stolen on his way back to America, thus leaving Jonathan with only one reliable source: his own creative imagination. Written in the style of magic realism, the history of Trochenbrod acquires the power of metaphor. A mechanism of

aesthetization and mediatization of the past, Foer's novel places the image of the Holy Book and the figure of an old woman, the Mnemosyne of this Jewish tale, in its centre. Revealed under the name of Lista, the girl who survived the massacre because her baby killed in her own womb saved her life, the old woman appears as a keeper of the past, the guardian of the village's memory, and the embodiment of its spirit (Foer 184–193). Lista's house, filled with physical mementoes of the lost life, becomes a threshold between the past and the present, whereas the old woman herself – *I am IT, I am Trochenbrod* – turns into the only deposit box in which the history of the village, of all Jewish people and of the Holocaust massacres can be kept. The figure of an old woman embodies the spirit of the river Brod and the girl Brod, who was named after this river when she was miraculously saved from drowning, and who became Jonathan's ancestor. She also acts as a trigger to Alex grandfather's testimony. Their encounter unleashes his guilty consciousness: he admits the shameful role of a bystander to Nazi's atrocities he played during the war, recognizes his guilt, and accepts his responsibility. The neighbors and the traitors, however, cannot be forgiven, a realization that prompts him to commit suicide.

At the centre of Foer's construction is *The Book of Antecedents* written by the Trochenbrod rabbi. Used to depict the villagers' life, archive their dreams, and transmit them through generations, this book holds the power of the Holy Scriptures. Its imperative is to produce memory: "the what [...] is not so important, but that we should remember. [...] Memories are small prayers to God," which turn into dreams, because "[w]hat is being awake if not interpreting our dreams, or dreaming if not interpreting our wake?" (Foer 36). Embarking on the journey of return is Jonathan's attempt to continue writing this book and to recreate the *yizker bikher*, a memorial book, of Trochenbrod's massacre. The historical *yizker bikher* were written by the survivors of the Holocaust for their children; they contained personal stories and pictures of the survivors' past, to become the silent "acts of witness and sites of memory" (Hirsch "Past Lives" 423). Aiming at depicting the past as it once was, in the irresistible gesture of nostalgia as erasure, these books turned into the acts of "public mourning, forms of a collective Kaddish. But they [were] also sites where subsequent generations can find a lost origin, where they can learn about the time and place they will never see" (424). *Everything is Illuminated* renders Foer's literary Trochenbrod an example of such *yizker bikher*; it insists on the consistence of the metaphor of return: "in the water I saw

my father's face, and that face saw the face of its father, and so on, and so on, reflecting backward to the beginning of time, to the face of God, in whose image we were created" (Foer 41).

Here repetition as distortion and erasure also acts as an artistic practice; it connects the author back to his characters, the present to the past, the exilic child to his roots through discovery. The film, however, takes on significant liberties with the book; it erases the historical narrative of Jonathan's chronicle to focus only on his Ukrainian pilgrimage. The role of Alex's grandfather is radically changed as well: in the film he is turned from the Nazi's bystander into one of the Trochenbrod's dwellers, who survived the massacre by chance. He still commits suicide, which leads to the family's acceptance of their Jewish heritage and Alex' reconciliation with his newly discovered past. Despite this populist take on the proposed issue, the film does attempt to speak to the consequences of exilic returns as the work of commemoration, and hence presents an important point on the map of migrant returns.

Homecoming: Researching Hybrid Identity

My last example in the narratives of exile, nostalgia, and return, is the work of Olivier Kemeid, a Quebecois theatre artist whose grandfather was an Egyptian refugee to Canada. In his plays, Kemeid explores the themes of history, memory, and new nationalisms. His trilogy of exile – *L'Eneide* (2008), *Moi, dans les ruines rouges du siècle* (2012), and *Furieux et désespérés* (2013) – presents an example of theatre writing oscillating between the act of historiography and the act of philosophy, in which Kemeid speaks of history in similar terms to Ricoeur's. He recognizes the subjectivity of the narrating agent formed as the experiential act of history and as the act of interpretative utterance, the speech act of a philosophical inquiry. Kemeid speaks of exile in three temporal dimensions: as the act of flight or making history, the act of memory, and the act of return, the gesture of forgiving. Kemeid's project reflects the new political climate in Québec, in which individuals and institutions negotiate the province's traditional values under the pressure of growing economic and political presence of new immigrants. He aspires to speak on behalf of Québec's writers, engaged with the ethical questions of globalization. His plays often "take place elsewhere, deal with war, difficulties of politics," and "offer reflection on human destruction"; they feature a new tragic character "unable to function in a system, where intense productivity and

profit are used in lieu of moral criteria” (Lesage, qtd. in de la Chenelière and Lefebvre 51). To convey his concerns, Kemeid chooses the aesthetics of Brechtian epic theatre, whose goal “is not so much to develop actions as to represent conditions” (Benjamin *Understanding* 4). He presents the world through the gaze of a stranger, locating the characters’ past and present within the so called “mythological” time of a philosophical narrative. He demonstrates that in re-writing, re-staging, and re-enacting the past, theatre not only makes it *visible* in the present, it opens it up for negotiation with each individual directly involved in making a singular history of the state and the plural histories of its people. So, it is “the family tragedy unfolding on the background of this History, [...] the odyssey of a lonely man lost in the ruins of his home country” (Kemeid “Au loin là-bas” n.p.; my translation) that make up his theatre. In *Furieux et désespérés*, Kemeid engages with the questions of returns. He dramatizes the processes of *historical forgetting* as “the problematic of memory and faithfulness to the past” and *forgiving* as “guilt and reconciliation with the past” (Ricoeur 412). The play deals with no other objective but “to investigate” the author’s own self; it focuses on the mechanisms of rupture and reconciliation as experienced by those who left and those who stayed behind.

To Ricoeur, the act of forgetting “remains the disturbing threat that lurks in the background of the phenomenology of memory and the epistemology of history” (412), it can be experienced as “an attack on the reliability of memory” (413) and thus can be seen as historical escapism, one’s desire to avoid responsibility. The memory of course is a much deeper phenomenon: defined by one’s personal and collective experience, it leaves emotional and psychological traces, through which it creates our collective and individual selves. Ricoeur recognizes three types of traces that the lived experience prints upon our psyche: 1) the written or documentary trace found on the plane of “the historiographical operation”; 2) the physical trace or “an affection left in us by a marking [or] striking event”; and 3) the cerebral or cortical trace, “which the neurosciences deal with” (415). Those traces constitute degrees of forgetting and erasure that in their own turn guide the hand of a historian in making the new narratives of the past.

Kemeid focuses primarily on these mechanisms, staging the effects of post-exilic returns, memory as erasure and forgiveness. He stages the post-exilic return as the act of reconciliation and erasure. At the centre of *Furieux et désespérés* is the young Québécois, Mathieu, who visits the

land of his father, and so tries to negotiate his own place in its modern history. Prompted by the effects of postmemory and the guide-books his father gave him, Mathieu sets to compare the image of the land he carries in his mind with its reality. The journey takes on a surreal dimension, typical of the tales of migrant returns. The play opens with a monologue of a taxi-driver, setting up the mythological background to his trip. As the action unfolds, Mathieu gradually realizes how the old world works. Here, time takes over space while mythology takes over history. Between the two, he must make a choice. If he allies with Beatrice, his aunt, he will fall into the time of mythology, the world resting on the rules of ancient hospitality and religious beliefs. If he joins Nora, his cousin, he will get a chance to step into the time of the present, to cast out the spell of temporizing. Both choices involve forgiveness: those who stayed will have to accept Mathieu as one of their own; Mathieu, a returned migrant, will have to willingly step into the present, the time of history. Nothing feels more like the present than making a revolution: before Mathieu has a chance to choose, Nora puts his loyalty to the test by coercing him to take part in the upheaval. He joins the rebels, kills a prison guard, participates in manifestations, and loses Nora to the bombings. The ghost of Jean-Francois Champollion, the Father of Egyptology and the most credited nineteenth-century decipherer of Egyptian hieroglyphics, provides assistance: “you will find what you’re looking for – he tells Mathieu – as soon as you stop being afraid of this country” (Kemeid *Furieux* 98). The outsider to this war, however, Mathieu is granted forgiveness: he finds Nora and establishes his own view of the old world. The play ends with Mathieu realizing his mission: he returns his father’s memories to his native land and makes his own. As a token of forgiveness, Beatrice presents Mathieu with an old family photo that depicts the day of his father’s departure to Canada: the mother is on the left, the father is a step behind, the cousins, the uncles, the aunts, all smile but the grandmother, who is wearing black. All this – the fear of the unknown and the exaltation of hope – makes the act of immigration unbearable. What is left – many years, losses, new impressions and encounters after – is the memory of the moment. The materiality of the photo brings back the effects of temporizing; it takes Mathieu out of the spell of the present time. A bridge between the past and the present, the photograph reveals the mechanisms of making memory, so history comes full circle. The experiential act of the exilic flight is echoed in the stillness of the photograph that depicts its rupture. The past and the present are collapsed in the enactment of

the event, something that in the new circumstances of return turns into a gesture of erasure. The play ends with another *mise-en-scène* of separation, now staged for Mathieu's own departure. The same family, forty years after, is out on the balcony: "Beatrice is wearing black standing to the left; Nora is behind her; Nadia is on the right; Florence is in the center, at the back" (Kemeid *Furieux* 112). With this new photograph coming alive as reconciliation, the power of a theatrical performance to negotiate the past and the present, and to insist on the act of becoming comes forward. A moment later, the image turns into a new object of memory: the world on the photograph will remain, as before, only a fantasy, an object of desire, immersed in the atmosphere of distant pain.

Conclusion

In Kemeid's play, much as in Kundera and Foer's works, the act of return erases the promise of repetition. It gives place to shame; so the question of *how* ["how can the act of return become the true instance of reconciliation and forgiveness?"] remains at the forefront. To Boym and Hirsch, nostalgia and postmemory have the power to create communities. Nostalgia turns emigrants into a new collective, who share a common past and support each other in the present; Boym names this effect *diasporic intimacy* (*The Future*). Postmemory unites second generation exiles in their search for roots; the travel stories of returned migrants create new societies. Diasporic intimacy and post-exilic community rest with the power of a narrative produced by the historical imagination of a storyteller. This power, as Benjamin writes, lies in the "co-ordination of the soul, the eye, and the hand" of the artist ("The Storyteller" 108). This deeply personal connection that the storyteller experiences with his/her material makes his/her craft "solid, useful, and unique"; so "the storyteller joins the ranks of the teachers and sages [and] let[s] the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story" (108–109). As many exilic writers state, it is only in the act of writing that the act of return can take place. A device of a literary narrative, the act of return exposes the temporal multidimensionality of exile encompassing the simultaneity of one's past and present experiences. The act of writing turns for an exilic writer into the act of temporizing and parallax: it functions as a mechanism of return and erasure at the same time.

There is no better way to conclude this argument as to cite Milan Kundera once again, who once wrote that in exile

man is separated from the past [...] by two forces that go instantly to work and cooperate: the work of forgetting (which erases) and the force of memory (which transforms). [...] What becomes of History itself, to which we refer every day in good faith, naively, spontaneously? Beyond the slender margin of the incontestable [...] stretches an infinite realm: the realm of the approximate, the invented, the deformed, the simplistic, the exaggerated, the misconstrued, an infinite realm of non-truths that copulate, multiply like rats, and become immortal. [...] Against our real world, which, by its very nature, is fleeting and worthy of forgetting, works of art stand as a different world, a world that is ideal, solid, where every detail has its importance, its meaning, where everything in it – every word, every phrase – deserves to be unforgettable and was conceived to be such.

(*The Curtain* 148–49)

The act of writing, in other words, relies on the transformative power of imagination and helps the exile overcome anger, frustration, and disillusionment triggered by the act of homecoming. It turns the truth of the encounter into a new creative act; the act of forgetting, erasure, and reconciliation.

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Réalisme magique historique allemand et sémiotique de l'espace dans les récits d'après-guerre de Hermann Kasack et Anna Seghers

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Labondante et instructive historiographie du réalisme magique international, rédigée majoritairement en langue anglaise, a débouché sur un postulat partagé par la grande majorité des critiques, selon lequel cette esthétique serait d'inspiration fondamentalement postmoderne et postcoloniale. Ce constat surprend quelque peu, dans la mesure où – depuis l'anthologie fondatrice de Zamora et Faris (1995) jusqu'à l'ouvrage collectif édité par Warnes et Sasser (2020), parfaitement à jour sur le plan conceptuel – cette historiographie revient régulièrement aux origines du courant magico-réaliste dans les arts et la littérature et à la « paternité » du critique d'art allemand Franz Roh et de sa monographie *Nachexpressionismus. Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (1925).

En d'autres termes, on a l'impression que l'histoire du réalisme magique ne commence réellement à exister qu'à partir du moment où ce dernier – et sa variante du *real maravilloso* – fait l'objet d'un transfert vers l'Amérique Latine. Ce moment est bien connu ; il est porté par des passeurs bien identifiés entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Monde (Alejo Carpentier, Uslar Pietri, Angel Flores, etc.) et inaugure le succès d'une poétique qui se transmettra dans le monde entier.¹ Or, cette réception productive des idées de Franz Roh, mais aussi de l'autre théoricien initial

¹ Il est d'ailleurs significatif que le texte de Roh figurant dans l'anthologie de Zamora et Faris a été traduit par cette dernière, non pas depuis l'original allemand, mais depuis la traduction espagnole du texte paru en 1927 dans la *Revista de Occidente* (Roh 15–31).

du réalisme magique, l'écrivain italien Massimo Bontempelli, n'est logiquement pas immédiate. On sait également qu'elle calque la logique du fantastico-poétique sur une compréhension particulière du réel par les Latino-Américains, la reliant à leur expérience de la vie, à leurs paysages et à leurs mythes. Cette lecture de nature anthropologique, au service d'une logique de construction identitaire, « resémantise » pour ainsi dire les premiers fondements d'une « pré-histoire » du réalisme magique tout à fait étrangère pour sa part à une lecture de type anthropologique.

Une telle distinction avait en réalité déjà été clairement établie dans la conclusion de l'ouvrage collectif qu'avait dirigé Jean Weisgerber en 1987. Cet ouvrage, peu cité dans les recherches actuelles, subdivisait le réalisme magique en aires linguistico-culturelles et présentait ainsi un large panorama, dont la dimension historique n'a pas été suffisamment exploitée dans les recherches ultérieures. À une époque où on ne parlait pas encore de transfert culturel comme mécanisme d'appropriation, voire de territorialisation, Weisgerber mettait toutefois déjà le doigt sur la césure que nous évoquons dans l'histoire longue du réalisme magique. Il opposait ainsi, dans son « bilan provisoire » des recherches, une variété « savante » du réalisme magique, développée notamment en Allemagne et en Italie dès l'entre-deux-guerres, à l'émergence d'une nouvelle « espèce collective, mythique ou folklorique » de cette esthétique en Amérique Latine, puis dans les littératures postcoloniales (Weisgerber 218).

Je préférerais à l'expression de « variété savante » celle de « réalisme magique historique » pour esquisser cette poétique particulière qui prolonge les premiers textes théoriques de Roh et de Bontempelli. Pour ce faire, je me référerai à un corpus de prose narrative de langue allemande issu des années 1920–1960, auquel je viens de consacrer une étude approfondie (Roland *Magischer Realismus*), particulièrement mal connu, voire ignoré par les recherches sur le réalisme magique international. En effet, celles-ci n'intègrent que très rarement les sources spécialisées de langue allemande qui, depuis le début des années 1990 et la monographie de Michael Scheffel, réservent l'expression de *Magischer Realismus* à un courant qui traverse la période de la littérature allemande reliant un après-guerre à l'autre, assumant ouvertement un décalage et un malentendu avec l'historiographie dominante.

Les romans et textes des autrices et auteurs dont il est ici question ne sont – à l'exception de ceux d'Ernst Jünger – connus aujourd'hui que des spécialistes de l'histoire littéraire de cette période, ce qui n'exclut pas que

plusieurs aient connu une résonance certaine à l'époque. Du fait que la plupart de ces œuvres sont également difficilement accessibles en traduction, leur rayonnement international est faible.

Après avoir esquissé le programme intellectuel du *Magischer Realismus*, qui anima notamment, en Allemagne, les discussions de l'immédiat après-guerre de 1945, je me livrerai à l'analyse de deux œuvres particulièrement représentatives de ce moment historique précis, le roman *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom* (1947) de Hermann Kasack et la nouvelle *Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen* (1946) d'Anna Seghers. Parmi les traits distinctifs du réalisme magique historique sur le plan narratif, je sélectionnerai à dessein celui d'une poétique de l'espace particulière, pensant éventuellement identifier là un élément de continuité avec le réalisme magique contemporain.

I. Un « programme » tenu mais cohérent

Dès avant la publication de la monographie de Scheffel, Henri Plard avait (dans l'ouvrage susmentionné de Weisgerber, Plard 45–72) déjà identifié quelques noms saillants de cette poétique dans la prose narrative du *Magischer Realismus* : parmi eux Ernst Jünger (dont Plard était traducteur) et plusieurs autrices et auteurs très influent·e·s dans l'immédiat après-guerre : Hermann Kasack et son roman *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom* (traduit en 1951 par Clara Malraux sous le titre *La Ville au-delà du fleuve*) ; l'Autrichienne Ilse Aichinger dont le premier et unique roman *Die größere Hoffnung* (1948 ; *Un plus grand espoir* dans la traduction récente d'Uta Müller et Denis Denjean) anticipa une carrière poétique de premier plan par la suite ; Elisabeth Langgässer, dont le roman *Das unauslöschliche Siegel* (1946 ; *Le sceau indélébile*, dans la traduction de Gritte Senil en 1951) marquait de fortes affinités avec l'existentialisme chrétien, etc.

Jünger, Kasack et Langgässer sont connus pour avoir représenté le courant de « l'émigration intérieure » (*innere Emigration*) dans les années du national-socialisme. Définie a posteriori, cette dénomination désigne les autrices et auteurs qui n'ont pas pris le chemin de l'exil suite à la mise au pas de la culture allemande par les Nazis (comme Bertolt Brecht, Alfred Döblin, la famille Mann, etc.) mais ne se sont pas non plus compromis avec l'idéologie du régime et son esthétique officielle. Au

contraire, « l'émigration intérieure » suggère une approche métaphorique du réel volontairement compatible avec une critique larvée, telle qu'elle a pu être attribuée au roman de Jünger *Sur les falaises de marbre* (*Auf den Marmorklippen*, 1939), projeté dans un univers semi-mythique dominé par la figure tyrannique du « Grand Forestier », derrière qui on a pu reconnaître Hitler.² Assimiler le réalisme magique allemand et la littérature de « l'émigration intérieure » s'avère toutefois trop étroit et, dans mon étude, j'ai suivi une orientation critique récente, qui distingue aussi des traits magico-réalistes chez une autrice comme Anna Seghers, notamment dans son fameux roman de l'exil *Transit*.

En comparaison avec son pendant latino-américain et postcolonial, le réalisme magique historique se distingue par un horizon d'interprétation métaphysique imprégné de philosophie de l'existence, ce qui faisait déjà dire à Plard qu'il s'agissait d'une « méthode de déchiffrement enracinée dans un Monisme de l'esprit, qui est vie et harmonie derrière les banalités apparentes et les diversités trompeuses des phénomènes [...] » (Plard 54). Les influences d'Oswald Spengler – et de sa thèse du « Déclin de l'Occident » – mais aussi de la philosophie de Karl Jaspers sont évidentes. Au lendemain de la guerre, la littérature cherche, au travers même du deuil de la catastrophe, des réponses à la crise de la pensée rationnelle occidentale et aspire à un renouveau civilisationnel en osant des tentatives d'interprétation qui intègrent les idées politiques à l'intérieur d'un repli sur des « valeurs éternelles » (Plard 62) inspirées par d'autres modèles de pensée, remettant par là en valeur la pensée mythique ou prônant des idées importées des philosophies orientales.

Mais le réalisme magique historique comme poétique découlait en réalité depuis les années 1920 d'une vision du monde à la fois labile et cohérente, contenue dans un nombre de textes théoriques et intellectuels somme toute restreints, de sorte qu'on hésitera à les qualifier vraiment de

² Le profil politique global d'Ernst Jünger (1895–1998) est particulièrement retors. Animateur de la « Révolution Conservatrice » dans les années 1920, un courant intellectuel fortement nationaliste à qui on reproche d'avoir préparé le national-socialisme (cf. Warnes 26–29), Jünger préféra toutefois se détourner de la politique après 1933 et on s'étonne que sa critique larvée du nazisme dans *Les Falaises de Marbre* ait pu passer à travers les mécanismes de la censure. S'il mentionna pour la première fois le terme *Magischer Realismus* dans un essai paru dans une revue nationaliste en 1927 (cf. infra), sa conception de cette poétique, reprise dans son recueil d'essais *Le Cœur aventureux* est franchement d'inspiration métaphysique (cf. Roland *Magischer Realismus* 35–40).

« programme ». Le propos de Franz Roh définissait le réalisme magique par défaut, soit en opposition à l'expressionnisme, au moment où celui-ci trouvait à s'essouffler, raison pour laquelle l'ouvrage de Roh porte le double titre de « Post-expressionnisme. Réalisme magique » (la traduction espagnole inversera d'ailleurs les deux termes dans le titre). Dans la foulée de l'exposition de Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub sur la Nouvelle Objectivité (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) à la Kunsthalle de Mannheim en 1925 – exposition pour laquelle Roh fait fonction de conseiller – ce dernier alimenta une sorte de confusion entre réalisme magique et Nouvelle Objectivité, autour notamment de deux idées structurantes : la réhabilitation d'un art qui met à l'avant-plan l'importance de l'objet et le retour d'influences formelles et classicistes dans une esthétique encore nourrie de la modernité des avant-gardes. Roh se réfère ainsi explicitement au mouvement italien du *Quattrocento* et aux esthétiques néo-classique et réaliste de Jacques-Louis David et Ingres (Roh *Geschichte der deutschen Kunst* 112–13). Sous l'influence de certains milieux littéraires autour de la revue *Die Kolonne*, la réception des idées de Roh se cristallisa autour d'une esthétique censée renouer avec une description minutieuse, quasi microscopique du réel dans toute sa diversité. Mais là où les Réalistes du XIX^e siècle entendaient le réel essentiellement dans sa dimension empirique et sociale, le réalisme magique l'élargit et l'approfondit sur le plan ontologique et y intègre insensiblement mais pleinement une dimension irrationnelle, d'inspiration surnaturelle. Une transformation du réel s'opère donc, suivant la devise oxymorique « miracle et objectivité » (*Wunder und Sachlichkeit*, cf. Scheffel *Die poetische Ordnung*), comme si une dimension mystérieuse s'était toujours tenue cachée derrière les choses, avant de se retrouver révélée à travers la pratique de l'art.

En complément du volet fondamentalement esthétique contenu chez Roh, le programme magico-réaliste esquissé – en français – par Massimo Bontempelli, dans les premiers numéros de la revue *900 [Novecento]* en 1926/1927, se construit pour sa part en continuité avec l'héritage de l'avant-garde futuriste. Il met en avant d'une part une vision empreinte de métaphysique comme terrain nourricier de la réalité (« un penchant spéculatif et philosophique qui constitue son fondement le plus sûr et sa réserve la plus féconde » ; Bontempelli « Analogies » 10) mais également un impératif de nature à la fois sociale et éthique, un besoin de « bâtir à nouveau le temps et l'espace », voire une nouvelle « géométrie spirituelle » (Bontempelli « Justification » 7) pour répondre au désarroi existentiel consécutif au manque d'orientation issu de la guerre.

C'est toutefois au cœur-même de l'expérience de la guerre, écrivait Ernst Jünger dans son essai sur le « nationalisme et la vie moderne », paru dans la revue « de combat » nationaliste *Arminius* le 20 février 1927, que l'être humain a appris le « double regard » (*der doppelte Blick*), qui permet de reconnaître à l'intérieur de chaque instant la surface et la profondeur, ce regard qui se révèle à travers les images du réalisme magique, « dans le cadre desquelles chaque ligne du monde extérieur est ancrée avec la précision d'une formule mathématique et dont la froideur translucide est en même temps, de manière incompréhensible, illuminée et réchauffée par un arrière-fond enchanteur » (Jünger *Nationalismus und modernes Leben*).³

Que le programme du réalisme magique se bâtisse donc sur les ruines du premier conflit mondial, comme chez Jünger et Bontempelli, ou avec une plus grande insistance encore sur les ruines du second en Allemagne, il relève donc d'un impératif d'ordre civilisationnel. Dans son essai « Literatur im Interregnum », qui façonna les discussions du *Gruppe 47*, le très influent Hans Werner Richter plaide à son tour pour un nouveau réalisme, qui serait apte à rendre visible la « transformation de l'être humain » (*die Wandlung des Menschen*) :

La tâche d'une nouvelle littérature sera de rendre visible l'irréel derrière la réalité, l'irrationnel derrière la réalité ; derrière le grand processus de transformation sociale la transformation de l'homme. Saisir et configurer comme un tout la vie de notre époque comme l'expérience vécue par l'homme de notre temps, dans toutes ses profondeurs et ses hauteurs, dans toute sa dimension tragique et sa confusion, on peut peut-être encore appeler cela le réalisme ou le réalisme magique ou alors l'objectivisme – ce n'est toutefois rien d'autre que le chemin de sortie du vide de notre temps vers une nouvelle réalité.

(Richter 10–11)⁴

³ Ma traduction de : « [...] in deren Rahmen jede Linie der äußeren Welt mit der Bestimmtheit einer mathematischen Formel gebannt ist, und deren Kälte doch auf unerklärliche Weise, gleichsam durchscheinend, ein zauberhafter Hintergrund erleuchtet und erwärmt ».

⁴ Ma traduction de : « Die Aufgabe einer neuen Literatur wird es sein, in der unmittelbaren realistischen Aussage dennoch hinter der Wirklichkeit das Unwirkliche, hinter der Realität das Irrationale, hinter dem großen gesellschaftlichen Wandlungsprozess die Wandlung des Menschen sichtbar zu lassen. Das Leben unserer Zeit als Erlebnis des Menschen unserer Zeit in seinen Tiefen und Höhen, seiner Tragik und seiner Verworrenheit, als Ganzes ganz zu erfassen und zu gestalten, das mag man vielleicht noch als Realismus oder als magischen Realismus oder als

On mesure ici tout l'écart qui existe entre un premier réalisme magique fondamentalement européen (auquel il faudrait ajouter les textes théoriques des écrivains flamands Johan Daisne et Hubert Lampo) et le programme qui sera redéfini à peine quelques années plus tard dans le Nouveau Monde. Le discours articulé de manière convergente par Bontempelli, Jünger et Richter se lit indépendamment de tout arrière-fond anthropologique et ne mobilise pas une esthétique pour un discours de construction identitaire ou communautaire comme ce sera le cas chez Carpentier ou Angel Flores. La base théorique du réalisme magique défini historiquement en Europe relève au départ de l'esthétique et de la critique d'art, avant d'insensiblement glisser vers une vision du monde d'inspiration métaphysique, une sorte d'ontologie du réel, appliquée aux questions de société et de civilisation.

Par ailleurs, on insistera à nouveau sur le caractère ténu de cette « base programmatique » dans la mesure où son influence réelle sur le corpus de textes narratifs dont il est question est incertaine. Bien davantage la poétique magico-réaliste relève de multiples convergences, plus ou moins concertées ou non – la chose serait à analyser dans le détail des études de cas – mais il est toutefois possible d'en dégager une cohérence définie par une approche relevant à la fois des procédés d'écriture et d'une approche sémiotique de la culture.

II. Poétique magico-réaliste et espaces-seuils

Comme on va à présent l'examiner, les principaux traits constitutifs du réalisme magique historique relèvent de la conscience du temps et de l'espace. D'une part, la topographie et la poétique de l'espace se rejoignent pour constituer une dimension fondamentale du récit. Elles privilégient de manière récurrente les lieux-frontières concrets, convergeant de manière paradoxale avec la fluidité des « lieux-seuils » correspondant à des états aussi bien physiques qu'ontologiques (passage entre le jour et la nuit ou l'inverse, du réveil au sommeil ou à d'autres états de semi-conscience mais aussi d'un univers réel à un univers fantastique). D'autre part, la plupart de ces récits culminent – souvent mais pas uniquement à un stade avancé de leur progression – dans des moments particuliers

Objektivismus bezeichnen – es ist dennoch nichts anderes als der Weg aus dem Vakuum unserer Zeit zu einer neuen Wirklichkeit ».

de lumière et de « clarté de conscience »⁵ de type épiphanique et illuminatoire, qui réconcilient, toujours provisoirement, les personnages avec l'ensemble des composantes conscientes et inconscientes de leur identité et de leur rapport au monde extérieur.

Ces moments particuliers sont, d'une certaine manière, appelés à répondre aux problèmes de troubles profonds d'identité qui caractérisent les personnages du réalisme magique, en manque de stabilité existentielle. Ceux-ci renvoient également très souvent à un imaginaire des traumatismes, comparable à celui qu'a identifié Eugene Arva dans son ouvrage sur la *Traumatic Imagination* constitutive pour lui du réalisme magique international contemporain. Cet ouvrage, qui ne se réfère donc pas au corpus allemand dont il est question dans cet article, m'a toutefois paru incontournable pour l'analyse des nombreux romans allemands magico-réalistes qui, après 1918 et 1945, ressassent sur le mode de l'imagination traumatique, d'inspiration à la fois réaliste et/ou métaphorique et symbolique, les événements extrêmes des deux conflits mondiaux : outre les auteur-es déjà cité-es, on peut y ajouter George Saiko, Horst Lange, Felix Hartlaub (étudiés dans Roland *Magischer Realismus*) et d'autres encore.

La littérature du réalisme magique historique adopte la perspective d'un « double fond » de la réalité ressortant d'un seul et unique plan ontologique ambigu, sans qu'il y ait de rupture de la structure narrative, tout au plus un glissement. Comme le précisait déjà Weisgerber, on fait face au prolongement du moment d'hésitation constitutif du fantastique jadis défini par Tzvetan Todorov : « Là où le surréalisme unit les pôles du quotidien et de l'imaginaire, et le fantastique met en demeure de choisir l'un des contraires, le réalisme magique continue à en poser simplement la simultanéité, sans requérir de solution » (Weisgerber 218). La définition plus récente de Benoît Denis, présupposant « [...] une vision du réel renouvelée et élargie par la prise en considération de la part d'étrangeté, d'irrationalité ou de mystère qu'il recèle » ne dit pas autre chose, lorsqu'elle postule que « [...] le monde magico-réaliste forme un ensemble synthétique : l'unité en réside dans une subjectivité active qui investit la réalité au point de la transformer ou d'en abolir la perception commune » (Denis 512). Cette subjectivité s'avère toutefois difficile à circonscrire, tant la focalisation des points de vue narratifs s'avère oscillatoire, comme dans les deux récits choisis pour illustrer cette analyse.

⁵ Je reprends ici l'expression *Bewusstseinsbelle* de Michael Scheffel (95).

La Ville au-delà du fleuve de Hermann Kasack

Une insensible transformation du réel insufflée dans ce sens est perceptible dès les premières lignes du roman *La Ville au-delà du fleuve* de Hermann Kasack. On y reflète l'expérience que fait le protagoniste principal, Robert Lindhoff, du passage d'un train sur un pont surplombant ce fleuve avant de pénétrer « sous la verrière d'une gare d'importance moyenne » en forme de cul-de-sac :

Quand le train, ayant perdu de sa vitesse, s'engagea lentement sur le grand pont, situé juste avant le terminus, Robert s'approcha de la fenêtre de son compartiment et jeta un regard sur le pays qu'il laissait derrière lui. Enfin au but ! Il eut un soupir de soulagement. En dessous de lui s'étirait le lit profond du fleuve frontière. Des deux côtés du chenal couraient, asséchées par un été précoce, de larges bandes de terre parsemées de galets. Et sur l'ensemble suintait la lumière ambiguë de l'aube naissante. Robert avait passé la nuit dans un état proche à la fois du sommeil et d'une demi-veille, qui lui avait fait apparaître le voyage plus long encore qu'il n'était.

(Kasack *La Ville* 7)

Précédé par sa réputation de chercheur en écriture cunéiforme, Lindhoff a reçu une convocation de la part de l'administration de la ville, qui lui a demandé d'en devenir l'archiviste et d'en rédiger la chronique. Les contours topographiques précis de ce lieu soumis à cette « lumière ambiguë » sont toutefois indéterminés. Lindhoff se retrouve au milieu d'une ville de cavernes et de ruines, dont les habitants accomplissent des actions ritualisées sans véritable conscience de leurs gestes. Il vient en réalité de franchir le seuil du Styx et se retrouve dans un espace intermédiaire entre la vie et la mort, dans lequel il rencontre les ombres des personnes qu'il a connues – notamment son père défunt et sa compagne Anna, dont il distingue après une nuit d'amour le stigmate d'une blessure suicidaire au poignet.

Désarçonné par la voix invisible de l'autorité toute puissante du commissaire de la ville qui, depuis un haut-parleur, lui donne des leçons sur la nature et l'esprit en guise d'examen d'admission, Robert entame un parcours sinueux de type labyrinthique, qui le contraint à intérioriser une nouvelle conception du temps et de l'espace. Assisté dans sa quête par quelques guides et médiateurs, il découvre (dans les chapitres XI et XII d'un récit qui en compte 20) les mécanismes sous-jacents du cœur de l'activité de la ville, sous la forme de deux fabriques de pierres artificielles

qui occupent la majorité des habitants, à travers un double processus qui s'annule.

Tandis que, dans la première fabrique, on s'attelle à travailler consciencieusement à la production des pierres, on réduit de manière tout aussi systématique celles-ci à l'état de poussière dans la seconde. Plongé dans un hall « baigné d'une lumière plâtreuse, à travers laquelle jouaient, d'un lieu de travail à un autre, les faisceaux aigus des phares, immenses polypes tremblants – [...] » (Kasack *La Ville* 154), Robert, toujours « rêveur » est conduit à l'administration générale, « [...] située dans des sortes de cabines, construites à même une excavation rocheuse, le long d'une galerie que l'on appelait la galerie de verre. Les côtés de ces pièces, appuyées sur une construction métallique bien entretenue, consistaient en surfaces de verre mobiles. Le plafond et le plancher étaient, eux aussi, de verre transparent, si bien qu'on semblait se mouvoir dans un lieu transparent et dépourvu d'air ». Oscillant entre « léger vertige » et sentiment d'« insécurité » (154–55), Robert est mené à la révélation faite par un contremaître de la seconde fabrique que les pierres artificielles ne sont créées que dans le but d'être détruites, ce qui, face à son indignation, lui est présenté comme « le charme d'un jeu mécanique » (174).

Il a, à ce moment précis, le « privilège » d'assister à l'irruption du « président-doyen » des fabriques, drapé dans un costume lacé et collant, « une sorte de momie accroupie, semblable à un nain et qui montrait, au-dessus de ses mains fanées, un visage jaune cireux. Sa tête était parée d'un tricorne, garni de rubans multicolores. L'encens s'élevait dans la salle » (175). C'est lui qui enseigne à Robert le sens du processus, selon lequel l'accélération du travail et le perfectionnement technique de la méthode ont été définis comme seul impératif dans cette région, où, « monsieur, on est au-delà du romantisme et du pathos » (176). Se réjouissant que, sous sa préfecture, le processus de production s'est raccourci et répondant à Robert, qui voit dans ce processus un enfer, la momie ajoute encore : « Pour les gens qui sont ici [...], il n'est ni ciel ni enfer. Cependant, les employés de la fabrique de pierres artificielles croient en la construction, et ceux de ma fabrique, en la destruction. Il est réservé à la Préfecture de maintenir l'équilibre entre la construction et la destruction » (176–77).

La vision du monde particulière transmise dans cette scène relève d'une dynamisation paradoxale de l'espace, qui se caractérise par son incertitude fondamentale quant à son « réalisme » au sens d'une référentialité historique. Il est évident que les lecteurs de l'époque ont

spontanément associé la ville en ruines de la diégèse avec la situation historique des villes allemandes bombardées – ce qui a alimenté la forte résonance du roman.⁶ Mais les traits magico-réalistes du récit en déstabilisent systématiquement le statut, comme en atteste la description de la momie, qui pourrait être empruntée à un univers de *fantasy* ou alors relever d'une exagération métaphorique pas complètement invraisemblable, tendant vers le grotesque. Le motif de la tricorne n'est pas le seul qui, dans l'ouvrage, invite à la comparaison avec des figures historiques impériales, comme, en l'occurrence, Napoléon ou, ailleurs dans le récit, Hitler. La configuration de l'espace relève donc sur tous les plans d'un ambivalent « entre-deux », entre la vie et la mort, mais aussi entre la réalité historique et son dépassement dans un univers relevant à la fois de la fable philosophique et de la critique de la civilisation.

La fin du roman mettra en scène un dernier va-et-vient, d'une part entre la vie et la mort, de l'autre entre réalité historique et surnaturel. Au moment où Robert entend rejoindre le royaume des vivants, le texte de sa propre chronique, sorti de nulle part, lui est remis par la préfecture de la ville. Il effectue alors le trajet retour vers l'Allemagne des ruines, des mendiants et des réfugiés et, s'inspirant de sa chronique, se donne une allure de prophète qui prévient des conséquences de la civilisation moderne. Mais le texte de la chronique s'effacera à nouveau au moment d'un ultime retour de Robert au-delà du fleuve, au moment où sa mort définitive semble cette fois actée.

Dans sa monographie récente sur les procédés d'écriture du réalisme magique de langue allemande comme « poétique du milieu » – cette *Poetik der Mitte* s'entendant ici comme un compromis entre techniques d'écriture avant-gardistes et un retour à des procédés du réalisme traditionnel du XIX^e siècle – Torsten Leine fait valoir la grille de lecture offerte par Youri Lotman quant aux fonctions et propriétés d'un espace littéraire organisant des correspondances structurantes entre l'univers du texte et une anthropologie de la culture (Leine 237). Les considérations de Lotman sur la frontière (dans le cadre de son approche théorique de la « sémiosphère ») se révèlent en effet particulièrement pertinentes si on les applique au roman de Kasack, qui divise le monde en civilisations

⁶ On compte plus de 120 recensions d'un ouvrage qui dépassa le tirage des 100.000 exemplaires au début des années 1960. Le roman fut traduit en huit langues, dont en japonais. Kasack reçut également le prestigieux Prix Fontane en 1949.

occidentales et orientales au sens très élémentaire, en même temps qu'il joue en permanence sur les limites entre la vie et la mort comme universaux de la pensée. Toutes les catégories des oppositions binaires citées par Lotman (ici dans sa traduction anglaise) se retrouvent traitées d'une manière ou d'une autre dans l'univers fictionnel magico-réaliste de *La ville* :

Every culture begins by dividing the world into "its own" internal space and "their" external space. How this binary division is interpreted depends on the typology of the culture. But the actual division is one of the human cultural universals. The boundary may separate the living from the dead, settled people from nomadic ones, the town from the plains; it may be a state frontier, or a social, national or confessional, or any other kind of frontier. There is an amazing similarity, even between civilizations which have no contact with each other, in the expressions they use to describe the world beyond the boundary.

(Lotman 131)

Comme dans le modèle sémiotique de Lotman, le roman de Kasack montre que la délimitation des limites et frontières est appelée à être dépassée, en ceci qu'on attribue au lieu-seuil la fonction de dynamiser les schémas culturels existants. Là où une image du monde donne l'impression de la pérennité, elle est déjà sujette à un processus paradoxal et ambivalent de déstabilisation.

L'excursion des jeunes filles qui ne sont plus d'Anna Seghers

La nouvelle d'Anna Seghers *L'excursion des jeunes filles qui ne sont plus* (1946) est issue de la même période d'indécision qui, en Allemagne, précède la création des deux États, celle qui, en 1949, figera les frontières et positions idéologiques. Contrairement à Kasack, qui s'essaiera alors à des tentatives de médiation intellectuelle entre Berlin-Ouest et Berlin-Est, Anna Seghers, revenant de ses années d'exil en France et au Mexique, liera résolument son sort à celui de la République Démocratique. Sur le plan esthétique, ce ralliement aurait présupposé une adhésion aux principes esthétiques du réalisme socialiste. Or, la nouvelle dont il est question, rejoint bien davantage un principe d'indétermination du réel historique qu'elle partage sans équivoque avec le roman de Kasack.

La protagoniste du récit, à l'instar de son auberge, a été poussée par un vent de tempête d'Europe jusqu'au Mexique, et se remet d'une maladie dont les effets persistants troublent sa perception des choses sous forme d'attaques de fatigue. Quittant son auberge car elle s'est sentie attirée par le mur blanc d'un rancho, elle donne la description d'un paysage montagneux aux aspects lunaires, qui évoque l'absence de vie au-delà de la frontière bien délimitée d'une forme de civilisation :

Le village, tel une forteresse, était entouré d'une palissade de cactus géants. Par une brèche, je pouvais apercevoir les pentes de la montagne, d'un gris brunâtre, dénudées et sauvages comme celles d'une montagne lunaire. Leur seul aspect suffisait à écarter le soupçon qu'une parcelle de vie les eût jamais touchées.

(Seghers 9)

La perception des objets et paysages par la narratrice est marquée d'une incapacité à distinguer les choses des impressions de ses sens. Ainsi, attirée par un rancho, « [...] où plutôt cette chose, quelle qu'elle fût, qui brillait toute seule, sous le ciel nocturne [...] », la narratrice perçoit que celle-ci « [...] se dressait dans une vapeur papillotante dont j'ignorais si elle venait de la poussière enflammée du soleil ou de ma propre fatigue qui enveloppait tout de brouillard, si bien que les environs immédiats s'évanouissaient et que le lointain se faisait limpide comme un mirage » (10).

Le mur blanc du rancho va servir de cadre d'une mise en abyme sur un récit intérieur, en même temps qu'il fait également fonction de seuil entre la vie et la mort, mais aussi entre le présent de l'exil et le passé de la narratrice en Allemagne, dans un monde qui précédait immédiatement la Première Guerre Mondiale. Percevant derrière le mur des reflets verts annonçant l'abondance d'un jardin arrosé, elle passe à travers un porche et fait la découverte d'une balançoire, symbole concret par excellence d'un mouvement de va-et-vient entre différentes temporalités de sa vie. Elle entend une voix qui l'appelle « Netty », le nom qu'utilisaient jadis ses camarades de classe Leni et Marianne, qui font à présent leur apparition, au moment précis où quelques motifs d'inspiration magico-réalistes dissipent les brumes et ancrent dans des éléments naturels une transformation du réel :

La souche d'arbre sur laquelle était clouée la balançoire me sembla d'abord, elle aussi, enveloppée d'un nuage épais ; mais ce nuage s'éclaircit et s'écarta tout de suite, et il n'y eut plus que des buissons d'églantiers. Bientôt,

quelques boutons d'or se mirent à briller dans la vapeur qui s'exhalait du sol à travers l'herbe haute et dense ; la vapeur se dissipa, et devant moi pissenlits et géraniums cessèrent enfin de se confondre. Mêlées à ces plantes, il y avait aussi des touffes d'amourette d'un rose brunâtre, qu'un regard suffisait à faire frémir.

(14)

C'est à ce moment précis où Netty retrouve ses deux amies que débute le récit d'une excursion en bateau à vapeur sur le Rhin qu'elle avait faite avec ses camarades de classe en 1913. Mais cette incursion nostalgique, ouvrant sur l'idylle du « monde d'hier », antérieur à la catastrophe de 1914, laisse rapidement libre cours à des glissements chronologiques successifs. À partir des biographies des amies de Netty, Seghers cherche à alimenter une réflexion sur l'histoire allemande des années noires du national-socialisme. On apprend ainsi au fil du récit que, tandis que Leni entrera dans la Résistance, Marianne épousera pour sa part un officier SS.

La plaie ouverte de cette fracture culmine finalement dans l'image de la ville de Mayence en ruines suite aux bombardements des Alliés, un décor que la narratrice choisit de manière anachronique comme terme de l'excursion des jeunes filles en 1913. Suivant la logique typiquement magico-réaliste du « dire sans dire » sous la forme d'une projection visionnaire et contradictoire du réel, Netty évoque la destruction de fond en comble de l'Église Saint-Christophe de Mayence (la ville natale de Seghers), marquant l'impossibilité du retour :

Avec quelques camarades, je me dirigeai sans hâte vers la rue Christhof. Au début, j'étais inquiète. Au moment où, venant du Rhin, nous tournions pour pénétrer dans le centre, un poids s'abattit sur mon cœur, comme si une chose absurde, pénible, me menaçait, peut-être une nouvelle désastreuse, ou un malheur que cette excursion ensoleillée m'avait fait oublier, écartelée que j'étais. Puis je compris clairement qu'il était impossible que l'église Christhof eût été détruite dans un bombardement de nuit, car nous entendions l'angélus qu'on y sonnait. Rien ne justifiait l'angoisse qui m'avait saisie à l'idée de rentrer par ce chemin, simplement parce que je ne pouvais m'arracher de l'esprit le sentiment que le quartier central de la ville était entièrement détruit par les bombes.

(Seghers 49–50)

La critique spécialisée sur Seghers – sans pour autant faire le rapprochement avec le roman de Kasack – confirme le sentiment que l'errance de la jeune fille à travers le paysage de ruines de la ville détruite se lit

comme une métaphore de la recherche d'une issue à la crise à la fois matérielle, politique et existentielle de l'Allemagne au sortir de la guerre (cf. Schlossbauer 579–80). À cela vient se greffer la question de la responsabilité morale d'une société qui s'est laissé entraîner dans les mécanismes de la dictature nazie, question qui sera plus rapidement mise explicitement à l'ordre du jour en République Démocratique qu'en République Fédérale.

À cet égard, il est aussi intéressant de constater que Seghers se plaît à cumuler l'impératif d'édification du réalisme socialiste, telle qu'elle le pratiquera plus franchement encore à partir de 1949, avec les procédés d'écriture fondant une structure poético-symbolique du réel, faisant place à une intégration d'une dimension mystérieuse, voire irrationnelle, au cœur de celui-ci. Cette confusion des genres autour de la réalité historique lui vaudra d'ailleurs une controverse avec Georg Lukács (cf. Schmitt 272). Face aux thèses beaucoup plus affirmées de ce dernier, adepte d'un réalisme socialiste doctrinal, Seghers revendiqua la possibilité d'un « réalisme métaphysique » ouvrant sur une dimension transcendante et surtout sur un élargissement de la réalité requérant une faculté particulière du pouvoir des sens, de la vision et du souvenir (Schlossbauer 592 et 595). Annonçant déjà la vaste réflexion qu'alimentera W.G. Sebald un demi-siècle plus tard, à partir de la même thématique des villes allemandes détruites à la fin de la guerre,⁷ Seghers démontre qu'une conception magico-réaliste d'un récit donnant des contours incertains à la réalité historique peut parfaitement se concilier avec une approche critique et politique sur les événements et qu'elle peut même se mettre au service de celle-ci. À la manière de Sebald – notamment lorsque, dans son roman *Austerlitz* (2001), celui-ci expose des photos factices du camp de concentration de Theresienstadt, que la propagande nazie présentait comme une colonie juive modèle – Seghers a recours à une photographie de la destruction de l'Église Saint-Christophe comme outil de mise en doute du réel et de contradiction des apparences :

Je songeai aussi que cette photographie de journal, sur laquelle toutes les rues et les places étaient rasées ou en ruines, pouvait bien s'être trompée. Tout d'abord, je pensais que sur l'ordre de Goebbels, afin de dissimuler l'ampleur de l'attaque, on avait peut-être construit très vite une fausse ville, dans laquelle il ne restait rien des édifices de pierre de l'ancienne, mais qui, néanmoins, donnait l'impression d'être solide et de belle apparence.

⁷ Cf. Sebald. *De la destruction comme élément de l'histoire naturelle* ; traduction française du texte publié en allemand sous le titre *Luftkrieg und Literatur*.

N'étions-nous pas toutes habituées depuis longtemps à ce genre de mirage et de trompe-l'œil, non seulement à l'occasion des attaques aériennes, mais aussi pour d'autres événements difficiles à démêler ?

(Seghers 50)

Si le lecteur peut, le temps d'un instant, penser que « [p]ourtant, les maisons, les escaliers, la fontaine étaient debout, comme toujours » (50), l'ambivalence de la superposition des couches chronologiques du récit (celle de 1913 et celle de 1945) finit par être levée, après une ultime hésitation. Rentrant chez elle, Netty hésite à tourner dans la rue de la maison familiale, « comme si je pressentais qu'elle était détruite » (54). Son dernier sentiment amalgame pourtant encore une vision idyllique de son enfance et une évocation spectrale de sa mère :

Je levai les yeux vers le deuxième étage où se trouvait notre logement. Ma mère était déjà sur le petit balcon vitré et orné de pots de géraniums qui dominait la rue. [Elle m'attendait déjà.] Comme elle semblait jeune, ma mère, beaucoup plus jeune que moi ! Comme ses cheveux lisses étaient noirs, comparés aux miens ! Car les miens grisonnaient déjà, alors que dans les siens on ne voyait pas encore une seule mèche grise. Elle était là, heureuse, faite pour connaître une vie familiale bien remplie, avec les joies et les peines de tous les jours, et non une fin cruelle, atroce, dans un village perdu où elle devait être bannie par Hitler. Elle me reconnut et me fit signe comme si je rentrais d'un voyage. Elle avait ce rire et me faisait ces signes chaque fois que je revenais d'une excursion. Je courus aussi vite que je pus vers l'escalier.

(Seghers 55–56)

L'allusion à la mort tragique de la mère de l'autrice, Hedwig Reilin, déportée au ghetto de Piaski, près de Lublin, où elle fut assassinée en 1942, est incontournable.⁸ Encore une fois, le motif magico-réaliste du brouillard, marqueur de fluidité du réel, culmine dans un moment oxymorique de clarté et de révélation (« Le brouillard gris bleu de la fatigue enveloppait tout. Et pourtant, autour de moi, il y avait cette clarté brûlante, et non pas la pénombre habituelle des cages d'escalier » ; Seghers 56), tandis que le lecteur est ramené au cadre initial du récit, le paysage mexicain de l'exil, par un glissement métaphorique n'excluant pas non plus une allusion à l'univers concentrationnaire (« La rampe de l'escalier,

⁸ Un pavé commémoratif à Hedwig Reilin honore sa mémoire dans la vieille ville de Mayence (am Fischtorplatz 23).

en se tordant et en s'arrondissant, se transforma en une énorme clôture de cactus géants, comme une palissade » ; Seghers 58).

III. La médiation indirecte de Franz Kafka

Notre analyse se veut représentative de traits distinctifs majeurs du réalisme magique historique, une catégorie appliquée ici au cas particulier allemand mais que des recherches ultérieures pourraient distinguer dans un corpus italien, français et francophone ou encore néerlandophone. Elle démontre, s'il le fallait encore, l'écart substantiel qui existe avec les formes plus tardives du réalisme magique latino-américain, puis de ses prolongements postcoloniaux et postmodernes. Pourtant, comme on l'a dit, les chemins et modalités de l'importation du réalisme magique dans le Nouveau Monde par les intellectuels latino-américains sont connus. Ils relèvent autant de la traduction espagnole des textes de Roh, accomplie dès 1927 par Fernando Vela pour la *Revista de Occidenta* qu'à la réception décisive de Kafka dans les Amériques via les différents travaux rédigés et coordonnés par Angel Flores.

Que la réception de Roh ait servi de simple prétexte à une appropriation du concept dans l'acte du transfert pour une « resémantisation » originale relève de l'évidence. En revanche, le rôle particulier de Kafka comme courroie de transmission mérite qu'on s'y attarde. Dans son essai bien connu « Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction », issu d'une conférence qu'il donna au Congrès de décembre 1954 de la *Modern Language Association* à New York (Flores 109–17, reproduit dans Zamora & Faris), Angel Flores insistait sur l'importance de l'œuvre de Kafka pour l'évolution de la littérature européenne et mondiale. Dès 1946, Flores avait déjà dirigé et fait paraître un ouvrage collectif, *The Kafka Problem*, une importante mise au point sur la réception de Kafka depuis la mort de ce dernier en 1924. Cet ouvrage collectif comprenait notamment des textes d'inspiration philosophique comme ceux d'Albert Camus, de Bernard Groethuysen ou de l'exilé allemand Paul-Louis Landsberg, actif pour la revue *Esprit* dans les années 1930 et qui mourut dans le camp de concentration de Sachsenhausen en 1944. Nul doute que Flores s'est amplement nourri de cette réflexion préalable au moment de sa conférence de 1954 qui se cristallise autour des relectures du réalisme littéraire et pictural après la Première Guerre Mondiale. Il épingle les artistes qui, loin de l'obsession d'un « réalisme photographique [...] redécouvrent le symbolisme et le réalisme magique » : Proust, Kafka ou Chirico pour la

peinture. Il retrace finalement une ligne claire d'inspiration commençant avec les Romantiques allemands E.T.A. Hoffmann et Achim von Arnim, se nourrissant au passage d'auteurs choisis du XIX^e siècle comme Gogol, Strindberg ou Edgar Allan Poe.

Kafka figure jusqu'à aujourd'hui comme une figure inspiratrice du réalisme magique latino-américain et international. Paradoxalement, il figure peu dans l'historiographie du *Magischer Realismus* historique, une appréciation que j'ai tenté de réévaluer en le considérant au contraire comme un précurseur important de cette poétique (cf. Roland *Magischer Realismus* 134 et Roland *Kafka précurseur* 250–57) sur base d'une analyse de *La Métamorphose*. Ce sont tout particulièrement les questions de perspective dans ce récit, exemplaire d'un point de vue que la narratologie allemande appelle la *Personalerzählung* – soit la combinaison d'un narrateur à la troisième personne et d'une focalisation interne⁹ – qui me semblent asseoir cette hypothèse, en ceci qu'elle favorise une irrésolution fondamentale du lecteur. Le fait de découpler l'instance qui parle de celle qui voit renforce en effet, comme le postule Anne Hegerfeldt (88) dans son étude sur le réalisme magique dans les fictions contemporaines britanniques, la confusion entre une interprétation réaliste et une interprétation métaphorique, renvoyant cette responsabilité au lecteur.

C'est bien un phénomène de même nature qui est à l'œuvre au cœur de *La Métamorphose* (tout comme d'ailleurs de *La Ville au-delà du fleuve*, un roman qui doit énormément à l'imaginaire de Kafka). On sait que le lecteur y est tributaire du point de vue du personnage-réflexeur Gregor ; ce sont sa conscience intérieure, son ressenti physique qui déterminent sa perception du réel. La *Personalerzählung* devient le mode narratif de la subversion du réel et de l'ambivalence par excellence, celui qui fait fondamentalement douter de la fiabilité du narrateur et ce d'autant plus que – pour ne rien simplifier – ce procédé narratif est appliqué par Kafka de façon très conséquente mais pas totale. Car à l'occasion de l'une ou l'autre incursion, le narrateur se distancie de la conscience de Gregor pour marquer ponctuellement une forme d'omniscience, à l'insu donc du personnage-réflexeur. Cette indétermination culmine à la fin du récit, après la mort de Gregor, vu que celui-ci n'est plus censé avoir

⁹ Claudine Raboin propose de parler de récit à la troisième personne avec « personnage-réflexeur » (70), là où dans *Théorie du récit. L'apport de la recherche allemande* (2007), John Pier parle de « situation narrative figurale » (renseignement aimablement fourni par Hélène Thiéard et Eva Sabine Wagner).

conscience des événements, or le lecteur n'aura pas ressenti de rupture de ton au niveau d'un récit dominé par la focalisation interne (cf. Roland *Kafka précurseur* 254–55).

Conclusion

La référence commune à Kafka pourrait se révéler fructueuse dans une tentative de rapprocher les critiques spécialisées du *Magischer Realismus* et du réalisme magique international qui, pour l'heure, évoluent sur des voies complètement parallèles. Outre le fait qu'elle se justifie pleinement au niveau du passage du réalisme magique entre l'Europe et le monde, elle permet d'avoir recours aussi bien aux traits distinctifs de base mis en avant chez Wendy B. Faris – en particulier la catégorie des « Unsettling Doubts » (Faris 17–21), qui fait d'ailleurs explicitement référence à *La Métamorphose* – qu'au processus que Torsten Leine appelle, dans son excellente étude sur le *Magischer Realismus*, un « double conditionnement » du lecteur (Leine 62–63).¹⁰

D'autres angles de comparaison se dégagent spontanément pour une approche croisée et inclusive des historiographies allemande et internationale du réalisme magique. La question des espaces liminaires, rituels et symboliques, porteurs d'expérience révélatrices rejoint bien l'idée des fictions qui délimitent ces « near sacred or ritual enclosures » mis en avant par Faris (Faris 24), tandis que la question d'une vision du roman postcolonial nourrie d'influences de la *Weltanschauung* de l'idéalisme romantique allemand – partant de la distinction bien connue entre le modèle du *magischer Idealist* et celui des *magische Realisten* dans un brouillon de Novalis – a été actualisée par Christopher Warnes (Warnes 20–29).

On rappellera encore le lien entre la *Traumatic Imagination* structurante du réalisme magique contemporain (Arva ; Arva and Roland) et la mémoire de court et moyen terme des récits de langue allemande fondés sur les ruines des guerres de tranchée de 1914–1918. À la lecture d'Arva ou de la monographie plus récente de Kim Anderson Sasser (2014, compte rendu de Jessica Maufort dans *Recherche littéraire*),

¹⁰ Leine emprunte ce concept au modèle d'Albrecht Koschorke dans son ouvrage *Wahrheit und Erfindung. Grundzüge einer Erzähltheorie*. Cet auteur parle d'un principe d'« oscillation entre deux perspectives incomplètes et qui, même, s'excluent mutuellement », débouchant sur un sentiment quasi existentiel d'« agitation persistante » (« fortdauernde Restunruhe », Leine 42–43 ; ma traduction).

on aspire également à une étude comparative des liens entre esthétique magico-réaliste et « strategies of belonging » de personnages subversifs, tentant de se soustraire aux conditions politiques de régimes politiques hégémoniques et totalitaires, générant racisme et ethnocentrisme. À cet égard, les recherches allemandes sur réalisme magique et « émigration intérieure » à l'époque du national-socialisme ont mené une large réflexion qui n'a jusqu'à présent pas trouvé d'écho dans l'historiographie postmoderne et postcoloniale.

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Politique de la littérature et comparatisme au prisme de la pensée queer : pour une discipline du trouble

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« Bien est vray que les preuves et raisons qui se fondent sur l'expérience et sur le fait, celles là je ne les desnoue point ; aussi n'ont elles point de bout : je les tranche souvent, comme Alexandre son neud. Après tout, c'est mettre ses conjectures à bien haut pris que d'en faire cuire un homme tout vif »
(Montaigne III, XI 1032).

« Nous savons ce qu'est la famille, le désir, un sujet humain, le discours ; nous savons ce qui est compréhensible ; nous en connaissons les limites. Je pense que ce sentiment de certitude engendre un terrible esprit de clocher »
(Judith Butler « Changer de sujet » 144–45).

« Nous obéissons à la Parole de Dieu » : c'est l'argument invoqué par les trois prêtres catholiques polonais qui, le 31 mars 2019 dans une paroisse de Gdansk, livraient aux flammes, parmi d'autres objets « liés à l'occultisme et à la magie », des exemplaires de *Harry Potter*.¹ Il faut dire qu'en leur qualité de membres de la fondation « SMS des Cieux » (*SMS Z Nieba*), ces religieux, exorcistes à leurs heures, étaient sans doute branchés en ligne directe sur la Vérité – ce qui ne les dispensa pas d'excuses publiques plaidant le « malentendu », à la suite du tollé déclenché par les images de l'autodafé mises en ligne sur leur page Facebook.² Rien de neuf pour J.K. Rowling : la voie du succès planétaire de son

¹ L'information a été diffusée en France par l'Agence France Presse (voir par exemple *France Info*).

² Source : AFP (voir par exemple *Le Point*).

jeune apprenti sorcier est balisée depuis le début des années 2000 par les bûchers que lui réservent les fondamentalistes de plusieurs religions, certains évangéliques américains en tête.³

Mais c'est désormais la gauche la plus officiellement progressiste qui reprend le flambeau de la Justice, si l'on ose dire : depuis une controverse survenue sur Twitter entre Rowling et ses fans en juin 2020 au sujet des personnes trans,⁴ des étudiants « *woke* »⁵ brûlent ses livres sur les campus, pour transphobie ; le sceau d'infamie est public : Rowling est une TERF (*trans-exclusionary-radical-feminist*).⁶ D'une chasse aux sorcières l'autre...

On sait que l'exacerbation des luttes politiques pour la reconnaissance des « identités » minoritaires entraîne une polarisation idéologique croissante du monde de la recherche universitaire, de l'enseignement et de la culture ; polarisation qui, hystérisée par sa réfraction sur les réseaux sociaux, a fini par s'étendre au débat social et politique dans son ensemble, des deux côtés de l'Atlantique. Pour m'en tenir à l'atmosphère des départements de recherche et d'enseignement en sciences humaines : un vent de haine, de mépris, de crainte et de mauvaise foi semble souffler sur un monde académique pourtant habitué à maintenir la controverse intellectuelle dans les limites du respect mutuel au nom d'un minimum de crédit accordé à la personne de son contradicteur en matière de bonne volonté – dans le sens le plus large qu'on voudra bien donner à ce terme. Caricature et dénigrement de la position adverse, stigmatisation morale

³ Voir par exemple *Forbes*. L'article inclut un entretien avec le romancier Ray Bradbury qui exprime à ce sujet, on s'en doute, une amère consternation.

⁴ Cette controverse a fait l'objet de commentaires nombreux et passionnés dans la presse comme sur les réseaux sociaux. Pour une synthèse quelque peu distanciée de ce feuilleton polémique, voir par exemple Etancelin.

⁵ Le terme, dérivé de l'anglais « *wake* », désigne dans l'argot africain-américain un état de vigilance individuelle face à l'injustice et de combativité militante contre l'oppression des minorités, en particulier contre le racisme. Popularisé au cours des années 2010 dans le sillage du mouvement *Black Lives Matter*, le terme s'est chargé, au tournant de la décennie 2020, de connotations ironiques : il sert désormais de désignation parodique pour railler les tenants d'un radicalisme de gauche nourri de ce que ses détracteurs appellent « l'idéologie intersectionnelle », mise au service d'une « *cancel culture* » vouant aux gémonies – autodafés, censures éditoriales ou pédagogiques, annulations de spectacles et licenciements d'enseignants inclus – tout ce que la sensibilité « éveillée » juge offensant. Sans préjuger du débat dans sa complexité, j'assume l'inflexion sarcastique du terme, appliqué aux incendiaires de *Harry Potter* ! (voir Dryef ; Bherer).

⁶ Voir Loire ; Nolan.

et appel à l'éviction de l'adversaire : les vieux artifices rhétoriques du pamphlet reprennent du galon. Il va de soi, à mes yeux du moins, que la probité individuelle de la très grande majorité d'entre nous n'est pas en cause, mais le climat général est en train d'obliger chacune et chacun, bon an mal an, à « choisir son camp » – et à couper les ponts avec celles et ceux de « l'autre bord », comme avec d'indignes fréquentations.⁷

Sans doute le refus de choisir mon camp – non pas entre des idées, qui devraient seules être dans l'arène, mais entre des personnes qui me semblent les unes comme les autres aussi dignes d'estime intellectuelle et de respect, éventuels « différends » inclus – a-t-il partie liée avec la défense et illustration que je m'appête à tenter, de la littérature comparée comme « discipline du trouble ». J'entends par là une discipline dont la raison d'être, parmi les sciences humaines et sociales, est d'interroger les frontières qui permettent, dans la multitude des œuvres et des pratiques relevant d'une manière ou d'une autre du littéraire,⁸ d'*identifier* « l'un » par sa différence avec « l'autre » : qu'il s'agisse de ses moyens d'approche théorique ou de ses objets d'étude, le repérage et le minutieux arpentage

⁷ On peut rappeler que, dans un contexte plus général de débat international houleux autour de la liberté d'expression face au terrorisme islamiste, les circonstances immédiates qui ont mené à cette situation de crispation hystérique au sein de l'université française sont consécutives à l'assassinat terroriste du professeur d'histoire-géographie Samuel Paty le 16 octobre 2020, peu après l'annonce par le Président Emmanuel Macron (le 2 octobre) d'un projet de loi contre les « séparatismes » qui avive la controverse autour de « l'islamophobie » institutionnelle en France (voir Meziti) : le 22 octobre, Jean-Michel Blanquer, Ministre de l'Éducation, relie l'attentat à « l'islamo-gauchisme », idéologie qui selon lui « fait des ravages à l'université », propos auxquels la Conférence des Présidents d'Université et les principaux syndicats étudiants (également visés) réagissent aussitôt avec indignation. À l'inverse, les propos du ministre reçoivent le soutien d'une centaine d'universitaires qui alertent, dans une tribune du journal *Le Monde*, sur « la persistance du déni » face à la menace que constitue la montée, à l'université, des « idéologies indigénistes, raciales et décoloniales » (Collectif, « Une centaine » ; *Manifeste des 100*). Cette tribune suscite la contestation de centaines d'universitaires, à leur tour signataires de lettres ouvertes et tribunes en France et à l'étranger (voir notamment Lentin). La polémique est encore alimentée par la création d'un « Observatoire du décolonialisme et des idéologies identitaires » (à l'adresse decolonialisme.fr) dans le sillage d'un « appel » publié sur le site du magazine *Le Point* (Collectif, « Appel ») le 13 janvier 2021.

⁸ Je n'ignore pas la difficulté que pose la question de la définition et donc des frontières mêmes du « littéraire » d'une part, des objets d'étude pouvant relever du champ de compétences de la « littérature générale et comparée » d'autre part. La question qui m'occupe est contiguë à cette interrogation, sans se confondre avec elle.

des *différences* est le gagne-pain du (ou de la) comparatiste. Mais pour cette raison même, c'est une seconde nature chez les comparatistes que d'apprécier le caractère historiquement construit de ces différences : qu'il s'agisse de différences de méthodes entre les disciplines ou entre les partis pris théoriques, de caractères « nationaux », de genres littéraires, ou de bien d'autres choses encore, le constat que les différences permettant d'identifier une certaine réalité valent rarement « de tout temps, en tous lieux » peut avoir de quoi troubler quelques « évidences ».

Dans l'inlassable réflexion que notre discipline mène sur elle-même depuis ses débuts au milieu du XIX^e siècle,⁹ ces dernières années ont été ponctuées d'importants états des lieux sur les reconfigurations apportées au champ disciplinaire de la littérature comparée par le retentissement mondial des « études culturelles » d'inspiration anglo-saxonne,¹⁰ en résonance désormais avec la visibilité internationale inédite des discours critiques sur le « genre » et la « race », conjuguée non sans frictions avec la nouvelle vague des luttes féministes. Prenant acte de cette nouvelle donne – celle qui, en particulier, fait désormais du mot *genre* un « signifiant-maître » de toute prise de parole en langue française, par-delà même les discours savants et le débat médiatique,¹¹ alors que « *gender* » était encore largement considéré en France comme un intraduisible dans

⁹ « Le comparatisme comme approche critique » a donné son intitulé au XX^e Congrès de l'AILC qui s'est tenu à Paris en 2013 (voir Tomiche). La critique autoréflexive est consubstantielle à la littérature comparée, discipline dont Françoise Lavocat a rappelé en 2012, dans une étude de synthèse, « le caractère hautement agonistique » (Lavocat § 2) : commentant le tour radical qu'a pris dans les années 2000 le diagnostic, par ailleurs récurrent (Wellek ; Etiemble ; Weisstein), d'une crise de la discipline (Spivak ; Damrosch), elle précise : « Les enjeux de cette réflexivité ne sont pas, et n'ont jamais été, purement scientifiques : ils répercutent des conflits idéologiques et déclinent des rapports de forces entre pays, aires culturelles, sphères de pensée, dans un monde récemment devenu, on l'a assez dit, multipolaire » (Lavocat § 1).

¹⁰ Voir par exemple Clavaron ; Plate. Le XXX^e Congrès de la SFLGC (Dijon, 2008) était consacré aux modalités d'un essor des « études culturelles » au sein du comparatisme français, dans le contexte de l'influence croissante des *cultural studies* anglo-saxonnes (voir Dominguez Leiva *et al.*). J'ai tenté de montrer ailleurs (voir Perrot-Corpet « Affinité de la littérature et du comparatisme ») qu'il y avait eu là une rencontre manquée : la relégation des études sur le genre et le fait colonial aux marges du champ de recherches défini comme « comparatisme culturaliste » dans le sillage de ce congrès ne me semble pas compatible avec la vocation critique qu'il revendique.

¹¹ J'emprunte cette affirmation à Éric Marty dans son dialogue avec le psychanalyste Jacques-Alain Miller : il énonce sa certitude que « le signifiant 'genre', depuis qu'il est apparu, a pris la place d'un signifiant-maître, un signifiant indispensable à tout

les années 2000 (Planté) – , j’aimerais repartir de cette position centrale acquise par les questions d’identité en matière de sexe, de genre et d’orientation sexuelle¹² pour tenter un pas de côté – avec le vif espoir qu’on n’y verra pas d’emblée un réactionnaire pas en arrière.

Ainsi, je suis frappée par les affinités qu’on peut reconnaître entre la pensée queer¹³ et la démarche comparatiste – du moins, entendues l’une et l’autre d’une certaine façon : c’est l’intuition initiale qui motive mon propos, et que j’essaierai de clarifier dans un premier temps.

D’autre part, un point de rencontre spécifique entre théorie queer et littérature comparée tient au rôle que joue dans l’une et l’autre le travail de la traduction, sur le plan très concret des passages d’une langue et d’une culture à l’autre, et des effets qui en résultent, en particulier en France – je pense ici, dans le cas de la théorie queer, aux allers-retours transatlantiques de la « French Theory » –, mais aussi sur le plan d’un imaginaire de la traduction, riche de potentialités politiques.

J’espère que j’aurai pu montrer, à l’issue de cette étude, la direction possible d’une incorporation pleine et entière de la pensée queer – comme geste de décentrement – à la recherche française en littérature comparée – dans son attention à la part d’étrange singularité qu’elle a vocation à mettre au jour dans toute littérature, passée et présente, occidentale ou extra-occidentale.

Théorie queer et littérature comparée : pensées de la défamiliarisation

Une précision s’impose pour commencer : j’ai conscience de m’aventurer avec une certaine naïveté dans un champ de réflexion qui fait déjà l’objet de recherches importantes et diversifiées et a donné lieu depuis les années 1990 à des publications majeures en langue anglaise. Mais c’est

sujet parlant, et qui le met en demeure de se demander comment on faisait avant pour parler sans lui » (Marty et Miller n.p.).

¹² On sait que ces différentes questions sont étroitement imbriquées, comme en témoigne l’acronyme « LGBTQI+ » qui les juxtapose (tout en laissant ouverte la liste des « identités » de genre et/ou de sexe et/ou d’orientation sexuelle grâce au signe « + »).

¹³ Je revendique ici l’absence d’italiques comme la marque d’une incorporation linguistique du terme, avec une signification quelque peu différente de celle de l’original « *queer* ». Voir *infra*.

précisément depuis cette « myopie » du regard français sur des questions qui ont fait leur chemin dans la recherche française en littérature comparée *via* la référence – hérissée de polémiques – aux *cultural studies*, que je peux tenter d’apporter une petite pierre à l’édifice commun, dans un effort pour « *queeriser* la discipline » comparatiste à la française, suivant la proposition formulée dès 2003 par Beatriz Preciado :

L’université française est l’un des systèmes disciplinaires les plus puissants et des plus *straight* qui soient. La théorie *queer* entretient une relation critique avec la formation des disciplines et des savoirs et ce, pas seulement en sexualisant l’espace déssexualisé de l’université, mais aussi en subvertissant les normes qui régissent la division des enseignements ainsi que celles de la spécialisation en matière de recherche. Il s’agit donc de *queeriser* les disciplines.

(Preciado 83)

Je ne me risquerai pas à tenter d’esquisser un « état de l’art » concernant la productivité scientifique de la *queer theory* dans le champ des études de *Comparative Literature* : on sait que les figures fondatrices de la *queer theory* sont des professeures de littérature comparée.¹⁴ On sait également que les études de genre sont incorporées de longue date aux études comparatistes anglo-saxonnes (Higonnet « *Borderwork* »), justifiant la création par Margaret Higonnet, en 2004, du *Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies* de l’AILC, dont les activités scientifiques prennent clairement acte, depuis une bonne décennie, du tournant majeur réalisé, au sein des études de genre, par la *queer theory* et les *queer studies*. Il n’y a donc pas lieu de s’étonner que la proposition, dont je me fais l’écho ici, d’une affinité profonde entre littérature comparée et pensée *queer* ait été formulée clairement dès 2010 par le Comité de Recherche en question, dans *Comparatively Queer : Interrogating Identities across Time and Cultures* (Hayes *et al.*). Dans l’introduction intitulée “Comparing Queerly, Queering Comparison: Theorizing Identities Between Cultures, Histories, and Disciplines,” Jarrod Hayes, Margaret Higonnet et William Spurlin¹⁵ exposent en ces termes la visée du recueil

¹⁴ Je pense à Judith Butler (UC Berkeley), à Teresa de Lauretis (UCLA), à Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (City University of New York).

¹⁵ William J. Spurlin succède en 2010 à Margaret Higonnet, à la présidence du *Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies*, présidé depuis 2016 par Liedeke Plate.

de contributions qu'ils ont constitué – celle de mettre en lumière une équivalence entre le mouvement comparatiste et le décentrement queer :

we hope to convince our readers that its title is queerly redundant. If queer is always queer in relation to the normative, it is only queer in historical and cultural context. If queer differs from context to context, it might nonetheless be considered a concept capable of crossing both time and cultures. But if we are going to allow the queer to travel in such a way, we should deploy it comparatively.

(Hayes *et al.* 2)

Les auteurs prennent soin de souligner que les forces d'ébranlement respectives des *queer studies* et des *comparative studies*, renforcées l'une par l'autre, offrent un excellent moyen de corriger certains préjugés inhérents à l'histoire de ces champs disciplinaires, tels le « présentisme » des *queer studies* nord-américaines ou l'eurocentrisme des *comparative studies* :

Comparatively Queer works across the varied and multiple points of intersection of these two fields, thereby strengthening their interdisciplinary potential. And crossing queer and comparative studies across disciplines will challenge and destabilize the frequent Anglocentric biases of both fields as well as the frequently presentist assumptions of queer studies – which finds its historic beginnings in the Anglo-American academy – and the Eurocentric nationalisms of comparative studies.

(Hayes *et al.* 2)

Je fais partie des lectrices que ce double effort pour ouvrir des espaces de pensée dans l'entre-deux (« *in-between* »)¹⁶ des catégories identitaires convainc totalement – que ces catégories relèvent « au départ » des études queer (lorsqu'elles interrogent les assignations de genre et de sexe ou l'orientation sexuelle) ou de la littérature comparée (lorsqu'elles interrogent les définitions aptes à rendre compte de productions esthétiques précisément situées les unes par rapport aux autres, dans le temps long de l'histoire des sociétés). C'est la raison pour laquelle je regrette beaucoup que les « biais » et autres préjugés évoqués par les auteurs de *Comparatively Queer* n'aient pas encore permis que leurs ouvrages soient traduits en français. De fait, l'incorporation des apports de la théorie queer

¹⁶ “The key to queering comparison and comparing queerly, we will argue, lies precisely in the “in-between” that these crossings create” (Hayes *et al.* 2).

aux études françaises de littérature comparée est loin d'aller de soi : c'est très dommage, car une meilleure compréhension, en France, de ce que recèle la proposition d'une pensée « *comparatively queer* » contribuerait peut-être à dissiper les malentendus qui continuent de s'épaissir, entre les comparatistes de la vieille école « à la française » et les chercheurs et chercheuses qui, en nombre croissant dans la jeune génération, prennent acte du « tournant intersectionnel » des études littéraires.¹⁷

Ainsi, dans une synthèse de 2019 offrant un état de l'art des relations entre littérature comparée et études culturelles vues depuis la France, Yves Clavaron rapproche lui aussi la subversion queer et le « potentiel de défamiliarisation propre à la démarche comparatiste » (Clavaron 15 ; voir Lavocat), mais pour constater aussitôt le peu de succès de cette proposition dans la recherche française :

Les effets contestataires et subversifs des études *queer* peuvent rejoindre le potentiel de défamiliarisation propre à la démarche comparatiste, qui travaille la confrontation entre des textes et contextes divers sans chercher à ramener l'inconnu au connu, mais l'application de la théorie *queer* à un corpus littéraire connaît un succès bien plus important dans le monde anglophone qu'en France. Et comme pour les études postcoloniales, ce sont souvent des Britanniques ou des Américains issus des *French Studies* qui abordent des corpus francophones, à l'image de James Day qui a édité *Queer Sexualities in French and Francophone Literature and Film*, ouvrage collectif qui contient un article d'un des rares spécialistes français de la question, Pierre Zoberman.

(Clavaron 15)

¹⁷ J'emploie à dessein une formulation quelque peu polémique, appliquée aux études littéraires : les apports aux études de genre d'une part, aux études postcoloniales d'autre part, et aux sciences sociales en général, de notions comme « l'intersectionnalité » et la « colonialité » (avec son corollaire : la vigilance « décoloniale »), sont désormais sur le devant de la scène universitaire et médiatique en France : souvent caricaturées ou mal comprises par les « pour » (en marge de la communauté restreinte des enseignants-chercheurs le plus souvent) comme par les « contre » (qui tendent à confondre les slogans des uns avec les champs de recherche des autres), ces notions sont devenues les porte-drapeaux et les épouvantails d'une bataille idéologique dont les manifestations sont de plus en plus inquiétantes. J'entends par « tournant intersectionnel des études littéraires » les répercussions de cette bataille idéologique à « l'arrière » d'un front constitué d'abord de sociologues, de politistes ou philosophes du politique, et d'historiens. Sur les étapes de cette crispation du débat intellectuel en France depuis les années 2000, voir par exemple Roudinesco.

De fait, Pierre Zoberman est le seul chercheur français à faire partie du *Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies* de l'AILC ; et réciproquement, les seules contributions de William Spurlin publiées en français, du moins à ma connaissance, l'ont été dans le cadre de travaux dirigés ou co-dirigés par Pierre Zoberman¹⁸ qui trace, avec Anne Tomiche en particulier,¹⁹ les lignes pionnières d'une incorporation pleine et entière des questions de genre et d'« identités » sexuelles dans la recherche française en littérature comparée.

C'est dans leur sillage que je m'inscris, en cherchant la voie d'un comparatisme français « au prisme de la théorie queer », assumant de tenir compte des allers-retours théoriques qui font que la théorie queer, des deux côtés de l'Atlantique, « n'existe que comme traduction » (Preciado 79) – et, dans mon cas, dans une traduction « en République française ». ²⁰ Cette aspiration me rend très sensible à la concordance entre la remise en cause de toute « identité » répertoriée, qui est au principe de la pensée queer,²¹ et cette « herméneutique de la défamiliarisation » que Françoise Lavocat reconnaît la plus souhaitable pour la littérature comparée lorsqu'elle définit « la visée du comparatisme aujourd'hui » : car « la mise en relation du connu et de l'inconnu ne rend pas seulement possible la découverte en traçant des voies d'accès », écrit-elle en 2012, « elle change notre regard sur ce que nous croyions connu » :

L'opération de défamiliarisation²² est une conversion du regard qui nécessite un travail. Schleiermacher recommandait de faire comme si l'on ne

¹⁸ Voir Spurlin « Pour un nouveau tracé » ; Garnier ; Spurlin “*Rein bleiben*” ; Zoberman *Queer 1* ; Zoberman *Écritures du corps*.

¹⁹ Voir Tomiche et Zoberman. Anne Tomiche est la fondatrice en 2019, avec le spécialiste de littérature anglaise Frédéric Regard (membre du Conseil Scientifique de l'Institut du Genre dès sa création en 2012), du groupe « Philomel », réseau interdisciplinaire d'études sur les questions de genre au sein de Sorbonne Université, qui bénéficie désormais d'un soutien pérenne de l'université. Anne-Isabelle François (Université Paris 3-Sorbonne Nouvelle) est une autre figure pionnière de l'articulation entre la pensée queer et la littérature comparée en France (voir notamment François et Zoberman).

²⁰ Voir Perreau et *infra*.

²¹ Par les temps qui courent, il faut y insister : « Car la queerité [*queerness*] ne peut jamais définir une identité : elle ne peut que l'inquiéter [*disturb one*] » (Edelman 306).

²² Comme elle le rappelle ici dans une note : « la défamiliarisation a d'abord été théorisée par les formalistes russes, en particulier Victor Chklovski (*L'art comme*

comprenait pas, précisément lorsqu'on a l'impression de comprendre (1809–1810, 1987, p. 73). [...] La démarche comparatiste contrarie la tendance cognitive naturelle qui est de ramener l'inconnu au connu.

Les deux opérations d'exploration et de défamiliarisation sont complémentaires. Elles définissent à mes yeux la visée du comparatisme aujourd'hui, en ce qu'elles nous ouvrent de nouveaux espaces de savoir, dans l'espace et dans le temps.

(Lavocat n.p.)

Françoise Lavocat ne manque pas de reconnaître l'exemple qu'ont donné les études de genre et les études postcoloniales d'une nécessaire critique de « la bonne conscience qui s'exprime parfois sans retenue dans les écrits comparatistes ». Mais c'est pour leur dénier aussitôt les qualités d'« inquiétude » et de « réflexivité critique active » qu'elle réclame pour le comparatisme – affirmant en effet que les études de genre et les études postcoloniales se sont « arrog[é] elles-mêmes le privilège de la position juste » (Lavocat n.p.).

Sans préjuger de la pertinence d'une affirmation aussi générale appliquée à tous les cas particuliers, on peut suggérer que la réception (désormais plus largement étendue en France qu'en 2012), de la pensée queer, née au confluent des études de genre et des études postcoloniales, suggère de nouvelles résonances : ainsi, je trouve frappante la similitude entre, d'une part, une démarche comparatiste qui, définie par Françoise Lavocat comme une « herméneutique de la défamiliarisation, opère comme une métathéorie », porteuse d'un « engagement éthique » fondé tout ensemble sur la remise en cause des évidences et sur le désir de connaissance et, d'autre part, le mouvement de désassignation des corps et d'incessante relance théorique²³ qui met au principe de la pensée queer un questionnement radicalement inconfortable de tout discours de connaissance, engagé au service d'une reconnaissance émancipatrice de toute forme de vie. « Le comparatisme occupe un lieu fondamentalement instable », conclut Françoise Lavocat :

Exploration et défamiliarisation (des objets et des théories) sont les deux aspects complémentaires de la visée que permet cette position qu'il faut souhaiter inconfortable. C'est de cette place mal délimitée, donc toujours plus

technique, 1917) ; elle est assimilée à la fonction de l'art. Le terme est couramment employé dans ce sens. »

²³ Voir Zoberman *Queer 1* 21–62.

ou moins menacée, que peuvent être minées les histoires nationales incrustées et les concepts impensés ; que l'on peut faire émerger des singularités dans l'uniformité prétendue de notre monde globalisé ou du désert du passé oublié.

(Lavocat n.p.)

Ces lignes, qui dessinent une ambition à laquelle je souscris pleinement pour la littérature comparée, me semblent pouvoir aussi bien s'appliquer à la théorie queer – du moins telle que je la comprends dans ma « traduction » d'universitaire française non engagée dans le militantisme LGBT+.

***Whatever works* : (pourquoi ne pas) vivre avec le trouble**

J'ai noté avec amusement, dans ma quête de résonances queer dans le comparatisme français, le retour du même mot – “*whatever*” – pour donner son titre à la revue lancée en 2018 par le groupe de recherche italien CIRQUE (*Centro Interuniversitario de Ricerca Queer*) – *Whatever. A Transdisciplinary Journal of Queer Theories and Studies* – et pour désigner le fameux « bricolage » méthodologique²⁴ qui permet au comparatisme, entendu comme « herméneutique de la défamiliarisation », d'opérer comme une métathéorie. Pour la citer une dernière fois, Françoise Lavocat choisit de défendre le « pluralisme théorique » en littérature comparée pour des raisons pragmatiques de résistance face aux effets de mode (en l'espèce, celle des études postcoloniales),²⁵ mais surtout pour des raisons épistémologiques :

²⁴ À sa suite (Lavocat note 46), je rappelle que la notion vient de Claude Lévi-Strauss : il oppose « l'ingénieur » (qui subordonne à son projet l'élaboration des outils et matières premières dont il a besoin) au « bricoleur », dont la règle est « de toujours s'arranger avec 'les moyens du bord', c'est-à-dire un ensemble à chaque instant fini d'outils et de matériaux, hétéroclites au surplus. » (Lévi-Strauss 27 ; voir Lallement 181).

²⁵ « [I] paraît évident qu'au sein de ce qu'on appelle la littérature comparée, une multitude d'approches coexistent ; il s'agirait même de renforcer cette diversité, afin de diminuer la domination autoritaire de telle mode ou de telle école, et pour qu'il ne soit pas obligatoire d'aborder, par exemple, tous les sujets à travers le filtre des études post-coloniales pour avoir droit de cité dans la communauté mondiale des comparatistes » (Lavocat n.p.).

En outre, il me semble aller de soi que, selon les objets, ce sont les derniers apports de la narratologie, ou de la logique des mondes possibles, ou de la philosophie morale, ou *whatever works*, qui seront les plus adéquats et les plus pertinents. [...] D'un point de vue épistémologique, il me semble que les combinaisons de théories (le « bricolage »), ou les théories qui favorisent une approche de la complexité sont mieux adaptées au « pluri-objet », en d'autres termes aux objets connectés ou mis en réseau de la littérature comparée. [...]

En effet l'effet déstabilisateur que j'ai choisi de mettre au centre de la démarche comparatiste affecte les théories envisagées comme des outils ; elle les met efficacement à l'épreuve.

(Lavocat n.p.)

C'est un « effet déstabilisateur » très comparable qui anime le principe de questionnement des frontières délimitant les catégories identitaires, y compris disciplinaires et méthodologiques, par lequel les fondateurs de la revue *Whatever* définissent la visée de la pensée queer :

Queer theory is not an idle pastime but a basic and effective tool to achieve change: it can accommodate any disciplinary perspective because the world is bigger than any possible description; it can accommodate any methodology because the world is more complex than any possible model. [...] As well as celebrating the affective roots of queer (with an allusion to Maria Bello's 2016 book, *Whatever. Love is Love*),²⁶ *Whatever* aims to emphasize the difference between the lack of methodological and disciplinary awareness of “anything goes” and the responsible and self-reflective eclecticism of “whatever works.”

(Burgio *et al.* iv)

L'effet déstabilisateur du « *whatever works* » – ou des « moyens du bord » : ceux du « bricolage » selon Lévi-Strauss – a partie liée avec l'opération de traduction, quels que soient les objets de cette traduction : mots de langues différentes, notions, valeurs, saveurs, sensations... Il s'agit toujours – du moins : c'est tout l'enjeu éthique et politique de la

²⁶ Voir Bello. Le sous-titre de cette autobiographie dans laquelle l'actrice américaine révèle sa nouvelle vie partagée avec une femme – “*Questioning the Labels We Give Ourselves*” – est bien au diapason de la mise en question des catégories et de la déconstruction des performances identitaires qui est au principe de la pensée queer, tandis que la place quasi tutélaire donnée à une « célébrité » de magazine à l'orée de cette publication académique sert le refus de souscrire à la traditionnelle coupure entre culture légitime et culture populaire.

traduction dès lors qu'elle n'est pas au service d'une visée dominatrice, voire exterminatrice de ce qui diffère et donc *échappe*²⁷ – d'une mise en rapport du connu et de l'inconnu, dont l'enjeu est à la fois de s'ouvrir à l'inconnu, à l'étranger, et de se familiariser avec lui, de le « connaître » – sans pour autant lui dénier son étrangeté (Kristeva ; Edwards) en le « ramenant au connu » : sans se l'approprier – c'est-à-dire sans l'anéantir ou l'abolir.

J'aborde ici aux rives de questionnements vastes et complexes dont je dois me contenter d'indiquer seulement la direction : la traduction, devenue une branche à part entière des études comparatistes, est également un sujet de prédilection des études queer, ce qui paraît logique si l'on considère avec Judith Butler que « le genre est un site de traduction culturelle » – au sens où « nous avons une reconstitution *a posteriori* de la performance [de genre] par les normes de réception – ce qui peut produire de très intéressants problèmes de traduction et des malentendus interculturels » (Butler « Changer de sujet » 126). Plus largement, la conscience du caractère culturellement construit des normes quelles qu'elles soient, et du caractère « situé » de tout discours de « connaissance », fait de la théorie queer un lieu de réflexion aussi crucial que peut l'être le champ des études comparatistes, sur les enjeux de la traduction, ses moyens et ses effets.²⁸ À défaut de pouvoir creuser une telle question ici, je m'en tiens à une remarque : est-ce un pur hasard si l'expérience de leurs échanges avec l'auditoire plurilingue et pluriculturel qui emplit leurs salles de cours est mise en avant par trois enseignantes-chercheuses en littérature comparée, comme un aliment puissant pour leur réflexion théorique dans les domaines, respectivement, de la littérature comparée (Françoise Lavocat), de la théorie queer (Judith Butler) et de la traduction (Tiphaine Samoyault) ?²⁹

Un autre aspect du problème – celui de la « traduction » des textes théoriques et des concepts, et partant, celui de toutes les distorsions, malentendus et jusqu'aux métamorphoses qui caractérisent les phénomènes de transfert culturel (Espagne) – est particulièrement retors dans

²⁷ On sait à quel point elle l'a été dans l'histoire des sociétés, et l'est toujours bien souvent ! Voir notamment Samoyault, *Traduction et violence*.

²⁸ À titre d'exemple, le congrès « Queer Studies : Genre et traduction », Université de Montréal, 18–23 juin 2018.

²⁹ Voir Lavocat n.p. ; Butler « Changer de sujet » 98–100 ; Samoyault « L'agonistique du traduire » 243–245.

le cas des *queer studies* et de la « théorie queer ». L'histoire des allers-retours transatlantiques de la pensée poststructuraliste française et de la *French Theory*, inspiratrice(s) de la *queer theory*, est en elle-même un passionnant champ de manœuvres intellectuel³⁰ – et de bataille idéologique, bien entendu.

Pour m'en tenir, ici encore, à effleurer la question, j'avancerai deux remarques à propos de certains mauvais procès qu'on peut faire en France à la théorie queer, sur fond d'un anti-américanisme aussi séculaire que fantasmatique (Dufoix ; Perreau ; Tournès). D'abord, on peut souligner que l'attention portée aux questions de race, de genre et d'orientation sexuelle depuis les années 1990 est mondiale, les États-Unis et leur dense réseau de postes universitaires jouant par-dessus tout le rôle de carrefour et de chambre d'échos.³¹ Par ailleurs, et c'est un corollaire de ma première remarque, la pensée queer a beau donner lieu à des publications surtout en langue anglaise (par exemple, les articles de la revue italienne *Whatever* sont le plus souvent rédigés dans cette langue de communication internationale), comme les premiers grands noms à lui être attachés sont le plus souvent américains (mais des figures fondatrices comme Monique Wittig et Teresa de Lauretis, Européennes de formation, suffiraient à nuancer cette idée, sans parler même du rôle séminal joué par les « French Theorists » Foucault, Lacan, Deleuze et Derrida) : la *queer theory*, loin d'être en elle-même « américaine », est au contraire le fruit d'une résistance marginale à la pensée hétéronormative qui domine la société américaine, modèle de la mondialisation néolibérale (Preciado 80–82).

Concernant maintenant l'emprunt à la langue anglaise du mot « queer » : le maintien du terme « queer » dans la formule « théorie

³⁰ Voir notamment Cusset *French Theory* ; Marty ; Perreau *Qui a peur de la théorie queer ?* ; Roudinesco. À propos de malentendus, je précise que j'emploie ici des formules comme « *queer theory* » et « théorie queer » par commodité, tout en sachant qu'il s'agit d'un champ de recherche rien moins qu'unifié, traversé de débats théoriques souvent vifs et de prises de position parfois antagonistes.

³¹ Pour ne prendre qu'un exemple, la théorie décoloniale, actuellement si décriée en France comme produit des campus américains, est née au début des années 1990 – dans le contexte des 500 ans de la Conquête espagnole – des travaux du « grupo colonialidad/modernidad » animé par des sociologues et philosophes hispano-américains, en particulier le Péruvien Aníbal Quijano, l'Argentin Walter Mignolo et le Portoricain Nelson Maldonado (voir Castro-Gómez y Grosfoguel ; Lander ; Quijano).

queer » est loin d'aller de soi, parce que ce calque lexical achève d'effacer le stigmate attaché au terme anglais – *queer* : tordu, bizarre, mais aussi « pédale » ou « gouine » – : du slogan « *We're here, we're queer, get used to it!* » scandé en 1990 par les activistes new-yorkais de l'organisation *Queer Nation*, au recours à la formule inédite « *queer theory* » par Teresa de Lauretis dans une conférence universitaire faite au même moment, l'enjeu était celui d'un renversement de l'injure, d'une réappropriation provocatrice du terme, en vue d'un travail de « resignification » (Butler « Changer de sujet » 135–141). Le succès rencontré par ce renversement a rapidement nourri la controverse quant à la validité de formules comme « *queer studies* » ou « *queer theory* » – récusées dès 1993 par la même Teresa de Lauretis qui regrettait leur récupération institutionnelle,³² tandis qu'à l'inverse Judith Butler, finalement convaincue par l'efficacité émancipatrice de cette réappropriation, a longtemps été trop sensible à la force blessante de l'injure pour accepter cette étiquette apposée à son ouvrage féministe *Gender Trouble*.³³ En France, c'est au contraire la lisse neutralité d'un terme étranger à l'histoire de la langue française qui, parce qu'elle permet de masquer la force contestataire liée aux revendications des minorités LGBT+, fait débat : comme le note avec une pointe de sarcasme Bruno Perreau, il y a loin, de l'acceptabilité académique d'une lénifiante « théorie queer », à celle d'une hypothétique « théorie de la pédale » ou d'une « théorie des tordu/es » (Perreau « La réception du geste *queer* » 123–126).

Soit. Mais pourquoi ne pas voir dans cet effacement du stigmate la chance de nouvelles alliances, de nouvelles connexions, à même de favoriser cette *queerisation* du regard dont l'enjeu principal est peut-être la prise de conscience de l'historicité et, partant, de la fragilité, voire de la bizarrerie (*queerness*) de toute norme censée assurer la lisibilité du monde social qui nous entoure ? Pour revenir à la question de la recherche comparatiste en littérature : le fait que toute norme relève, d'une manière ou d'une autre, d'un système politique de représentation fondé sur le binarisme de genre et l'hétérosexualité (De Lauretis ; Butler « Trouble dans le genre » ; Wittig) ne me semble pas obliger à cantonner la *queerisation* du regard à la stricte *thématique* du « genre » et des questions d'orientation sexuelle. Il me semble bien plutôt que l'attention portée à tout ce qui, dans les textes littéraires, manifeste ou produit du *trouble*, est de nature à

³² Voir Halperin 339.

³³ Voir son introduction à la nouvelle édition de 1999 (Butler *Trouble dans le genre* 25).

faire progresser la prise de conscience – émancipatrice par principe – de l'historicité des normes.

Ici, je voudrais encore souligner l'importance prise, pour la réception française de la pensée queer, par un faux-sens sciemment consenti par Éric Fassin et Cynthia Kraus dans leur édition française de *Gender Trouble*³⁴ : la conversion de l'anglais « *trouble* » en son (relatif) faux-ami français « *trouble* » fait que, de la « *difficulté* », du « *problème* », voire des « *ennuis* », on est passé au brouillage, à la confusion ; mais, de l'anglais au français, on est également passé d'une connotation essentiellement négative et volontiers liée au conflit, à une connotation plus ambivalente et volontiers chargée d'érotisme, ou au moins de l'excitation tout ensemble sensuelle et intellectuelle que suscite la découverte de l'inconnu. C'est en tout cas cette nuance que cultive une spécialiste française des pratiques artistiques queer, Muriel Plana, qui intitule un chapitre de l'ouvrage collectif *Corps troublés* : « *Corps/Relation : Érotique et politique du trouble* ». Dans l'introduction de l'ouvrage précédent, *Esthétique(s) queer*, elle défend l'idée, à laquelle je souscris, que la particularité première du queer consiste « à troubler la relation entre le sujet et l'objet (de la lecture, du désir, de l'art, du discours, de la pensée) » : il ne devient praticable pour la recherche en art et en littérature

qu'à condition d'être associé *a priori* non pas à une définition une et stable mais à un ensemble de représentations privilégiées, d'attitudes face au monde et à l'art et surtout d'interrogations multiples qui ont quelque chose à voir [...] avec *l'articulation problématique [...] entre identité, langage et pouvoir*.

Ces contenus complexes qui critiquent des états de fait ou de droit en les *troublant*, dans le sens où ils provoquent un certain malaise chez le lecteur/spectateur mais procèdent aussi et surtout au brouillage des oppositions et des différenciations [...] modifient à leur tour [...] des représentations de réalités psychologiques et sociales peu communes, de fantasmes originaux, concernant le corps et les identités, et des interrogations politiques et/ou métaphysiques sur la condition humaine et sur les définitions même de l'humain.

(Plana et Sounac *Esthétique(s) queer* 12)

³⁴ Eric Fassin s'en explique lors d'une séance du séminaire « Genre et autorité à l'Odéon : contrepoints » animée par Anne Tomiche et Frédéric Regard le 17 octobre 2020 (voir Tomiche « Genre et autorité »).

Cette extension du décentrement queer au trouble jeté sur les jeux d'articulation entre identité, langage et pouvoir dont sont tissés nos habituels sentiments d'évidences familières rend plus sensible la connexion entre le questionnement queer, le travail de la traduction et le comparatisme du trouble tel que le pratique par exemple Myriam Suchet – qui définit son travail de comparatiste comme l'exploration d'un trouble sans fin : celui d'une conscience toujours plus lucide de « l'intraduisible », compris avec Barbara Cassin comme « ce que l'on ne cesse pas de traduire » (Cassin xvii).³⁵ Contre le « comparatisme universalisant » et ses impensés eurocentrés, Myriam Suchet revendique avec Ute Heidmann un « comparatisme différentiel »,³⁶ concluant son ouvrage sur les littératures hétérolingues par ces mots : « Mon propre *ethos* comme chercheuse d'une littérature comparée différentielle sera, autant que possible, celui d'une étrangère professionnelle » (Suchet *Outils* 221).

Certaines figures de la pensée queer (comme Sam Bourcier) reprochent à Judith Butler son « institutionnalisation » jointe à l'inflexion humaniste de sa réflexion – au détriment de l'analyse frontale des catégories de sexe et de genre – sur les limites de l'humain et du non humain qu'inscrivent les normes discursives dans nos représentations, notamment dans les situations de crise politique et de lutte armée. Pour ma part, je trouve intéressant le fait qu'une évolution comparable – de la déconstruction du « système sexe/genre » (Rubin) à une interrogation sur la connaissance du réel et les conditions au gré desquelles il devient possible de vivre ensemble dans le monde – se retrouve chez une autre figure tutélaire du « postféminisme » queer comme Donna Haraway : elle propose dans son dernier ouvrage de « vivre avec le trouble » (pour reprendre le titre de la traduction française) : en version originale *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016), où la part dysphorique du terme anglais « trouble » (liée en particulier ici à la destruction écologique) est l'objet d'une réflexion qui cherche à la rédimmer en assumant l'intrication troublante de l'humain et du non humain, en créant d'inédites parentés (*kin*) qui ouvrent la voie d'un possible avenir commun.

³⁵ Voir Suchet *L'imaginaire bétérolingue* 23–28.

³⁶ Voir Heidmann 109.

Conclusion : la littérature, pratique théorique du trouble

François Cusset emprunte cette formule althusserienne – « pratique théorique » – afin de caractériser l'effort constant que fait Judith Butler pour chercher ses arguments théoriques dans « l'analyse de situations vécues où se révélerait, mieux qu'ailleurs la relativité des normes [...] » (Cusset « Intérieur *queer* » 15). La littérature, en particulier, offre à la pensée queer un réservoir inépuisable de ces expériences subjectives qui parviennent à faire affleurer à la lecture la part d'invisible, d'indicible ou d'impensable, que recèlent les normes de la représentation en vigueur dans une société donnée, à une époque donnée. On sait l'influence exercée par la lecture de Kafka sur Judith Butler dans *Gender Trouble*, ou l'importance fondatrice pour les *queer studies* de la relecture de certains classiques de la modernité (comme Proust, James ou Melville) par Eve Kosofsky Segwick dans *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).

Cependant, certains chercheurs très investis dans les études queer comme Pierre Zoberman (lui-même spécialiste du XVII^e siècle) ont en commun avec des théoriciens de la littérature comparée comme Françoise Lavocat (spécialiste du XVI^e siècle) de reprocher à leur domaine de recherche un « présentisme » qui menace de tronquer leurs perspectives théoriques respectives, et contre lequel ils luttent pied à pied en favorisant avec efficacité l'exploration de corpus antérieurs au XIX^e siècle et/ou non occidentaux. Je voudrais, en guise de conclusion, esquisser un pas dans cette direction, en évoquant la prégnance de ce trouble – très sensible à un regard comparatiste ouvert au prisme de la pensée queer – dans un texte de la première modernité européenne : le *Tiers Livre* (1546) de Rabelais.

On doit à Terence Cave quelques analyses magistrales de perturbations textuelles qui, dans des « textes troublés au seuil de la modernité » (Cave *Pré-histoires*) comme ceux de Rabelais, Ronsard ou Montaigne, dans un contexte intellectuel européen marqué par une conscience aiguë de la pluralité des langues et des croyances (Cave *Pré-histoires II*), sont « l'indice d'une incertitude épistémologique, d'une angoisse ontologique ou axiologique [...], une sorte de fêlure dont l'auteur et ses contemporains ne sont peut-être pas pleinement conscients, mais qu'ils ressentent comme un malaise, une tache floue à l'horizon de la pensée » (*Pré-histoires* 15). Les « ondes de choc » (*Pré-histoires* 23) produites par la redécouverte de la philosophie sceptique grecque au XVI^e siècle jouent

un rôle crucial dans cette déstabilisation des cadres du savoir, dont naîtra la modernité littéraire.³⁷

Je voudrais juste faire remarquer à quel point la force émancipatrice, radicalement antidogmatique, de défamiliarisation des « évidences » acquises, qui est au principe de la démarche comparatiste comme de la théorie queer, trouve sa pleine mise en pratique textuelle dans le *Tiers Livre*, objet textuel extrêmement *bizarre* dans lequel, sous couvert d'accompagner Panurge dans son enquête pour savoir s'il peut suivre sans crainte son envie de prendre femme ou s'il sera cocu, l'auteur fait faire au lecteur le tour des savoirs (sujets à caution) et des autorités (faillibles) de son temps – temps de crise pour l'humanisme en butte au dogmatisme de plus en plus menaçant de la Contre-Réforme, dans une France en guerre – pour le jeter dans une perplexité rationnelle dont émerge seule l'affirmation récurrente d'une nécessaire « volonté bonne » (dénommée aussi « pantagruélisme », et dont le modèle est, en bonne partie au moins, évangélique).

À la fin du prologue, l'auteur, s'inquiétant de la réception qui sera réservée à son livre, se rappelle l'anecdote livresque du triste sort échu à deux êtres bizarres que Ptolémée aurait offerts aux Égyptiens :

un chameau Batrian tout noir et un esclave biguarré, tellement que de son corps l'une part estoit noire, l'autre blanche, [...] en dimension perpendiculaire, choses non encore veues en Ægypte. [...] Qu'en advient-il ? À la production du chameau tous feurent effroyez et indignez : à la veue de l'homme biguarré aulcuns se mocquerent, autres le abhominerent comme monstre infame, créé par erreur de nature.

(Rabelais 25–27)

Dépité du mauvais effet produit par ses présents, Ptolémée les délaisse, si bien que le chameau et l'esclave ne tardent pas à mourir, « par negligence et faute de commun traictement » (27). Mais l'auteur, comparant son livre à un tonneau empli d'enivrantes sentences pantagruéliques, le place sous le signe de Bacchus, dieu de la transgression des frontières identitaires et de l'exploration du non rationnel, et reprend foi dans le pantagruélisme de ses lecteurs, qu'il dit avoir choisis justement pour leur bonne volonté (à l'exclusion des cagots, docteurs et chicaneurs – toutes gens qui jugent et condamnent au nom de normes plus ou moins

³⁷ Voir également Perrot-Corpet « Récit sceptique, morale cynique ».

frelatées – qu’il chasse à coups de bâton dans les dernières lignes du prologue). On appréciera la demande expresse, qu’il fait à ceux qu’il invite à son banquet, de ne pas lui parler des « cerveaulx à bourlet, grabeleurs de corrections » (c’est-à-dire prompts à dénoncer tout manquement aux règles), « on nom et reverence des quatre fesses qui vous engendrent et de la vivifcque cheville qui pour lors les coupplait » (29). Oserai-je affirmer la pleine « queerité » de cette image qui, d’un même mouvement, efface la distinction des sexes (quatre fesses) et la domination de l’un sur l’autre (la « vivifcque cheville » n’appartient pas plus à une paire de fesses qu’à l’autre : elle les relie entre elles, comme l’amour) et demande pour cet acte d’amour réduit à sa plus simple expression (la production d’un lien vivant entre deux corps) l’honneur et le respect (*cum grano salis*, il s’agit toujours d’honorer son père et sa mère...) ?

Toujours est-il que l’auteur du prologue, après avoir longuement mis en scène l’absence d’autorité qui caractérise sa parole, réaffirme le primat de la bonne volonté : élan pour partager joyeusement, pour « [boire] à pleins guodetz » (27) la condition d’une commune humanité, le pantagruélisme est la seule qualité qu’il demande à ses lecteurs de lui reconnaître pour, à cause d’elle, accueillir avec bienveillance son bizarre ouvrage. Car moyennant le pantagruélisme de ses lecteurs, écrit-il, « jamais en mauvaie partie ne prendront choses quelconques ilz congnoistront sourdre de bon, franc et loyal couraige. Je les ay ordinairement veuz bon vouloir en payement prendre, et en icellui acquiescer, quand débilité de puissance y a esté associée » (27).

Si ma lectrice et mon lecteur à moi voulaient y entendre quelque allusion ou appel...

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Diachronic Narratology and Historical Inquiry: Strategies, Principles and Metaphors

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The idea that *narratives* have a history and that narrative forms and practices, as defined in narratology, provide us with an important frame for literary history, is a recent invention. While there have been many attempts to unite narrative theory and historical inquiry since at least the 1980s,¹ the concept of diachronic narratology stems from Monika Fludernik's manifesto-like article, entitled "The Diachronization of Narratology" (2003), in which Fludernik envisions a new research field dedicated to the history of narrative forms, practices and their functions. However, despite recent advances in this field, behind the exciting rhetoric and bold promises of this trailblazing text loom questions of how narratological concepts and their system, involving decontextualized structural distinctions of narrative elements, can in fact be re-conceived as historical inquiry.

In its paradigm-shifting emphasis, Monika Fludernik's article is related to other contemporaneous calls for narrative theory to move towards cultural, historical and contextualist questions at the turn of the millennium (e.g., Herman; Nünning; Darby). Among these voices, the project of diachronic narratology is clearly closest to the ethos of a traditional literary historian. Fludernik argues, in fact, that the post-classical and contextualist trends of narratology of the time when she was writing, with the sole exception of feminist narratology, focusing on

¹ Or even much earlier if we wish to include Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (1973), Gérard Genette's essay "Poétique et histoire" (1969), Mikhail Bakhtin's historical poetics, and the Russian formalist notions of defamiliarization and motivation among such attempts.

forgotten and neglected women's texts, have lacked interest in the *history* of narrative (Fludernik "The Diachronisation" 331–32). She then calls for a major research breakthrough in diachronic inquiry, since it would also seem to offer endless research opportunities: "once one starts to cast around for historical questions touching on narrative, one soon finds that the sheer number of relevant topics and their significance are overwhelming" (332). Consequently, Fludernik sketches a research programme that would focus on narrative forms in their historical transmission, development and change, including issues such as the narrator-narratee communication, the author/narrator distinction, metafictional and metanarrative commentary and the function of descriptive passages. Basically, then, any narrative element formulated in narratological terms would be relevant as an object of study under the rubric of diachronic narratology.

The end of Fludernik's article reflects the writer's strong optimism and, seen from today's perspective, clear over-confidence in the heady vision of fusing narratology with history:

If such historical analysis is taken into account, the field of narratology could be on the brink of a major revolution. These questions will keep professors busy for at least a few decades and will provide ample opportunities for dissertations. The train has started in Europe. The motto is "Westward Ho!" (344)

In the last eighteen years, no such revolution has taken place, even though there has been a steady flow of significant studies under this rubric, especially within classical and medieval literary studies in Germany and The Netherlands. The wide and varied scope of the German-language research from the last decade has also been impressively introduced in the *Handbuch Historische Narratologie* (2019), which offers an overview of the theorization of narrative practices from antiquity to early modern times and seeks to bring these studies into dialogue.² However, in Anglo-American narratological research and elsewhere, diachronic narratology has made little progress during this period.

² See von Contzen and Tilg. Fifteen years after Fludernik's article, Paul Dawson echoed almost word for word the same concerns as his German colleague in 2003: "What narratology has tended to lack until recently is a historical dimension or, more precisely, a historiographic orientation to its method in which various formal features are understood as historically contingent practices rather than reified linguistic structures or universal cognitive processes and in which these features are studied through time" (Dawson "Introduction" 7).

In this essay, I will discuss the relationship between narratology and historical inquiry, a profound question that scholars working in this field have raised but that has not been systematically investigated. The persistence of this paradox may in fact provide an explanation for why this research field, with so much apparent potential, has been relatively slow to expand, spread and gain influence.

Historical or Diachronic, Typological or Specific

The problem of how narrative theory, and more precisely narratology, can be applied to and conceived in terms of historical inquiry can also be formulated as a question about the limits of the application of narrative theory. In other words: how can narratological concepts and their theoretical system be moved from one historical context, i.e. our own “narratological era” from after the late 1960s, and be applied to another period? The question becomes the more pressing the further back we are removed from the nineteenth century and the kinds of literary examples including mainly European novels ranging from Henry Fielding and Jane Austen to Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf that were used to formulate the basic categories in classical narratology.

The paradox concerning the relation between narrative forms and historical context has been recently discussed in terms of different research orientations and their various forms of reasoning. Thus, Eva von Contzen has cogently argued that the project of historicizing narratology is characterized by a tension between the need to focus, on the one hand, on “systematic approaches that rely on established parameters and theorems, and thus necessarily proceed deductively” and, on the other hand, inductive approaches to text analysis that try “not to impose categories that do not (yet) apply to the text in question” (von Contzen “Dido’s Words” 59). One option for diachronic narratological analysis, then, is to apply the narratological concepts deductively in text analysis, without paying attention to historic circumstances and to consider the relevance of this historical context only after the completion of the narratological analysis, while the other is to focus on the meanings and uses of narratives in a particular context; thus, in this inductive approach, one could consider whether the narratological concepts fit the texts and their context. In other words, one type of diachronic narratology relies on synchronic text analysis against some relevant historical backdrop; another is predicated

on some historical claim about changes in narrative practices, which is subsequently examined through the analysis of specific texts.

In fact, the opposition between deductive and inductive modes of diachronic research simplifies the situation in existing narratological practice. The options for diachronic narratology involve various alternatives along a broad spectrum situated between the use of additional theory- and concept- or corpus-driven as well as context-sensitive approaches. Furthermore, the choices faced not only concern whether one begins with the narratological concepts or with the historical context but also the very meaning of historical inquiry in such a diachronic study and the nature of the narratological categories themselves. Moreover, any scholar in this field is confronted with the question of the scope of narrative history, which can be conceived, for instance,

- as the history of some narrative form within some historical timeframe;
- as the study of literary history at some specific point or continuum in time, considering specific narrative forms and practices;
- as the history of narrative representation considering a particular literary form, device or practice and its functions within some historical trajectory and
- as the history of narrative in a broader sense, perceived across literary genres and other narrative arts and media, within some historical trajectory.

Furthermore, the delimitation of the historical timeframe and scope of research is also linked to the very notion of narrative. Indeed, the history of the concept of narrative remains to be written.

Some of these basic choices about the focus, method and object of diachronic narratological study are further reflected in von Contzen's attempt to differentiate between *historical* and *diachronic* narratology. Thus, she defines historical narratology as being "synchronic in that it considers narrative practices at a specific point in time, usually in a premodern context," while diachronic narratology "sets a historical narrative practice in relation to earlier and later developments" (von Contzen "Dido's Words" 57). Pointing out that these two notions "obviously overlap," since, for instance, it may be difficult to distinguish between "a point in time" and a historical period, she nevertheless argues that they

correspond to different views on narrative: in their most vehement applications, historical narratology is interested in its objects of study as an end in themselves, while a diachronic narratology considers narrative texts as building bricks, or steppingstones, in a larger trajectory of narrative developments.

(56; see also von Contzen and Tilg vii)

In other words, “historical narratology” is less interested in the transhistorical quality of the narratological notions than narrative parameters in their historical location and practice and in relating the given narrative forms to their historical-cultural conditions at a certain point in the past (von Contzen and Tilg vi). In existing research, however, the two perspectives usually overlap because the terms “historical” and “diachronic” narratology are often used interchangeably, and because there is much potential ambiguity between them, as becomes evident in perspective shifts between more theoretical and more historical moments within individual studies in the field.

Despite these shortcomings, von Contzen’s distinction between deductive and inductive reasoning on the one hand and historical and diachronic narratology on the other, brings to our attention important internal tensions within this research domain.³ What she calls “historical” and “diachronic” varieties or orientations could, in fact, be understood as an inner tension characterizing all narratological research. Perhaps the most burning issue here is that all research labelled diachronic or historical narratology must address the issue of how to relate theory (the narratological concepts and their system) to history. Subsequently, diachronic narratology must take issue with the question of whether to historicize the narratological concepts themselves and, if so, what that might mean in practical research.

Take Irene J.F. de Jong’s narratological analyses of classical literature as an example. Von Contzen classifies de Jong’s approach as an instance of diachronic orientation (von Contzen and Tilg vii), which is justified considering de Jong’s use of narratological notions as transhistorical

³ Contzen and Tilg suggest that, ultimately, it is necessary to combine the two approaches, as the specific and specifically historical can only be recognized in the larger universal or transhistorical context (or what is assumed to be universal and transhistorical): “Letztlich ist es notwendig, beide Ansätze zu verschränken: Spezifisches – also auch spezifisch Historisches – wird erst vor dem größeren Kontext eines Universalen oder Transhistorischen (d.h. eines als universal oder transhistorisch *Angenommenen*) erkennbar” (viii).

universals, as well as her interest in the formal and structural features of classical narratives. Narratology first and foremost provides de Jong with a set of invaluable perspectives to better grasp the typical qualities of a classical text's narrative structure, including questions of narrative situation and level, focalization, temporal structure and the narrative representation of space and visual experience. De Jong's research pays only some attention to the genetic history of the narrative forms, their modification over time or their historical context. Nonetheless, at the same time, certain important aspects of her research represent what von Contzen would call historical narratology. For instance, despite the typological focus of de Jong's careful narratological readings of classical Greek and Latin texts, the unique qualities of individual literary narratives are always foregrounded. Beyond typology, another important feature in narratology for de Jong, as becomes evident in the Preface to her *Narratology & Classics*, is that narrative theory can help to "sharpen and enrich our interpretation" in the study of classical texts (de Jong *Narratology & Classics* v), by which she means, in particular, to provide readers with a keener perception of the texts' narrative complexity, that is, the specific ways in which they mediate narrative meanings in their period.

In her definition of diachronic narratology, de Jong's entry from *the living handbook of narratology* states that it refers to "the description and analysis of the history of the forms and functions of narrative devices within a given (period of a) literature" (de Jong "Diachronic Narratology" n.p.). This definition further emphasizes the study of historical change. Apparently, then, diachronic narratology is framed in and subjected to the study of developments within a historical literary period.⁴ In fact, however, in much of de Jong's work, the relationship between the typological and the historical research interest remains deeply ambivalent. Her discussions of narrative structure in her narratological primer *Narratology & Classics* and many other works, seek to, first and foremost, confirm the supposed transhistorical applicability of narratological categories that can cross not only temporal and cultural but also generic boundaries. The main objective in the impressive monograph series that de Jong has co-edited under the title *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative* (SAGN), including four

⁴ In her *Narratology & Classics*, in turn, de Jong considers an even broader historical frame for narratology by suggesting that her approach could potentially enable students of Classics to tease out "the literary DNA of the most popular literary form of our times, the novel" (*Narratology & Classics* 11).

volumes published and one in progress,⁵ focuses on the identification, classification and description of narrative devices or techniques, including their repertoire, variation and function or the implications of their use in ancient Greek narrative literature (de Jong “General Introduction” xii; De Temmerman and van Emde Boas 3). At the same time, the comparisons that de Jong and her colleagues make in this series between the uses of the same devices in different texts and often across different literary genres, enable them to suggest some tentative historical claims.⁶ Typically, however, these historical inferences and insights are presented in the conclusions of these studies, concerning only general tendencies, intertextual speculations or changes in the functions of the devices under investigation (de Jong and Nünlist “Epilogue: Narrators” 552–53) and intertextual relations (546).

Moreover, whenever de Jong compares narrative devices and techniques, she does so independently of genre and, in fact, one central finding in this vast body of research is that they are not bound by genre (545–46; de Jong and Nünlist “Epilogue: Time” 522).⁷ Even with regard to ancient historiography, there is in de Jong’s mind no need to develop a separate historiographic narratology (*Narratology and Classics* 172), as she realizes the ancient historians used the same narrative devices and means to create personae as the writers of modern fiction; thus, she posits the supposed relevance of the narrator notion across times and narrative genres.

All things considered, it is difficult to classify de Jong, who is thus far perhaps the most productive and accomplished scholar in the field of diachronic narratology, according to von Contzen’s definition of the

⁵ The areas that have been covered thus far include narrators, narratees and narratives (2004); time (2007); space (2012) and characterization (2017).

⁶ By contrast, the parallels that de Jong frequently draws between classical narratives and modern fiction serve her to highlight the transhistorical relevance of narratological notions and parameters. See, for instance, her discussion of metalepsis (“Metalepsis” 88–92) or the device of “the anonymous traveller” (“Anonymous Traveller” 314–20), in modern and postmodern novels.

⁷ Nonetheless, de Jong and Nünlist also endorse the view, which evidently contradicts their genre-independent premise that genres “are not homogeneous where the use of narrative devices is concerned” (“Epilogue: Time” 522). Furthermore, Temmerman and van Emde Boas emphasize in the introduction to the fourth study in the SAGN series that “character and characterization are, *prima facie*, topics where de Jong’s point about genre-independence may not be wholly applicable” (De Temmerman and van Emde Boas 4).

two main directions in this field. The narratological studies of de Jong are structurally oriented, often typology-driven and focused on the narrative universals, investigating the narrative composition of individual texts in their classical period. This deductive approach emphasizes a synchronic perspective. There are, however, frequent historical comparisons, moments, insights and suggestions. This results in a kind of alternation between narratological formal analysis and the typological research interest, on the one hand, and the historical and comparative research approach on the other.

Strategies in Diachronic Narratology

It seems necessary for any scholar engaged in diachronic narratology to address the question of the relation between narrative theory and history and to choose a strategy in this respect. At the same time, as existing research in this field also suggests, more than just two strategies may be adopted. The alternatives include, at least, the following basic options, which appear in different varieties.

1. The *transhistorical* definition and application of the narratological concepts that privileges the study of *narrative categories*. The justification for this strategy may arise from the claim that narratology can make most significant contributions if it has a “clear profile,” that is, when it is used as a steady set of key categories that can be applied to all kinds of narratives in different epochs (Grethlein and Rengakos 3). In other words, keeping the narratological categories as intact as possible may allow one to better identify similar narrative devices and phenomena across different timeframes, narrative practices and literary traditions. Therefore, in its purest typological version, when diachronic narratology is conceived as a means of identifying, classifying and comparing narrative universals in some historical period, this kind of research becomes analogous to the study of any literary patterns, such as *topoi*,⁸ motifs or *Stoffe* that can be catalogued across periods, genres, and literary traditions.

⁸ In her study on the literary device of the anonymous traveller, de Jong identifies the same (unresolved) dilemma of perceiving the device either in terms of a universal (like a cultural meme) or a historical form (a literary device invented in ancient Greek literature), thus reflecting the ambiguity between a typological and a historical orientation characteristic of her work (de Jong “The Anonymous Traveller” 329–33).

Another possible justification for the transhistorical strategy is an interest in narrative categories as universals that point to the supposed timeless aspects of storytelling. However, in existing research practice, it is not common to maintain a transhistorical conception of the narratological categories without any consideration for the way in which these concepts can be used in the given context. Thus, the transhistorical application is, in fact, usually accompanied by historical considerations pertaining to the functions of these categories in the given epoch. Period-specific literary and rhetorical concepts may also be added to the set of narratological categories. For instance, de Jong adopts this strategy in *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*, where she includes in her glossary of narratological terms “whenever possible [...] the ancient equivalents of these terms, as found in the scholia” (de Jong *Narratological Commentary* xi). Thus, the glossary incorporates concepts specific to the study of the literature of antiquity, pertaining, in particular, to rhetoric and thematics, including examples such as epic regression, refrain composition or “Jørgensen’s law” that refers to characters who, “lacking the omniscience of the narrator” or the information that the narratees may have, “ascribe divine interventions to Zeus (in general), to an unspecified god [...], or to the wrong god” (xv).⁹

Still another possible justification used in support of the transhistorical strategy, is to argue that many earlier rhetorical concepts, from the literature of antiquity to the Renaissance, anticipate narratological categories. This “anticipation hypothesis” comes in at least two varieties. The weaker version suggests that premodern scholars, be they classical, medieval, or Renaissance scholars, showed interest in similar complex phenomena of narrative organization, perspective and strategy as today’s narratologists. It is therefore justified to compare these concepts with present-day narrative theory. René Nünlist has demonstrated that ancient

⁹ De Jong’s introduction to the SAGN volume on space also articulates the argument that the study of space in classical literature, “with its long history of ekphrasis, the ubiquity of topoi like the *locus amoenus*, or charged spatial oppositions, e.g. inside versus outside, to mention but a few of the more obvious examples,” can illustrate how narrative literature much before the nineteenth-century realist and naturalist novels, which have functioned as the standard for modern narrative theory on these issues (de Jong “Introduction” 17), explored the full range of possibilities of space and description.

scholars, in particular the writers of Greek scholia, observed complex phenomena of temporal organization, narrative perspective and voice closely related to what today's narratology might identify as analepsis and prolepsis or embedded focalization (see Nünlist). This shared interest across history, however, Nünlist suggests, does not necessarily entail that the Greek scholia "contain a narratological theory *avant la lettre*" (Nünlist 82) but rather that some of the reading strategies and questions in these scholia, show remarkable similarities with narratological notions. These resemblances (and differences) are worth noting and studying. By contrast, the stronger version of this hypothesis claims exactly the opposite, that is, that premodern scholars using the rhetorical notions of their time "can actually be seen as narratologists *avant la lettre*" (de Jong "Klassische Philologie" 275). It is then correct to say that narrative categories have remained the same and can be easily identified across different periods of time. Likewise, it is accurate to suggest the scholars' interest in such categories has not altered over time.

The transhistorical strategy can be further modified and rendered less fundamentalist by conceiving the narratological categories as universals only valid for certain periods (Fludernik *An Introduction* 115) or by regarding them as universals that have historically changing purposes and functions. In the latter case, diachronic research can distinguish between a universal narrative form and its use or function, which on the contrary is historically contingent and changing. For instance, in her discussion of the historical change of scene shifts¹⁰ from Middle English narratives through Renaissance to the nineteenth century and twentieth-century modernism, Monika Fludernik emphasizes that the scene change is "ideally suited to demonstrate that formal analysis needs to be complemented by a functional approach" (Fludernik "The Diachronisation" 344).¹¹ Thereby, the study of the functions of narrative devices and elements introduces a historical dimension into narratological research.

¹⁰ By a "scene shift" Fludernik means the way in which "narratives manage to get from one set of characters in one location to another set of characters in a different location" (Fludernik "The Diachronisation" 334).

¹¹ Similarly, in de Jong's large international research project *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, the historical dimension of the research involves the way in which the narrative devices are *used* by individual authors (de Jong "After Auerbach" 121).

2. The *historicizing strategy*, by contrast, contends that the narratological concepts need to be modified, and possibly also redefined, according to the given historical context. This strategy presupposes that the applicability and efficacy of the narratological categories is never given but needs to be proven, with added modifications, in each case and relative to each context and body of work. Thus, for instance, it can be held that the poetic terms of the given era and genre, or native philological traditions, need to be taken into account, and that the qualities of the given corpus, and the historical conditions of its reception, can significantly modify the approach. Therefore, this strategy also holds that the various contexts of literary history or the history of narrative can function as a testing ground for narratological concepts and approaches. In this sense, then, we could consider all diachronic study on narratives in premodern contexts as a wonderfully huge laboratory for testing the scope, applicability and weight of these categories. Moreover, gaining sharper understanding of the historical limitations of notions such as the narrator, narratee or focalization could also benefit the analysis of modern narrative texts.¹²

The historicizing strategy can assume different shapes, based on the way in which the narratological categories can be historicized. More precisely, this refers to how these concepts and their categories themselves are subjected to the study of historical transmission, change, continuity, and rupture; furthermore, as Fludernik suggests, they may be redefined, readjusted and related to context- and period-specific narrative concepts and practices (Fludernik *An Introduction* 115).

One variety of this strategy corresponds to what von Contzen has identified as “historical narratology,” in particular when it entails the investigation of how the modern narratological categories must be contextualized and functionalized differently in premodern contexts, including the possibility of questioning and *redefining* these categories (von Contzen and Tilg viii). The point of applying narratology to ancient narratives could thus take as its starting point the limitations of narratology – due to its focus on modern narrative fiction –, which could bring into sharper view some historically specific features, functions and uses of narrative. Hence,

¹² See also, Patron Sylvie, where the historical argument for optional-narrator theory is developed by various writers.

Egbert J. Bakker argues that narratology fails to do justice to the complex issue of narrative performance in Homer, due to the theory's systematic insistence on clear distinctions between author, narrator, and character (Bakker). Similarly, Nicholas Paige points out that narratology fails to recognize the distinction between modern omniscient narrators, as we find them in the works of such writers as Émile Zola, and the poet-narrators of earlier periods such as Homer (Paige *Before Fiction* 201); thus, they are both regarded as kinds of “extradiegetic heterodiegetic” narrators. Such findings concerning problems in applying narratology provide these scholars with important historical insights; this is a seminal point to which I will return later in this article.

Still another variety, perhaps to some degree less radical in its historicizing mode, is the strategy focusing on the multiple and changing functions of the narrative practices and strategies, including historically shifting forms of reading, genres and the aesthetic assumptions that accompany them. In other words, the point of diachronic inquiry would then be to study the historically changing uses of certain practices with specific attention given to the protean nature, reception and generic frames of such practices. Further, in this kind of research, the narratological categories can help to identify particular narrative practices, although there is no presupposition about their universal applicability. These categories may be affected by the historical research perspective and interest but, most of all, their use is subjected to the historical research perspective. Thus, Paul Dawson concludes in his investigation of the broad terminological shift and change of function concerning authorial commentary (or “intrusion”) from the eighteenth to the twentieth century English-language novel, that this technique “is neither a singular nor a static formal convention but a varied practice with an historically shifting relation to realism” (Dawson “From Digressions” 162).¹³

3. The *combination or complementary strategy* comprises approaches designed to bring narrative theory and history together while privileging the study of historical change. Thus, this strategy can

¹³ Diachronic narratology can also serve as a kind of research model for the study of a period-specific narrative device without any use of actual narratological categories. See, for instance, Maravela on the development of the narratorial *νήπιος*-comment in the Greek epic.

present the link between narratology and contextualist historical study in terms of a complementary relation. In research practice, it can involve alternation between a narratological text analysis and a study of historical change. For instance, diachronic narratology could thus proceed in a way enabling the narratological text analysis to function as a preliminary work for actual interpretation or as a contextualist, historicizing approach that supposedly “goes beyond the unhistorical frame of traditional narratology” (Grethlein and Rengakos 6). Following that principle, Jonas Grethlein and Antonios Rengakos, the editors of *Narratology and Interpretation. The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature*, argue that combining narratology with historicizing approaches is “a crucial step” (3) allowing them to do better historical research with ancient Greek and Latin literatures. Narratology, thus understood as a heuristic device put to the service of the historical study of narrative, can bring to light new aspects of the studied works or new dimensions of their known features; furthermore, it may offer a sharper and more systematic analysis of narrative form, practice and representation in ancient literature.¹⁴ The conception of the narratological categories may be similarly universal and transhistorical as in the first strategy but in contradistinction to that approach, here the scope of narratological analysis is subjected to a historical inquiry, either as a preliminary text analysis or in an add-on and ad hoc fashion.

As a whole, these three strategies and their variations reflect a broad spectrum of possible approaches, from the one extreme of narratological analysis including some occasional or haphazard, literary historical remarks (as in Gérard Genette’s “*Discours du récit*”) to a full-scale historicist rejection of the applicability of these categories beyond modern and postmodern fiction.¹⁵ In actual research, furthermore, these strategies

¹⁴ Thus, according to Grethlein and Rengakos the observation that *Ilias* and *Odyssey* include a dense net of anachronies may not merit attention in itself but becomes important only if we explore the potential impact of such temporal structures on the readers’ perception and experience of the plot or if it is linked to a discussion of how to place Homer’s epics between orality and literacy in a historical sense (Grethlein and Rengakos 3).

¹⁵ One example of such a rejection can be found in Liisa Steinby and Mäkilä’s introduction to the anthology *Narrative Concepts in the Study of Eighteenth-Century Literature* (2017). In it, the authors claim that due to the system-immanent nature of all narratological analysis and narratology’s supposed belief in the absolute conceptual

may overlap. Thus, it must be noted that both the transhistorical and the combination strategy can understand narratological categories as universals. In contrast to both options, the historicizing strategy treats the categories themselves historically and as potential traces of history that can represent kinds of thought and expression, beliefs and ideology, worldview and experience. At one extreme, then, the narratological concepts become an object of historical study themselves. In addition, the distinction between the second and the third strategy may become blurred, as both approaches subject narratological analysis to historical inquiry. Their difference, as I see it, lies in the question and the degree to which the narratological categories themselves are historicized.

The distinction between these strategies is further complicated by the question of whether narratological analysis is conceived of as a form of literary interpretation or as a tool of analysis that does not constitute an actual interpretation of texts. Some existing research in the field foregrounds the division of labour between (decontextualized) narrative analysis and a more comprehensive interpretation or the (contextualized) study of historical narrative practices. Thus, narratological analysis can be perceived as a preliminary, preparatory work for the interpretation of and historical research about a given text's narrative elements.¹⁶ However, in other approaches this distinction is not made, as the categories of narratological analysis and interpretation can become more or less fused.

accuracy of its notions (few narratologists would agree!), the historical changes that diachronic narratology claims to identify and study can never be anything but modifications in some aspects of the theoretical system (Steinby and Mäkikalli 15; 26). At best, Steinby and Mäkikalli argue, diachronic narratology can decode historical changes as variations in the distribution of the paradigmatic possibilities, implying that "certain traits defined in the theory are present or absent in narrative literature at a certain historical moment" (15). However, despite the writers' (paradoxical) presupposition that diachronic narratology can only succeed as literary history if it ceases to use narratological notions, several articles in this anthology promote diachronic narratology as a form of historical knowledge.

¹⁶ Thus, for instance, Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller see narratological "analysis" as different from any actual theory of interpretation. For them, it is heuristics, not a theory for interpreting texts (Kindt and Müller; Kindt 37).

The Division of Labour or the Incompatible Objectives of Narrative Theory and History

One claim that can be brought against diachronic narratology is that the study of narrative forms and the study of the history of narrative can never exist in a complementary relationship. Brian McHale made this point strongly in his 2005 article, “Ghosts and Monsters: On the (Im)Possibility of Narrating the History of Narrative Theory,” where he argues that it is never possible to reconcile, except perhaps for an exceptional critic like Mikhail Bakhtin, narrative theory and the study of literary history, since the interest in narrative structure and history constitute two vastly different kinds of knowledge and research objective. In this respect, McHale’s main references were the turn-of-the-millennium orientations of contextual narratology, such as poststructuralist narratology, cultural studies narratology, and cognitive narrative studies, including the subcategory of historicist cognitive narratology. Diachronic narratology is not mentioned, possibly because in 2005 this recently established field had not yet emerged from among the various contextualising tendencies of the day.

In his article, McHale contends that the attempt to reconcile the study of narrative structure and history at best results in research writing that looks like Frankenstein’s monster: a creature of hideous contrasts or a messy patchwork of alternating narratological and historicist elements. More precisely, McHale argues that

under the big tent of narrative theory, structuralism and historicism jockey for position, each seeking to outflank or overcome the other, to *contain* the other, and if that doesn’t work, then to forget or *repress* [or pre-empt] the other – a risky strategy since, as we know, the repressed is apt to return.

(McHale 64)

In the history of narrative theory, this dynamic is reflected for instance, as McHale points out, in the motivation concept of Russian formalism (i.e., the way in which literary devices and the thematic elements must be motivated in terms of composition, realism, or artistic effect), which enlists historical contingency in the service of the study of formal structure. Similarly, this tension can be identified in Gérard Genette’s classical *Discours du récit*, where the critic’s attempts to build a systematic theory of narrative outflank his literary historical claims (or asides) about Marcel Proust’s place within literary Modernism. McHale

then concludes that the relationship between narrative structure and history “has always been, and is likely to remain, a conflicted one. It may be that structure and history are finally irreconcilable; or rather, they may be reconciled, but only on terms congenial to one of the rival orientations and not to the other” (67). Therefore, using the metaphor of “two ships passing in the night,” McHale further concludes that “[w]hat we’re really doing, at best, is alternating between narratological moments and historical moments” (68).

McHale’s article captures the basic tension between narrative form and history that characterizes the enterprise of diachronic narratology. At the same time, one must consider the implications of the metaphors and terms in this pessimistic vision. What, for instance, might *reconciliation* or *reconcilable* actually mean in this framework? Indeed, not all narrative studies or theories, which may seek to lead narratology onto the terrain of history, try to reconcile structure and history. Furthermore, any adjustments, additions and changes that are made to narratological categories in historical inquiry can be done in a conscious and theoretically self-reflective way. For diachronic narratology, in particular, as long as it seeks to be a credible form of historical inquiry, the relationship between narrative form and history is a question that *needs* to be openly acknowledged and examined. This relation is, in a sense, the very subject of the investigation or the object of research, rather than a matter of reconciliation or the return of the repressed, as McHale would have it. Furthermore, if narrative form and literary history are reconciled in terms that are congenial to one of these orientations – and for diachronic narratology the dominant orientation should be history, since it is not a new theory of narrative – those terms can be opened to critical scrutiny.

McHale contends that historicising narratology or what he calls period-based narratology, must choose between revisiting the concepts of narrative theory from a historical perspective, thus rethinking them “as historically contingent and variable – malleable and adjustable, varying from period to period” or treating them as “permanent features of a system that *applies* differently at different epochs” (McHale 64). Therefore, when historicism tries to outflank or contain narratology, it is the narratological notion and, potentially the whole narratological “system” that becomes subjected to or is “repressed” by historical inquiry.¹⁷

¹⁷ I agree with McHale’s self-critical suggestion that his use of the term “repress” could strike one as rhetorical overkill (McHale 65). Indeed, the language in this article,

These options reflect the three strategies for diachronic narratology that I have sketched above. They also mirror von Contzen's distinction between historical and diachronic narratology. Furthermore, all these formulations seem to point to the fact that research in this field needs to choose whether it perceives the narratological categories as transhistorical universals and, consequently, must determine what it means for historical inquiry to a) treat and use them as such or b) reject that universal quality. Nonetheless, the choice between treating these categories either as permanent fixtures and universals that can be differently applied in various contexts or as historically contingent and basically malleable terms, are not the only options available to historicising narratology.

Could we also approach the dilemma of narrative theory (or structure) towards history by accepting the tension between them as a necessary and inescapable condition and in a sense the basis for doing diachronic narratology? This would require, as far as I see it, an acknowledgement and appraisal of the necessary division of labour and organization of knowledges between narrative poetics and historical inquiry (instead of blaming that division or psychoanalysing it). Thus, Dan Shen has insightfully argued that whenever various types of contextualised narrative poetics, ranging from feminist to cognitive narratology, investigate generic structures, they "have to leave aside varied specific contexts and focus on the decontextualized structural properties shared by specific uses in narrative texts of the same genre" (Shen 22). Therefore, she also suggests that the failure to clearly identify this division of labour – between narrative poetics examining generic structures across specific contexts and the study of sociohistorical contexts of narrative types, genres, and practices – is a fundamental tenet that underlies many (misguided) criticisms of formal narrative poetics (10).

To achieve a form of diachronic narratology that would be more than just a typology of narrative universals in each period is indeed a challenge, although one that can be met. Indeed, one must ask whether a typology really constitutes a form of history or suggests a patchwork of

including not just the metaphor of repression but those of combat, blindness and monstrosity as well, is effective in overdramatizing the opposition between structure and history or what McHale also identifies as the opposition between the (impossible) "stable synthesis or seamless integration" of structure, the contingencies of history and the (possible, but repressed) "messy patchwork" of alternating and rivalling orientations (68).

alternating structural and historical elements. To make that goal more realistic would require that diachronic narratology: 1) acknowledges that narrative theory and historical inquiry of narrative changes are different forms of knowledge that cannot be easily pursued at the same time; 2) conceives of their relationship in terms of a division of labour; and then 3) focuses on the way in which the narratological findings can be contextualized, including theoretical self-reflection of the preconditions of that application and the limitations of those concepts in a specific context. Thus, narratology would be understood as a heuristic technique at the service of the history of narrative and diachronic narratology as a form of history, not a theory of narrative.¹⁸ At the same time, it could be acknowledged that the historical study of narrative forms can contribute to narrative theory, at least indirectly, as a historical testing ground for narratological concepts and categories. In fact, the existing research in this field has already contributed significantly to the relativizing of narratological distinctions, in terms of their historical relevance, such as the prominent role of the (fictional) narrator and the focalising character in narrative theory based on modern prose fiction.

In a sense, I am thus calling for a new kind of diachronic narratology, one that compounds the historicizing sort with theoretical self-reflection drawing specific attention to the relationship between narrative theory and history. In this regard, I find helpful both Dan Shen's principle of co-validity and von Contzen's notion of re-alignment. For Shen, even if the study of generic structures in narratives, the rhetorical analysis of the hypothetical generic reader models and the empirical study of real readers reading, cannot be conducted simultaneously, there is much potential for "co-validity of, and the mutually-benefiting relationship among, the different kinds of inquiry" (Shen 10). This means, in other words, that the study of narrative forms and practices and the historical inquiry of their functions and meanings, do not need to be reconciled with one another or fused. On the contrary, it may benefit them both to keep them clearly distinct as forms of analysis, research practice and a sort of knowledge. In this way, it becomes clear how they may be best related to each other in each case (complementarity being just one option).

¹⁸ And, in fact, the name of this field, diachronic *narratology*, remains somewhat misleading if narratology refers, first and foremost, to a *theory* of narrative.

In turn, by re-alignment, von Contzen refers to the critical and context-sensitive use of the existing narratological theories and categories in medieval studies so that they “will be tested for their usefulness against the medieval texts in order to determine whether or to what extent they may require a careful and nuanced re-alignment” (von Contzen “A Manifesto” 16). I acknowledge that re-aligning the theory with the period-based corpus is not different, in essence, from claiming that the theoretical model is “malleable and adjustable, varying from period to period” (McHale 64). Thus, for von Contzen, medieval narrative texts, as they reflect their specific time and space, “lead to the theoretical and descriptive apparatus (and not the other way round)” (“A Manifesto” 16). However, even if the core concepts of this kind of study, including categories such as author/narrator, plot structure and motivation, character, perspective, time and space (16), are modified and re-aligned, these modifications can be performed in a systematic dialogue with the relevant narratological theories.

Furthermore, we can choose from among many other useful concepts, metaphors and kinds of descriptive language to designate the relation between narrative form and history and to approach the dilemma they produce. These can carry connotations completely different from rivalry, blindness, the return of the repressed or imagining (naive) forms of seamless integration, reconciliation and complementary functions. Among the ideas of co-validity, conversation¹⁹ and re-alignment, I would also like to list the notion of division of labour, the metaphor of conflict (to be solved or appreciated), the principles of *sprezzatura*²⁰ and learning from failure.

¹⁹ Seeking to distance themselves from some heady (and illusory) ideas of synthesis in “contextualist narratologies,” Divya Dwivedi, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Richard Walsh argue that formalist narratological analysis and ideological contextual criticism are antithetical methodologies, but potentially interdependent practices, “each serving as ground to the other’s figure” (Dwivedi *et al.* 8). This view, they believe, can facilitate “dialogue between narrative theory and criticism more effectively than the idea that there is some intermediate ground – the specific terrain of a contextualist narratology – in which a synthesis occurs” (8).

²⁰ De Jong borrows *sprezzatura* (*Narratology & Classics* v) from Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* while referring less to a certain nonchalance or graceful style of action concealing art, as in Castiglione, than to the principle of theoretical self-reflection. Thus, the analysed passages should not be made to conform to narrative theory but, on the contrary, research should allow for the fact that the narratological categories cannot in every case be used satisfactorily. Furthermore, textual complexity in, and the unique qualities of an individual work of art should be given prominence over theoretical uniformity (v).

At the end of this essay, I would like to quote Evelyn Birge Vitz, who concludes her study *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology. Subjects and Objects of Desire* with this insight:

In my case, the tools of narratology helped me to focus on some fundamental features – some structural features – of medieval narrative that I had simply never grasped before. The success of these models was, for me, in their failures: what they *failed* to account for in medieval literature was thrown in sharper relief. Can one really ask for more of any methodology?

(Vitz 222)

Analysing medieval autobiographies and legends, and *Roman de la Rose*, Vitz discovered that much of modern narrative analysis was far more radically modernist in its analytical and ideological orientation than she had thought. At the same time, she became convinced that it was highly problematic to apply narrative theory, which brackets “off as irrelevant all *but* the narrative elements in a *récit*” (Vitz 8) to medieval narratives rooted in the rhetoric of oral tradition, period-specific genres and their social practices and, furthermore, thoroughly influenced by Christian conceptual structures.

At first sight, Vitz’s conclusion that narratology must revise its theories and paradigms to fit the data and realign itself with medieval literary practices, if it is to make any sense at all, appears to confirm the sceptical view about bringing narrative theory and literary history into a meaningful relation. Her approach subjects the narratological system to literary history, while emphasizing that the theoretical concepts must be contained within literary history and literary interpretation. Her stance finally rejects the applicability of these concepts. Thus, the result is no longer narratology but a historicization of scholarship placing chosen bits and pieces of narratology in the service of history. However, I would like to underscore Vitz’s conclusion that narrative theory and history do not need to be reconciled. Instead, literary historical study can also openly highlight the conflict between them, from which important lessons can be learned.

Coda: the Narratologist, the Historian and the Comparatist

Diachronic narratology makes great demands on individual scholars. It goes without saying that to do convincing research in this field, one needs

to be both a good narratologist and a good historian. The field requires a researcher to formulate questions and produce findings relevant both in terms of narrative theory and literary history simultaneously. Moreover, this area of scientific inquiry unites vastly different research cultures and traditions. The historian's willingness to take the risk of historical interpretation is not necessarily something that comes easily for someone trained in narrative theory, while the categorization of narrative devices and elements may seem irrelevant for someone engaged in historical inquiry.

Perhaps partly because of these potentially conflicting demands placed on scholarship, the existing work in diachronic narratology has most often focused on a single narrative form within one particular literary period and in one literary tradition. Such a limited focus may not be exactly what was originally envisioned for this promising research field.

The comparatist framework of literary history, not commonly adopted in diachronic narratology today, makes even more considerable, linguistic, culture-specific and historical, demands on scholarship in this research field. One evident challenge in this respect is how to subject literary genres, and their fund of expectations, that are unique to traditions outside the Western Canon, to narratological analysis. Nonetheless, it is highly justified to ask how historicizing narratology could benefit from a comparative study of narratives across language areas and literary traditions, given the fact that narrative devices – indeed kinds of narrative – travel across borders and develop through intercultural relations. In fact, the comparative perspective of cross- and international relations looms large in much existing diachronic narratology, as it studies the development of narrative forms and practices. One obvious place to look at would be the changing forms and uses of first-person narration and subjective point-of-view in the context of early modern European fiction. Among the many cross-national trajectories of development in this area feature, at least, the trajectory of the picaresque novel from *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (circa 1554) and other Spanish models across Europe to Alain-René Lesage's *Gil Blas* (1715–35); the emergence of the eighteenth-century first-person memoir and epistolary novel;²¹ and the rise of the so-called focalized (or reflector) character in works ranging from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. A multilingual and comparative

²¹ Recently investigated in a large body of French examples in Paige, "The Artificality of Narrative Form" and *Technologies of the Novel*.

viewpoint would, without doubt, require much larger “telescopes” and forms of collaboration than before but could be best equipped to shed light on the relations of such developments. Furthermore, the comparative approach could function as a corrective to English-language literary history, which often equates the rise of modern narrative fiction with the eighteenth-century British novel.

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ESSAIS CRITIQUES / REVIEW ESSAYS

The “Outward” Turn in Translation Studies

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Approaching current trends in the rapidly expanding field of translation studies in the early part of a tumultuous twenty-first century, opens a countless array of transdisciplinary and polyglot lines of inquiry in major and minor languages alike. “Field” seems too provincial a word to describe the growing expanse of translation-centered projects that have become crucial means of understanding an increasingly globalized world, of accounting for the ongoing movement and displacement of millions of peoples across national borders,¹ and of both bridging communication divides and reinforcing lines of nation and language. Translation studies is no longer the proverbial “ugly duckling” poised to “come to the aid of the fading swan” of comparative literature (Lefevere 10), nor is the translation scholar a disciplinary-less pariah (as George Steiner describes himself in the preface to the 2nd edition of his classic *After Babel*). Rather, as Mona Baker posits in her introduction to *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*: “Translation studies has come of age” (1). Baker describes that:

we are now in a position to move safely and confidently not only beyond dichotomies and taxonomies, but also beyond the foundational literature and scholarly canon, and beyond reiterating core assumptions, revisiting our institutional history, and defending our disciplinary agendas. While holding on to earlier achievements, we can now engage with innovative new research

¹ The 2020 UN World Migration Report estimates the number of “international migrants” as “almost 272 million globally with nearly two-thirds being labour migrants” (World Migration Report 2). Moira Inghilleri references the UN Refugee Agency’s statistic that “by the start of 2016, 11.6 million Syrians had been displaced, nearly half of Syria’s entire population” (qtd. in Inghilleri 8).

that is not necessarily indebted to the theories with which we are most familiar. We can afford to think outside the box.

(“Introduction” 1)

Following Baker and others, the stated (or understated) arrival of translation studies is marked by a quiet self-assurance, by fewer conversations about the parameters of the field and more gestures outward, toward a variety of disciplines, discourses, “isms,” and collaborators.²

To this end, the relationship with comparative literature is not inimical so much as synergetic – translation-minded projects remain a vital and generative arm of comparative literary studies and are also making inroads in fields that have been more guardedly monolingual. American Studies scholar Wai Chee Dimock at several points takes up the question of translation in her work to extend and remap the contours of American literature, and, in her *Born Translated*, Rebecca Walkowitz examines translation as a trope and as a practice to trouble conceptions of English-language writing in the global literary marketplace. As Walkowitz argues, “[t]o approach the future of classification from the history of multilingual circulation is to recognize that anglophone writing operates in many languages, even when it appears to be operating only in English” (24).³ In her *Translating Empire: Migrant Latino Subjects and American Modernities*, Laura Lomas reads Spanish America’s José Martí as a U.S. Latino migrant and examines his trenchant and “decolonizing” translations of Anglo-American literature and culture. Moreover, *PMLA*, the flagship journal of the Modern Language Association, recently extended a blanket call for essays “that examine the complex and critical practice of translation in an increasingly connected and interdependent world.”⁴ Thus, studies of

² Also see Gentzler; Nergaard and Arduini; Bennett. As Duncan Large argues, “[i]f anything, as translation studies has found its feet, it has mostly viewed comparative literature with a sense of benign indifference: theorists of translation studies actually spend very little time these days thinking about comparative literature, and are certainly not planning any kind of land grab” (4).

³ In his provocatively titled “Hijacking Translation: How Comp Lit Continues to Suppress Translated Texts,” Lawrence Venuti roundly critiques Walkowitz’s project for “reaffirming” rather than challenging “the global hegemony of English” (184). As Venuti notes, though Walkowitz claims to be focused on interlingual translation, her primary focus is on English-language texts that play with translation as a form, “original compositions in English that deploy translation as theme and trope or as code-switching and shifts between dialects” (184).

⁴ This “Special Topic” CFP was sent out to MLA members on April 15, 2021.

translation – whether centered on literary and interlingual exchanges or on broader forms of cultural transformation – emerge as a critical mode and outlook in approaching both the most intractable global problems and stubborn particularities or “untranslatables.”

The recent pandemic has only underscored the extent to which humans, animals, and non-living intelligences the world over are interrelated and craft their own detriment by disregarding each other. Referring to the “COVID-19 Dashboard” developed in the early days of the pandemic at Johns Hopkins, Dimock describes that “it has been necessarily bilingual from the outset, suggesting that knowledge of more than one language is a prerequisite for more disciplines than we realize” (843). While translation is still a peripheral and scarcely remunerated practice in the global literary marketplace, the figure of the translator/interpreter emerges as a pivotal mediator. Hailed as “shadow heroes of literature” (Auster n.p.), translators and interpreters toil in the realms of the imagination (as a creators or co-creators of new versions of texts or narratives and as characters in literature and film), and they also act in real-time situations (e.g. *Translators without Borders* or *Traduttori per la Pace*) and undertake manifold real-world negotiations between texts, languages, authors, editors, and publishers. In the domain of literary translation, the “heroic” translator still encounters the impossible tasks of: “possess[ing] the gift of mimicry and be[ing] able to act, as it were, the real author’s part by impersonating his tricks of demeanor and speech, his ways and his mind, with the utmost degree of verisimilitude” (Nabokov n.p.), and in situations of cultural inequality translators shoulder the onus of resisting “translatese” or the flattening of a text’s “disruptive rhetoricity” (Spivak 313) into English. As Gayatri Spivak indicates:

[T]he translator from a Third World language should be sufficiently in touch with what is going on in literary production in that language to be capable of distinguishing between good and bad writing by women, resistant and conformist writing by women. [...] In other words, the person who is translating must have a tough sense of the specific terrain of the original, so that she can fight the racist assumption that all Third World women’s writing is good.

(319-20)

Moreover, as Karen Emmerich describes in her *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, translators are often obliged to act as “translingual” (1) editors who effectively decide or “make” a definitive version of a particular text. Emmerich explains that:

Translators use one or more texts for a work as the basis from which to formulate another text in another language. They decide what a text means (to them), how it means (to them), and which of its features [...] are most important for the particular embodied interpretation they hope to share with others. They also decide how to account for those features in the new text they are writing. Even more basically, translators often decide – if sometimes unwittingly – what the “original” or the “source text” *is*, or at least what *their* original or source text will be.

(4)

While, at least in theory, we’ve moved beyond endless debates about how best to translate or protracted discussions of how to elevate a translation vis à vis a sacrosanct “original,” translators still encounter an unenviable to-do list: be a genius mimic, resist “translatese,” enshrine a new “original,” and, in real-world situations, be able to translate or interpret on-demand and in accordance with the product-minded expectations of a digital universe. Even with the prospect of adroit machine translation, human translators are more and more needed and unheralded. If in the twenty-first century, the figure of the translator has attained some more “visibility” (Venuti *The Translator’s Invisibility* 1), it is on account of the incisive scholarship of translation studies scholars able to articulate why and how the evolving work of translation matters.

Rather than historicizing an increasingly unbounded discipline, I examine apparent manifestations of what Susan Bassnett and others have described as the “outward turn” in translation studies. As Bassnett argues, “Translation studies is not moribund; post-translation studies is an exciting new phase for the subject. We have seen a great many ‘turns’ in translation studies; now is the time for the Outward Turn as the field redefines itself and begins to enjoy greater exchange with other disciplines in a mutually beneficial process of importing and exporting methodologies and ideas” (ix-x). Here, Bassnett prefaces Edwin Gentzler’s related notion of “post-translation studies,” which in turn builds on Siri Nergaard and Stefano Arduini’s conceptualization of “a fundamentally transdisciplinary, mobile, and open-ended” era of “post-translation studies” in the inaugural 2011 issue of *Translation* (Nergaard and Arduini 8). For Gentzler, “post” refers to elucidating both the cultural conditions that post-date the event of translation and those that precede it; he calls for more cross-fertilization with the convergent worlds of reception, adaptation, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism, and for more engagement with the generative terms employed by Latin American theorists that

better account for more “transgressive” forms of “rewriting” (Gentzler 7). Presumably, this outward turn in translation studies or “post-translation” studies is somewhat less comparative and less text- or language-centric – it, rather, emphasizes how problems of translation are already at interstices of other disciplines and brings methods of translation studies to bear on the major questions and polemics of our moment.

In their *Relocation of Culture: Translations, Migrations, Borders*, itself a thoughtful rewriting of and homage to Homi Bhaba’s hallmark post-colonial text, Simona Bertacco and Nicoletta Vallorani promote a general “translation literacy,” which they succinctly describe as “an ability to acknowledge and assess the translational aspects of the world around us” (9). Instead of just a two-way transfer, translation emerges as a vital “mode of reading,” pedagogy, and approaching global problems and questions. As Bertacco and Vallorani explain:

[B]y using translation as a mode of reading, we might actually read texts as well as daily news differently; as educators, we might want to make sure that the translations of the texts we use in our syllabi are from the original language and not from another translation; or that the translation is a reliable and respected one; we might consider the where and why of translations, or the impact that individual translators have had on shaping a “global taste” or a field of scholarship, and so on.

(9)

Following this notion of “translation literacy,” we might also consider how Lawrence Venuti’s directives about “How to Read a Translation” in his seminal essay by the same name could turn into a meditation on “How Translation Helps Us Read.” In the following pages, I index recurrent trends within the so-called “outward turn” in translation studies: projects that engage new terms and metaphors for translation and rewriting; recent transdisciplinary collaborations; and translation-driven conversations about urgent matters of the millennium, including, for starters, migration, globalization, climate change, and questions of equity and identity. While my own approach is necessarily limited to my U.S. and Latin Americanist inculcation into the world of translation studies, I aim to briefly outline and give press to a number of important and outward-oriented projects in (and bordering on) the ever-encroaching and more and more pertinent domain of translation studies.

“New” Terms, Metaphors, and Collaborations

Admittedly, many of the projects that engage “new” translation terms and metaphors don’t actually take up recent vocabulary – as much as they draw light on alternative genealogies of translation that have gained currency amid more concerted efforts to decenter and reconfigure translation scholarship and praxis. Renewed attention toward the “Brazilian school” of translation is one case in point. In his *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, Gentzler goes so far as to argue that Haroldo de Campos’s Brazilian Modernist-inspired neologisms such as “‘transcrição,’ ‘translumição,’ ‘transusão,’ and [...] ‘transluciferação mefistofáustica’ [...] have challenged definitions of static texts and forced scholars to rethink the very definition of translation” (69–70). Gentzler maintains that these creative reconceptualizations of translation have purchase beyond a Brazilian context and better approximate the multidirectional exchanges that emerge in postcolonial spaces and the transformative rewritings of the digital era. Likewise, in her forthcoming *Cannibal Translation: Literary Reciprocity in Latin America*, Isabel Gómez traces the intra-Latin American circulations of both Haroldo and Augusto de Campos’s theorizations – as well as the mutual “reciprocity” (n.p.) born of these ideas in collaboration with Mexican authors Octavio Paz and José Emilio Pacheco in the mid- to late-twentieth century. Gómez unites the concepts of “version, transcreation, transdeduction, approximation, and untranslation,” among other terms, under the larger umbrella of “cannibal translation” and illustrates how the South-South translational exchanges between Brazil and Mexico “break with Eurocentric translation norms and counteract the values of translation associated with World Literature: legibility, domestication, authoritative-ness, completeness, and objectivity” (n.p.). She documents instances in which these Latin American writer-translators employ “translation to reduce historical colonial divisions between them and alte[r] their shared ‘peripheral’ status” (n.p.) and directs needed attention toward translation routes that don’t track movements in or out of English or fall back on reductive readings of “South-North” or “East-West” exchanges.

Recent projects by Leo Tak-Hung Chan and Douglas Robinson articulate a comparable longing for terms and metaphors that better account for fluid and multidirectional modes of translation. In his *Western Theory in East Asian Contexts: Translation and Transtextual Rewriting*, Chan builds on Joseph R. Allen’s claim that “the notion of translation—as an

interlingual operation involving the rendering of a source text into a target text on terms of equivalence — is a Western one” (6) and makes the case that in premodern China, Japan, and Korea looser forms of translation that might be termed “imitation” or “adaptation” (1) were more prevalent. Chan centers on intra-Asian or Sino-Japanese translation exchanges, what he calls “transtextual rewritings” (4), and invites more engagement with the concentric spheres of imitation and adaptation studies. He asks: “What if the traditional boundaries within which the concept of translation has been confined were to be replaced by a more fluid and flexible notion that includes not only adaptation and imitation, but also transcreation, versioning, remediation, transposition, localization, and so on?” (5). In his *Exorcising Translation: Towards and Intercivilizational Turn*, a likely intertext for Chan, Robinson makes a similar argument. Drawing from the work of Lydia Liu, Jon Solomon, and Naoki Sakai or (Sakai Naoki),⁵ Robinson claims that these scholars presume a “prehistory” of translation studies which poses “quite a trenchant challenge to the very foundations” of the field (1). Robinson explains that: “[f]or these scholars the TS ‘primal scene’ of translation, in which a text in a unified national language cannot be understood by speakers of another unified national language until it is translated, was not primal at all; rather, it was a fairly recent historical development, closely linked to the birth of the nation-state in the early modern period” (1). Following Sakai, Robinson calls for an “intercivilizational turn” in translation studies, an approach that privileges less nationalistic and less binaristic perspectives on East-West exchanges and clears space for “configurative” (xii) examinations of questions of influence, reception, and translational and literary histories.

Outward-oriented translation scholars are also keen to move away from binaristic and frequently gender-laden metaphors of translation. Building on the “Canadian” or feminist school of translation theory,⁶ a number of contemporary scholars and translators explore less hierarchical and more inclusive forms of practice and interpretation. In her pioneering *Gender in Translation*, Sherry Simon challenges longstanding

⁵ Robinson describes these theorists as “CTS” or “Critical Translation Scholars,” scholars who engage questions of translation but work in fields somewhat adjacent to translation studies (1–2).

⁶ See, for example, Simon (*Gender in Translation*); Godard (“Theorizing”); de Lotbinière-Harwood.

sexist tropes and metaphors surrounding fidelity, property, and passivity and invites more inventive, collaborative, and generative approaches to translation. As Simon describes, “[f]eminist translation implies extending and developing the intention of the text, not deforming it” (*Gender* 16). In reference to Barbara Godard’s co-creative translation of Nicole Brossard’s *Picture Theory* (first published in French), Simon argues, “[t]ranslation is not a simple transfer, but the continuation of a process of meaning creation, the circulation of meaning within a contingent network of texts and social discourses” (23–24). Contemporary poet, self-translator, and theorist Mónica de la Torre revels in such “circulations of meaning” in her *Repetition Nineteen*, in which she provides twenty-five disparate and multilingual versions or rewritings of one of her poems, the appropriately titled “Equivalencias.” De la Torre also provides a “Translation Key” to the wildly dissimilar versions of the poem, wherein she prefaces each “translation” with a playful and fairly candid description or label. Sample designations include: “T1: Embedded translation,”; “T3: Self-translation informed by journal entries from 1996, the original poem’s year of composition”; “T9: Google Translate version from Spanish to Japanese to English, 2018, with occasional contributions from Merriam Webster”; “T13: Associative departure”; “T18: Deliberate mistranslation of polysemic terms in T17”; and “T24: Anagrammatic translation permutating all of the letters in an English version of the original into Spanish-language words, and its corresponding translation into English” (de la Torre 70–73). In this revealing catalogue, she blends theory and practice and effectively opens up the processes of composition and translation and rewriting. By involving the reader in the spinning permutations of her poem, she marks the never-simple creation or transfer of meaning.

Likewise, in her varied and contingent self- and/or co-creative translations of her texts, contemporary Mexican and U.S. author Valeria Luiselli models a generative and conceivably “feminist” translation praxis. Referring to her decision to write her first book in Spanish, *Papeles Falsos/Sidewalks*, Luiselli describes her intentions to join a tradition of bilingual writers like Joseph Conrad and Joseph Brodsky who switched to writing in another language, writers she calls “linguistic transvestites” (Neyra n.p.). Here, she playfully subverts Nicolas D’Ablancourt’s (a major figure in the “Les belles infidèles” translation program) descriptions of the domesticating practice of “dressing” a foreign text or author in the clothes of the host county.⁷

⁷ As D’Ablancourt states in his “Preface to Lucian,” “Ambassadors are accustomed to dress in the fashion of the country where they have been sent for fear of appearing ridiculous to those with whom they endeavor to please” (35).

Ostensibly, Luiselli’s cross-dressing praxis entails foregrounding the cultural and interlingual transformations that shape her writing or marking the acts of translation across her literary corpus. Consider, for example, the divergent titles of the Spanish and English versions of her texts; Luiselli’s willingness to give her translators relatively free reign (e.g. Christina MacSweeney adding a chapter to the English translation of *Los ingravidos*);⁸ her proclivity to write collaboratively (*La historia de mis dientes/ Story of My Teeth* was written in conjunction with workers at a Jumex factory); and, in general, how she approaches translation as an opportunity to revise the previous version of the texts. Through the interconnected Spanish and English (or English and Spanish) versions of her works, Luiselli endeavors to make the performative and translational aspects of her texts more visible, if not apparent.

In her reading of Caroline Bergvall’s performance poem, “Via,” which presents forty-eight English translations of Dante’s tercet from the *Inferno*, Sandra Bermann makes the intersections between gender, performance, and translation explicit. Like de la Torre and Luiselli, Bermann explores “translation as an ongoing act, a performing that engages reader or audience as much as translators themselves” (Bermann 286). She emphasizes how Bergvall’s poem/performance continually extends an “invitation to interpret” (287) and puts the audio and textual iterations of the poem in conversation with the ideas of J.L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler about performance, citation, and iterability. As Bermann indicates,

While translation is hardly drag, it can enact a similar theatrical repetition and questioning of social and historical norms. Using the citational potential of its mode, it can exaggerate, highlight, displace, and queer normative expectations across genders and cultures as well as languages. Such a conception allows us to see anew a number of twentieth- and twenty-first-century translational practices that, in different ways, challenge social and historical norms as they challenge traditional expectations for translation.

(292)

Bermann’s discussion of the poem exemplifies the kind of transdisciplinary engagement that, to my mind, constitutes the “outward” turn in translation studies. She opens a cross-dialogue with interlocutors in poststructuralism, theoretical linguistics, and gender studies and signals

⁸ In her texts and in her discussions of them, Luiselli frequently gestures toward her translators and even credits them with spurring revisions of future editions of her texts.

how translation is itself a border or trans-disciplinary phenomenon that creates constructive tensions in other fields. As one such example, consider the 2019 CFP for a special issue of *GLQ* on “Queer/Cuir Américas: Translation, Decoloniality, and the Incommensurable.” The editors invite papers that examine how translation both resists and facilitates the “unidirectional flow of queer theories and epistemologies” from the U.S. and Europe, and they look to translation as a means of lending new legibility to “invisibiliz[ed]” bodies and “interrogat[ing] cultural and academic knowledge brokering” (Pierce *et al.* n.p.). Likewise, in the coda to her still very timely monograph on gender and translation studies, Simon reflects on the double-edged power of translation and on how “feminist translation has made gender the site of a consciously transformative project, one which reframes conditions of textual authority” (*Gender* 167). She explains that while “[t]his authority can be exercised in a ‘corrective’ mode,” as in the case of the translators actively rewriting problematic content in the Bible, “it is more fruitfully used to trouble sedimented accretions of dogma, to loosen the bonds of accepted verities, to challenge social and conceptual hierarchies” (167). Bermann, Luiselli, and de la Torre each extend the project of “feminist” translation as envisioned and embodied by Simon and others, and model the co-creative, transdisciplinary, and anti-hierarchical modes of translation theory and practice that can help unsettle “social and historical norms” (Bermann 292) and address pressing global problems.

Translation and the World

As a corollary, I highlight the expansive, transdisciplinary projects of contemporary writers and scholars who wield translation studies as a lens through which to approach urgent and, even, unfathomable global upheavals. They explore the abundant intersections between translation and problems such as migration, war, globalization, and a rapidly changing climate, and they enlist the problems of translation to help localize and quantify the unfathomable scale and dimension of these problems. In the first place, the important work of Loredana Polezzi, Moira Inghilleri, and Simona Bertacco and Nicoletta Vallorani, among others, comprises a veritable translation think-tank on the topic of migration. Bertacco and Vallorani posit the benefit of studying translation and migration in tandem, arguing that while “the current phenomenon of global migrations has sharply raised the currency of translation – in practical

as well as theoretical terms – as an area of study” (1), translation “as a border notion, that is, a notion that defines itself on the border of experiences, cultures, and disciplines, [...] is well positioned to capture the nuances of the complex historical phenomenon of current migrations” (8). In their *Relocation of Culture*, they argue that by espousing an ethos of “translation literacy,” authors like Emily Jacir, Valeria Luiselli, and others promote a “responsible way of reading migrant stories” (27-28). They suggest that, for Jacir, employing “[t]ranslation as a mode of understanding the world allows [her] to turn the tables on the standard narrative of migration given in political discourse and circulated by the media” (39), and for Luiselli, “making the interpreter’s role fully visible and acknowledging its importance but also its challenges,” (42) occasions a more ethical treatment of both her “translation encounter[s]” (42) and the migrant subjects that she represents. They also call for “transnational” and “translingual” (16) discussions of postcolonial texts; examine boats, detention facilities, camps, and shelters as key sites of signification (17) in texts by contemporary European writers; and highlight various visual representations or “translations” of migrants. Their book presents translation as an elastic and comprehensive worldview through which we can more thoughtfully approach the stories, figures, and representations of migration.

In her formative essay on “Translation and Migration,” Polezzi implies that pairing the two terms has even become a kind of truism, and she cautions against any glib or celebratory invocations of global connectivity, stating, “[i]t is one thing to imagine the utopian interconnectedness and cultural productivity of global diasporas, another to travel the routes of their individual members, for whom often borders remain firmly in place” (347). To this end, Polezzi emphasizes the assorted valences of the figure of the “migrant” – “from the image of hordes of illegal immigrants pressing at the borders of ‘Fortress Europe’ in search of an escape from poverty, to the refugees and *sans papiers* whose plight is at the centre of contemporary humanitarian concerns” on the one hand and “from the diasporic members of increasingly scattered transnational communities, to the well-travelled standard bearers of new brands of cosmopolitanism” (347) on the other – and she underlines the importance of both acknowledging the varied “realities and of representations” of migrants and distinguishing between the distinctive “needs, practices, locations and agents” that fall under the amorphous moniker of “migration” (347). Likewise, in her *Translation and Migration*, Inghilleri emphasizes the less unidirectional routes of migration in the twenty-first century. She

describes how in addition to providing a virtual “lifeline” (8) for those navigating crossings or seeking information about an intended destination, technology and “transnational media” allow modern migrants to “maintain virtual if not physical contact with their past and present” (2) and “give greater fluidity to territorial and conceptual boundaries” (3). While Inghilleri insinuates that the fluid contours of the migrant experience are most apparent in our digital age, she concedes that, “[m]igration has never been a simple matter of reproduction in a single direction: it has always involved a combination of diffusion, appropriation, assimilation, resistance, and enduring ambivalence” (34). The substantive projects by Inghilleri, Polezzi, and Bertacco and Vallorani each reiterate how translation phenomena, whether interlingual or cultural, undergird and add important intonations to sociological or political discussions of migration and show how the tangible facts and subjects of migration ground discussions of translation in the abstract. As Polezzi deadpans, “[i]f we take into account people rather than, or at least as well as, texts, then the implications of ‘translating’ them necessarily foreground ethical questions: there is, after all, a crucial difference between ‘manipulating,’ ‘domesticating’ or even ‘betraying’ a literary work and doing the same with a human being” (Polezzi 347).⁹

These committedly multidirectional examinations of translation and migration coincide with recent explorations of how problems of translation inform discussions of globalization and the ongoing Anglicization of “World Literature.” Translation studies scholar Michael Cronin is a primary voice here. As Cronin indicates in his prescient *Translation and Globalization*: “translation, and by extension translation studies, is ideally placed to understand both the transnational movement that is globalization and the transnational movement which is anti-globalization. Translation is rarely suited to the binary reductionism of polemic (for or against globalization) and [...] that is the particular strength of the activity” (*Translation* 1). By emphasizing how translation scholarship almost axiomatically refuses or disinvites dichotomies he prefigures or

⁹ To this point, we should credit the critical work by Inghilleri, Mona Baker, Robert Barsky, and Vicente Rafael, among many others, on interpreting (and the “interpreter figure”) in zones of conflict and border spaces. A very limited sampling of relevant articles and books since 2000 includes Rafael; Jacquemet; Baker (“The Changing Landscape”); Davidson; Inghilleri (“National Sovereignty” and *Interpreting Justice*); Stahuljak; Salama-Carr; Wolf; Maryn; Barsky; Augustine-Adams and Nuñez; Kahane; Boéri and Maier.

invokes the “outward” turn of the field. Accordingly, Cronin proposes new “paradigms” (42) and “geographies” (76) of translation in the global era, and he emphasizes the importance of building the cultural capital of translation in all its forms, including and especially non-literary translation. As Cronin indicates: “the hegemony of English in the fastest-growing area of technological development means that all other languages become, in this context *minority languages*” (146). In his discussion of translation in the case of modern Ireland he reprises his argument, elsewhere, that “[m]ajor languages have much to learn from minority languages” and asserts that “[t]he issue of translation and minority languages is not a peripheral concern for beleaguered fans of exotic peoples gabbling in incomprehensible tongues but the single, most important issue in translation studies today” (144).¹⁰ Cronin also looks inward and suggests that translation studies scholars must do more in theory in practice to acknowledge and remedy their complicity in privileging English (or other major languages) in institutional settings. He notes that: “[t]ranslation theory must address the question, [...] of its own *institutional translation*. In other words, we need to consider more carefully, in Europe and elsewhere, how the fact of translating our research and theoretical insights into major languages [...] circumscribes our field of inquiry or alters the reception and presentation of evidence” (149-50). In true anti-binary form, he reads translation as both “predator and deliverer, enemy and friend” (142); he presents questions of language and translation as vital manifestations of globalization and its mixed bag of blessings.

By way of conclusion, I outline recent projects in or adjacent to translation studies that extend Cronin’s forward or “outward” investigations of translation and globalization. This admittedly partial list considers: works that grapple with the Anglicization of World Literature and trouble the status of the English language; works that treat translation in urban spaces; and projects that approach seemingly insurmountable problems such as climate change and racial equity. In his *Forget English*, Aamir Mufti forcefully interrogates English as a “*global literary vernacular*” (17 ; emphasis in original) and argues that “[a]ny critical account of literary relations on a world scale – that is, any account of world literature as such – must thus actively confront and attend to this functioning of English as *vanishing mediator*;

¹⁰ See also Cronin (“The Cracked Looking Glass of Servants”).

rather than treat it passively as neutral or transparent medium, both as a world language of literary expression and as the undisputed language of global capitalism” (16; emphasis in original). Mufti provides a deeply historical account of the orientalist underpinnings of “world literature” and demonstrates how, from the outset, the program of world literature was one of effacement and exclusion, which in “its drive toward the universal” tended to “heighten the presence and visibility of the particular” (4–5). Emily Apter’s *Against World Literature: A Politics of Untranslatability* and Barbara Cassin’s *Dictionary of Untranslatables* (a collaborative project with Apter) emphasize the power of the particular; Apter and Cassin depict the words, names, and concepts that resist smooth transmission into a global English as bubbling sites of cultural resistance that refuse assumptions of ready equivalence. While Venuti and David Bellos and others have, to my mind, fairly criticized Apter’s book for its inadequate treatment of both interlingual translation and translation in the abstract, the projects by Apter (and Apter and Cassin) cogently articulate the value of the stubborn localisms that negate and/or call for more translation. As translators Arianne Des Rochers and Robert Twiss argue:

Apter’s project of using “untranslatability as an epistemological fulcrum for rethinking philosophical concepts and discourses of the humanities” is laudable, but we are curious as to why she does not use “translation,” or “translatability,” instead of its negation, to pursue this goal [...]. [W]e argue that attention to the complex and often frustrating workings of *translatability* helps us to better contextualize and engage with the texts we are reading.

(n.p.)

Even as they oversimplify the work of translation, Apter’s claims of “untranslatability” reiterate the need for translation as a means of accounting for both particularity and surplus in a globalized world.

Moreover, a number of recent works examine how “minority” languages and multilingual writers counter national imaginaries and resist an anodyne global English. A U.S.-centered list might include: Lawrence Rosenwald’s *Multilingual America: Language and the Making of American Literature*, Joshua Miller’s *Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism*, Debra Castillo’s *Redreaming America: Toward a Bilingual American Culture*, Rosina Lozano’s *An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States*, and Sarah Rivett’s *Unscripted America: Indigenous Languages and the Origins of a Literate Nation*. These Translation-Studies-adjacent projects each underline the constructed

notions of a national language and literature and invoke translation (of language, of culture, and of the self) as both a condition of assimilation and a vital means of connectivity. In the same vein, the many-voiced projects of contemporary, U.S.-based multiethnic and multilingual writers such as Valeria Luiselli, Mónica de la Torre, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Yaa Gyasi, Louise Erdrich, Ocean Vuong, and Yuri Herrera attest to the transnational contours of migration, citizenship, and belonging. By having readers pass through their frequent “intra-lingual” translations, these writers foreground their translational negotiations and clear space for multilingual writing in the global literary marketplace. Likewise, in her recent article about “typographic multilingualism” and “post-Anglophone” fiction, Walkowitz describes how contemporary authors such as Paul Kingsnorth, Junot Díaz, and Ali Smith “[activate] the relation between language and print” (96) to show the limits of language and to mark the ghostly presence of other languages. All of these projects induct the reader into the double-edged processes of translation and making-meaning and challenge the nationalist and monolingual expectations of writing and publishing.

Scholarly projects that elucidate the pre- and post-conditions of literary texts and translations further interrogate the norms of the literary marketplace. Consider, for example, Emmerich’s *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, Jim Collins’s *Bring on the Books for Everybody*, Marc McGurl’s forthcoming *Everything and Less: The Novel in the Age of Amazon*, Venuti’s “Translations on the Book Market,” Ignacio Sánchez Prado’s *Strategic Occidentalism: On Mexican Fiction, the Neoliberal Book Market, and the Question of World Literature*, Susan Bernofsky’s “Translationista” blog, and the work of Chad Post to maintain the invaluable “Three Percent Database,” a project of Open Letter Books, the University of Rochester, and *Publishers Weekly* which provides up-to-date data about the paltry few books translated from other languages into English. Each of these expansive projects challenges the relative silence about the interventions of translators, publishers, and editors and helps delineate the consequences of the expectations of “invisibility” and the cult of “originality” in literary spheres. Venuti argues that, in effect, publishers and editors in the U.S. and the U.K. disservice their own interests by nurturing “aggressively monolingual readerships” and failing to build a “translation culture” – “a culture that can sustain the study and practice of translation, that can foster a sophisticated and appreciative discourse about translation in its many aspects, and that can create an informed

readership to support and encourage the publication of translated texts” (Venuti “Translations” 159). Gentzler strikes a more optimistic note. He claims that in the digital era of “post-translation” studies:

Many systems of authority – publishing companies, governments, churches, established journals, and professional organizations – are being bypassed, breaking apart old structures that lent authority (and copyright legislation) to authors and translators and instead putting the power in the hands of a new and open generation. Indeed, there is a process of democratization going on in the translation industry, one that I find liberating. Small presses, Internet sites, and crowd-sourcing platforms proliferate.

(8)

Indeed, a number of academic, independent, and non-profit presses have been at the forefront in remedying longstanding inequities in publishing that have effectively barred both multilingual and international voices from global conversations. Organizations such as Words without Borders, Dalkey Archive Press, Archipelago Books, Open Letter Books, Amazon Crossing, New Directions, Arte Público, Asymptote, Deep Vellum, Lee & Low Books, Radio Ambulante, Wiigwaas Press, and Jalada Africa, among many others, have used their platforms to create more representative and less monolingual national literatures.¹¹ The future of translation studies is very likely to involve more collaborations with these translation-oriented presses.

As a last gasp, I assemble some ostensibly dissimilar but all future-minded projects that acknowledge the ubiquity and “embedded[ness]” (Simon *Cities* xvii) of translation in urban spaces and use translation to approach some of the most pressing matters of our time. In her *Cities in Translation*, Sherry Simon builds on Cronin’s calls for “polyglossic civility” (Cronin *Translation* 100) and articulates the vital interpretive role of the translator in metropolitan spaces, particularly in “divided or dual cities” (Simon *Cities* 3) that have long histories of conquest and discord and manifest a hastily forged togetherness or “community.” As Simon argues:

¹¹ The project of Amazon Crossing (and Amazon Crossing Kids) is a fascinating case. An imprint of Bezos’s behemoth, Amazon Crossing now publishes the most translations into English in the U.S. and is, arguably, rewriting and democratizing the English-language translation scene by publishing more popular, “genre” fiction. For more on Amazon Crossing, see Chad Post’s “AmazonCrossing Is the Story.”

The translator emerges as a full participant in the stories of modernity that are enacted across urban space – modernity understood as an awareness of the plurality of codes, a thinking with and through translation, a continual testing of the limits of expression. Translators are flâneurs of a special sort, adding language as another layer of dissonance to the clash of histories and narratives on offer in the streets and passageways.

(*Cities* 6)

Simon’s insinuation that the translator is uniquely able to decipher the pluralities of the city and to see past the “surface appearance[s] of language equality” (3) has laid the groundwork for many more projects. The forthcoming *Routledge Handbook of Translation and the City* (for which Simon has written the framing essay) speaks to how her project has become the basis for new scholarship. As the editor describes in a preliminary note, this volume travels to Hong Kong, Lagos, Cape Town, Cairo, Melbourne, and other sites to examine “the role of translation at critical junctures of a city’s historical transformation as well as in the mundane intercultural moments of urban life, and uncovers the trope of the translational city in writing” (Lee n.p.). In her “City in Translation” – a literary website, podcast, public workshop, and social media endeavor since about 2015 – Amsterdam-based writer, artist, and translator Canan Marasligil approaches various cities through a “translation lens.” She aims to make less valued languages more visible in urban spaces and to thereby “reclaim urban spaces through translation” (Marasligil n.p.). The fluid, trans-medial form of her project seems especially apt for capturing the visual, aural, and multilingual dimensions of the cities represented across her creative works. Both Simon’s and Marasligil’s projects fruitfully wed the vernacular of translation studies to the language of urban studies and affirm the general transferability of a translation lens or outlook.

In his 2017 *Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene*, Michael Cronin pairs the language of translation studies with that of ecology in order to approach the overwhelming problem of climate change. A fitting sequel to his earlier project on translation and globalization, Cronin’s *Eco-Translation* establishes a vocabulary and ethos of translation through which to approach “the age of the anthropocene,” the era in which humans have had an outsized impact on earth and its ecosystems. Cronin maintains that “translation as a body of ideas and a set of practices is central to any serious or sustained attempt to think about this interconnectedness and vulnerability in the age of human-induced climate change” (1), and also contends that some of “assumptions we

make about translation [...] may need to be radically re-thought on a planet that, from a human standpoint, is entering the most critical phase of its existence” (3). Accordingly, Cronin cultivates the critical “awareness of the place sensitivity of language and usage” (16); promotes the idea of translation as a “*renewable*, a form of cultural and linguistic energy that can be recycled through different forms and that adds to rather than depletes [...] linguistic and cultural resources” (38; emphasis in original); examines how translation complicates “the triangular relationship between food, mobility and culture” (42); marks the “ontological link between food and non-translation” (48); envisions a “Slow Language” movement in response to the “increasing industrialization” of language production (57); urges more engagement with Animal Studies to counter “human exceptionalism” (68) and to “construct a notion of animal subjectivity” (77); emphasizes the waste born of Information and Communications Technology and submits that “the ecological imperative to reduce, reuse, recycle, must be imbedded in the very tools that translators use” (102); correlates conversations about dying languages and endangered species; and explores the extent to which travel writers are “complicit in the major ecological problem of global linguicide” (122). In short, he stakes out the contours of a new field and prefaces many more collaborations between translation studies and the social and physical sciences.¹²

Another emerging and urgent conversation in translation studies concerns translation’s intersections with questions of race and equity – consider, for example, recent *Asymptote* podcasts on “Translating Blackness,” “Blackness Revisited,” and “International Blackness” (Benitez-James); and, certainly, the heated discussions about who should translate Amanda Gorman’s poem “The Hill We Climb,” and the subsequent (ALTA)

¹² Elizabeth DeLoughrey explores Kamau Brathwaite’s concept of “tidalectics” in the literal wake of hurricanes Irma, José, and Maria. As DeLoughrey explains, Brathwaite’s term “describes ‘the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic [...] motion, rather than linear’” (Brathwaite, qtd. in DeLoughrey 94). DeLoughrey describes how Brathwaite’s cyclical neologism challenges linear notions of history and progress and emphasizes how the water-centered metaphor aptly conveys movement and “flux” – that “[t]idalectics are concerned with the fluidity of water as a shifting site of history, invoke the rupture of modernity created by transoceanic migration and transplantation, and imagine a regional relationship beyond the bifurcations of colonial, linguistic, and national boundaries” (95). Cronin’s conceptualizations of translation approximate Brathwaite’s generative term: as recursive instead of linear, based in perpetual movement and regeneration, and equally ambivalent to the permutations or “bifurcations of colonial, linguistic, and national boundaries.”

American Literary Translators Association’s “Statement on Racial Equity in Literary Translation.”¹³ Here is one such pointed excerpt: “In our view, the foundational problem this controversy reveals is the scarcity of Black translators and other translators of color, a scarcity caused by long-term patterns of discrimination in education and publishing.” “Translation as Reparation” is the upcoming theme for the 2022 slate of seminars organized by the ICLA Translation Committee, an encompassing thematic that considers, for starters: “race, identity, and belonging in translation; ecocriticism and ecological repair; feminist, queer/cuir, intersectional translation praxis; translational medicine and mental health in the interpretation field; reparations in major and minority languages; austerity, and divestment from neoliberalism in translation; and translation as self-fashioning and healing.”

By indexing various recent translation studies projects, I illustrate how, in the twenty-first century, translation studies is an expansive outlook and a vital form of literacy that intersects a variety of fields and transdisciplinary phenomena. The twenty-first century translation studies scholar might well be described as self-assured and increasingly open to co-creative entanglements with other fields and modes of thinking.

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¹³ For a list of additional resources correlating race and translation, see Tachtiris.

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Magical Realisms for a Global Twenty-first Century

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A review of Christopher Warnes and Kim Anderson Sasser, eds. *Magical Realism and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 406. ISBN: 9781108426305 and Richard Perez and Victoria Chevalier, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. Pp. 671. ISBN: 9783030398347.

Theoretical studies of magic realism have abounded in the past several decades, and include important works by such prominent scholars as Amaryll Chanady (*Magical Realism and the Fantastic. Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*, 1985), Jean Weisgerber (*Le Réalisme magique: Roman, peinture et cinéma*, 1987), Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (*Magical Realism. Theory, History, Community*, 1995, an influential critical anthology), Jean-Pierre Durix (*Mimesis, Genres and Postcolonial Discourse. Deconstructing Magic Realism*, 1998), Wendy B. Faris (*Ordinary Enchantments. Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, 2004), Maggie Bowers (*Magic(al) Realism*, 2004), Christopher Warnes (*Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel. Between Faith and Irreverence*, 2009), Eugene Arva (*The Traumatic Imagination. Histories of Violence in Magical Realist Fiction*, 2011), and Kim Anderson Sasser (*Magical Realism and Cosmopolitanism. Strategizing Belonging*, 2014). Broadly speaking, these critics view magical realism as an aesthetic form asserting the co-existence in a literary text of apparently irreconcilable elements, such as everyday reality and the supernatural.

The term “magical realism” was first coined in the 1920s in Germany as a way of referring to the objective presentation of a new reality typical

of Post-Expressionism in art and literature. This new aesthetic form was then described by Franz Roh as “Magischer Realismus” or “Neue Sachlichkeit.” Later in the twentieth century, particularly during the “Boom” of the 1990s, magical realism became strongly associated with Latin American literature and culture. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, magical realism also became more and more often linked with such literary phenomena as postmodernism and postcolonialism. It spread beyond the boundaries of the Latin American universe to become a more global aesthetic, as the contributions collected in Zamora’s and Faris edited *Magical Realism* indicate. For instance, in “Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers,” Theo D’haen suggests that, in the postmodern era, magical realism can be found well beyond the confines of Latin America, for instance in South Africa, India, Canada and the UK. To substantiate his claim, he examines works by J.M. Coetzee (South Africa), John Fowles and Angela Carter (UK), Salman Rushdie (India), Robert Kroetsch and Jack Hodgins (Canada). In her essay published in the same collection, “Psychic Realism, Mythic Realism, Grotesque Realism: Variations on Magic Realism in Contemporary Literature in English,” Jeanne Delbaere acknowledges the plurality of the shapes of magical realism in contemporary postcolonial cultures. In seeking to identify these nuances of magical realism, she grounds her discussion in a partly postcolonial and Anglophone literary corpus, which comprises works by Angela Carter (UK), Jack Hodgins (Canada) and Janet Frame (New Zealand). In recent years, added emphasis has been laid by critics on the truly international appeal of magical realism. In her monograph, *Magical Realism and Cosmopolitanism. Strategizing Belonging*, Kim Anderson Sasser further emphasizes the broadening geographical scope of magical realism, by linking it to globalization and its concomitant cosmopolitanism. Sasser claims the “codes of magic and realism” serve to “assert regional, national, and cultural identities” through “a particular strategy of belonging in the world, one defined by locality and particularity” (40). Magical realism, Sasser contends, has become a truly “cosmopolitan” genre, a feature that enables its various practitioners to negotiate globalization on their own local terms. The two recent scholarly books reviewed in this essay prolong this long line of insightful studies on a mode of writing that is becoming increasingly global in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

These two remarkably rich collections of essays gather innovative contributions by established scholars in the field of magical realist studies,

including Christopher Warnes, Maggie Ann Bowers, Lois Parkinson Zamora, Maria Takolander, Ben Holgate, Kim Anderson Sasser, Wendy B. Faris, Eugene Arva and many others. Moreover, the contributors to these anthologies enlist new critical methodologies in order to reach a more complex assessment of the enduring and multi-faceted literary phenomenon of magical realism. Through insightful examinations of specific case studies, the many contributions assembled in those pages demonstrate that magical realism remains a relevant aesthetic mode of writing in today's globalized world. They offer a rebuttal of the only too common critical view that magical realism has lost its vital energies in the twenty-first century. This pessimistic perspective was perhaps first articulated by critic Graham Huggan in *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), in which he compared magical realism to "a commodified, increasingly formulaic aesthetic through which the histories of different cultures are effectively levelled out" (71). Taking a different stance, the contributors to these collections showcase the multiple cultural and geographical areas of the world in which magical realism is currently flourishing, as it undergoes a form of renaissance in this new century.

Christopher Warnes and Kim Anderson Sasser's edited *Magical Realism and Literature* offers a comprehensive survey of the changes that characterize this re-energizing of magical realism. In their introduction, the editors boldly assert their reliance on the concept of "polygenesis": "Magical realism has emerged independently across time and space. There are no geographical limits on it, just as there are in principle no restrictions on the purposes to which it might be put" (7). This polygenetic account is articulated in different ways in the three parts of the volume: Part I focuses on the history of the concept; Part II explores various regional contexts, while Part III concentrates on applications of the term for specific purposes, such as for instance trauma studies. Space limitations would make it impossible in the framework of this review essay to provide an in-depth analysis of each of the 19 chapters of which this volume is comprised. Everyone will have their favourite. I shall therefore restrict my comments to those essays I feel will be most useful for comparatists.

Part I gathers contributions on "Magic and Otherness" by Christopher Warnes, on "Primitivism, Ethnography and Magical Realism" by Erik Camayd-Freixas, on "Magical Realism and Indigeneity: From Appropriation to Resurgence" by Maggie Ann Bowers, on "Insubstantial Selves in Magical Realism in the Americas" by Lois Parkinson Zamora, and on "Space, Time and Magical Realism" by Ato Quayson. Camayd-Freixas

usefully reminds us of Latin-American writer Carpentier's skeptical attitude towards European surrealism, which he eventually came to regard as superficial. However, he continued to base his theories "on the Surrealist concept of the *merveilleux* as the 'chance encounter' or clash of disparate realities" (43). Maggie Ann Bowers focuses on the risks of cultural appropriation of Indigenous magical realist texts by Western scholars. She explores the possibility of using alternative terms to designate this literary mode of writing, such as the one coined by Indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor: "mythic verism" (57). While Lois Parkinson Zamora insists on the collective nature of character as a defining aspect of magical realism in the Americas in her subtle analyses of works by Erdrich and Marquez (65), Ato Quayson productively contrasts Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* to Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*.

Part II, which is perhaps the most fascinating section of the volume, contains chapters providing surveys of the fortunes of magical realism in different parts of the world, well beyond its traditional roots in Europe and Latin America. Most of these chapters shed light on works and authors not usually associated with magic realism, thus whetting the reader's appetite for new discoveries. After Ignacio Lopez-Calvo's account of how magical realism achieved a *Weltliteratur* status during the "Boom" period of the Latin American novel in the 1990s, Theo D'haen offers new perspectives on magical realist literature in Europe. In doing so, he stresses the importance of magical realist novelists in Italy (namely Dino Buzzati, 121) and in Flanders (principally Hubert Lampo, *De Komst van Joachim Stiller*, 123–25). In "Beautiful Lies: Magical Realism in Australasia," Maria Takolander underlines the long tradition of magic realist writing in Australia and New Zealand, citing such writers as Richard Flanagan, Peter Carey, Alexis Wright, Kim Scott, Witi Ihimaera, and Keri Hulme. In particular, she examines the parody of Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet* in Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, thus indicating the subversive potential of magical realist fiction in that region of the world (140). Graham K. Riach, in "Myth, Orality, and the African Novel," claims that the fiction of writers such as Zakes Mda, Wa Thiongo Ngugi and Mia Couto can be read through the lens of magical realism. In "Breaking Boundaries: The Tale of North American Magical Realism," Shannin Schroeder provides new avenues for reading Toni Morrison's and Louise Erdrich's works, while pointing to magical realism's remarkable elasticity in the North American region (181). In "East Asian Magical Realism," Ben Holgate sheds light on the magical realist works of Mo Yan and Banana Yoshimoto in

Japan. Proceeding along similar lines in “Magic Realism in South Asia,” Sourit Bahttacharya focuses on magic realist writers in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, highlighting the persistence of magic realist fiction well into the twenty-first century (citing Raj Kamal Jha’s *She Will Build Him a City*, 2015; Subhangi Swarup’s *Latitudes of Longing*, 2018; Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*, 2017; and Mohan Raja Madawala’s *Colombo*, 2018). Alexandra Chreitech’s essay, “Fantastic Cohabitations: Magical Realism in Arabic and Hebrew,” concludes Part II. It places in conversation the political hauntings evident in magical realist novels in Arabic (such as Ahmad al-Saadawi’s *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, 2013; and Fadi Azzam’s *Sarmada*, 2012) and in a magical realist film in Hebrew (Marco Carmel’s *My Lovely Sister*, 2011).

Part III, entitled “Application,” gathers essays focusing on the link between magical realism and related fields of study. In “From the Inside of Belief: Magic and Religion,” Kim Anderson Sasser argues that magic realism can serve to reflect religious beliefs. Eugene Arva’s excellent chapter, “Word, Image and Cinematic Ekphrasis in Magical Realist Trauma Narratives,” throws interesting light on how both narrative and cinematic storytelling can serve as artistic means of coming to terms with the “*felt reality* of painful traumatic experiences” (265). Arva’s ability to detect signs of the magical realist aesthetic in the film medium suggests this mode of writing might also exist in theatre and performance, a field to which little attention has been devoted so far, much to this reader’s regret.¹ In “Scheherazade in the Diaspora: Home and the City in Arab Migrant Fiction,” Jumana Bayeh casts a new look at the profound link between diaspora literature and the magical realist mode of writing, which serves to amplify experiences of displacement and dispersal (299). In the following essay, “Ecomagical Realism in Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria* and

¹ The reader seeking more information about magical realism in the field of drama may turn to my book *Transgressive Itineraries: Postcolonial Hybridizations of Dramatic Realism* (2003), in which I provide a comparative analysis of the magical realist aesthetic in late twentieth-century (non)Indigenous plays from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Analyses of more recent, 21st century developments of the magical realist aesthetic can be found in my essays, “Forging Native Idioms: Canadian and Australasian Performances of Indigeneity in an Age of Globalization” (2014) and “Staging the Ambiguities of Race: Polymorphous Indigenous Dramaturgies in Canada” (2021). I would argue that further research in this domain should be undertaken, particularly with the aim of clarifying the theoretical underpinnings of the nexus performance/magical realism.

Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale*," Laura A. Pearson shows how magical realism enhances the ecocritical underpinnings of works by Indigenous writers Alexis Wright and Linda Hogan. The most impressive essay of Part III is perhaps Wendy B. Faris and Miho Nonaka's detailed analysis of Haruki Murakami's novel *IQ84* as magical realist fiction, an article entitled "Proximate Magic: Magical Realism and the City in Haruki Murakami's *IQ84*." These scholars indicate how, in Murakami's 2011 dystopian novel, magical realism enables readers to locate forms of proximate, intimate magic in the overconsumed space of a huge megalopolis such as Tokyo. The critics contend this novel shows how, in the twenty-first century, magical realism has ceased to be exclusively associated with postcolonial concerns, as the mainstream environment of *IQ84* demonstrates (319). Finally, the collection concludes with Ursula Kluwick's essay on the marketing appeal of magical realist fiction, entitled "Magic and the Literary Market." Kluwick examines the tendency of publishers to consider magical realist fiction as a "commodified vehicle to exoticism" (355). She therefore insists on the necessity of distinguishing "between innovative and formulaic magical realism" (355).

All in all, the essays collected in this dense and well-edited critical anthology make abundantly clear that magical realism has become a truly cosmopolitan mode of writing in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By showing magical realism can no longer be exclusively associated with Latin American and postcolonial contexts, this volume offers innovative perspectives on a mode of writing that is now entering its second century. Being a coherently structured and effectively written book, *Magical Realism and Literature* will rapidly become an indispensable research tool for all scholars in the field.

Richard Perez and Victoria Chevalier's edited *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century*, published in the same year as Warnes and Sasser's collection, is predicated on a similar ambition of shedding new light on the recent global spread of magical realism. In contrast to the first volume reviewed in this essay, it proposes to concentrate mainly on twenty-first century developments – one might quibble that the editors could not entirely respect their agenda and still had to, in part at least, focus on twentieth-century developments. Moreover, the protean nature of the 650-page Palgrave anthology is such that it may be slightly more difficult for readers to navigate this book, although its comprehensive bibliography and useful index somewhat alleviate this potential hurdle. In addition, the excellent quality of the scholarship will easily

make readers forget this minor flaw, especially if they use the volume as a reference work. As in the case of Warnes and Sasser's collection, I think it will be more useful in these pages to concentrate only on those essays that would be particularly relevant for comparatists, as the sheer length of this opus precludes any exhaustive treatment.

In their introduction, "Proliferations of Being: The Persistence of Magical Realism in Twenty-First Century Literature and Culture," Richard Perez and Victoria A. Chevalier describe the main concern of their anthology in these terms:

The essays herein demonstrate that the use of magical realism in literature has transitioned to a global practice, indicating a new stage in the history of the genre [...] the essays in this anthology argue that magical realism in literature has proliferated globally partly due to continual travel and migrations, with the shrinking of time and space through technology [...] and the contact between and within cultures [...]. Therefore, global literatures offer the reimagining of spaces and shifting populations within continually reconfigured worlds. (1)

This anthology is thus predicated on the assumption that the "new stage in the genre... is characterized by a focus on Being. By Being, we refer to its most rudimentary definitions as a force or energy that signals the existence of a vital presence within a body, place, or thing" (3). The editors further argue that magical realism in the twenty-first century relies on a new understanding of Being, one that incorporates a special focus on "difference and multiplicity" (3). In other words,

magic offers a multi-dimensional view into the layers of existence compressed within the logic of colonial societies. In this sense, magical realism functions as an assertive social and political feature that calls for the reimagining of Being, in a decidedly decolonial manner of speaking, in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the task of magic in the twenty-first century is no longer to reveal Being, but to revel in it, to re-experience Being in all its openness, multiplicity, and potentiality. (3)

As this quote indicates, the aim of this anthology differs slightly from that of Warnes and Sasser. While the latter privileges a "polygenetic" approach to magical realism rooted in a diachronic perspective, *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century* foregrounds a synchronic understanding of this mode of writing. Moreover, the Palgrave volume focuses on the "openness; multiplicity, and potentiality" of magical realism (3), while the Cambridge University Press

anthology suggests the eventual re-inscription of magical realism into the mainstream – as Wendy B. Faris and Miho Nonaka evidence in their examination of Murakami's *IQ84*. To Perez and Chevalier, magical realism in the twenty-first century, as it increasingly becomes a tool to explore the “proliferation of Being” (4), reflects “an expansion of perception, obligating the reader to reevaluate what might be considered ordinary and normative” (6).

The book is comprised of six parts. Part I, “Global Migrations of Magical Realism,” concentrates on the “global turns of magical realism” (10), while Part II, entitled “Magic, Aesthetics, and Negativity,” “explores the practice of negative aesthetics as a characteristic sensibility in magical realistic artistic forms” (10). Part III, “Magical Conditions,” analyses the “psychic dimensions of magic and their wide-ranging effects on the subject” (11). Part IV, “Racial and Ethnic Imaginaries” turns to the link between magical realism and race issues. Part V, “(Trans)National Illusions,” addresses the many ways in which magical realism favors the deconstruction of traditional views of the nation. The concluding Part VI, “Magical Crossings: Pedagogy, Genres, and Fairy Tales,” tackles matters related to pedagogy and genres. Magical realism, then, is definitely future-oriented, inviting “readers to imagine globally” and to pay attention to “broadened forms of experience in all their rich, unpredictable possibilities” (16).

The book opens with a reprint of Mariano Siskind's seminal essay, “The Global Life of Genres and the Material Travels of Magical Realism,” which clearly voices the theoretical premises of this volume. At the outset, Siskind usefully reminds us that in magical realist texts, “the ordinary and extraordinary co-exist without conflict, without even calling attention to each other's Otherness” (26). He concludes by stressing the dilemma the book's numerous contributors will try to deal with in their own terms: “[...] opinions are divided regarding whether magical realism still preserves the potential to imagine emancipatory horizons for global peripheries where ethnic and racial tensions and hybrid forms of subalternity await aesthetic languages capable of articulating their cultural identity, or whether it is another ruin in a landscape of demolished modernist edifices” (56). The various essays collected here suggest that magical realism has indeed kept its power to envision new worlds. Subsequent contributions in Part I provide illuminating analyses of African fiction (Lydie Moudileno), magical realism in South Asia (Roanne L. Kantor), as well as the descriptive turn in magical realist literary works (Maria del Pilar Blanco).

Richard Perez's "Harboring Spirits: Deontological Time, Magic, and Race in *Gods Go Begging* by Alfredo Vea" ushers in Part II. In this well-researched essay, Perez examines the connection between the ghetto, the prison and the Vietnam war – tropes of negativity – in Alfredo Vea's 1999 magical realist novel. Nicholas F. Radel then offers an insightful analysis of "white gay ontology" in Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance* (1978) and Edmund White's *Nocturnes for the King of Naples* (1980). This leads him to the conclusion that "queer magical realism" constitutes a literary reality. Moreover, Radel is one of the few critics to mention the presence of magical realism in contemporary American theatre, namely in Matthew Lopez's *The Inheritance* (2018), a play devoted to AIDS issues. And yet, this reader would argue, magical realism is a frequent occurrence in theatre, one that would deserve closer scrutiny. The climactic contribution to Part II is undoubtedly Maria Takolander's essay on magical realism in the fiction of Australian Indigenous writer Alexis Wright. Takolander's insights rely on the theories of native American literary scholar Gerald Vizenor, namely the concept of "survivance." Through this term, Vizenor seeks to "convey a sense of the survival/endurance of native Americans in a way that transcends stereotypes of 'absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimry,' as well as identities of 'mere commerce and simulation of romance,' precisely because it is 'manifested through the pitch and turn of native mockery and irony,'" as the figure of the Trickster indicates (176). Vizenor considers the fiction of such artists as Thomas King and Louise Erdrich as magical realist, though he chooses to use the term "mythic verism" in order to avoid the stereotypical connotations inherent in the label "magical realism" (176). Takolander applies Vizenor's notion of an "ironic postcolonial magical realism" (176) in her analyses of Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise* (1997), *Carpentaria* (2006), and *The Swan Book* (2013). She contends we should "attend not to the authenticity but to the aesthetic of postcolonial magical realist literature as fundamental to its agency" (177). Like critic Diane Molloy, she points out how "*Carpentaria*'s magical realist form in fact instantiates an ironic and carnivalesque aesthetic of playfulness and subversiveness" (182), emphasizing again, as she did in her chapter in the Cambridge University Press anthology, that the novel can be viewed as a "parody of Tim Winton's magical realist fiction *Cloudstreet* (1991)" (184). She concludes her essay with an examination of Wright's recent novel, *The Swan Book* (2013), in which science fiction serves to unsettle the traditional association of magical realism with the past (186). In the next chapter, "Magical Terrestrialism in Edwige Dandicat's *Claire of the Sea Light*," Carine M. Mardrossian and Angela Veronica Wong consider magical

realism in relation to Caribbean literature. In *Claire of the Sea Light* (2013), Edwige Dandicat describes the everyday “in its extraordinary, unsuspected, and seemingly fantastic dimensions” (201). Beause in this novel the “‘magic’ is more of a hint that lingers through evocation than an actual magical occurrence, the authors suggest it would be appropriate to use the term “marvelous/magical terrestrialism” when dealing with this novel (208).

Part III opens with a well-researched essay by Victoria A. Chevalier, “The Multiplicity of This World: Troubling Origins in Jesmyn Ward’s *Sing, Unburied, Sing*.” This 2017 novel offers a prime example of contemporary African American fiction. Conceived as a response to the 2010 British petroleum Deepwater Horizon oil spill, this novel’s magical realism adopts an ecocritical perspective while projecting apocalyptic visions of the Anthropocene. It places the human against the non-human animal “in its effort to critique species-ism, respect the earth, and imagine a more radically just response to lived social being” (216). In his cogently argued essay, “The Analogical Legacy of Ground Zero: Magical Realism in Post-9/11 Literary and Filmic Trauma Narratives,” Eugene Arva focuses first on Safran Foer’s novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) before moving on to Guillermo del Toro’s films *Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006) and *The Shapes of Water* (2017). Subsequent essays by Claudine Raynaud and Md Abu Shahid Abdullah respectively deal with the role of magical realism in Toni Morrison’s *Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012), *God Help the Child* (2015) and Gioconda Belli’s *The Inhabited Woman* (1988), which relies on magical realism to express the contribution of women to Nicaraguan history (293). In “Black Magic: Conjure, Syncretism, and Satire in Ishmael Reed,” Joshua Lam examines Ishmael Reed’s reliance on what could be termed a “neo-hoodoo” artistic form “that draws inspiration from Afro-diasporic folk beliefs about magic and the supernatural” (298). Towards the end of his essay, he sheds interesting light on two recent works by Ishmael Reed: the novel *Conjugating Hindi* (2018), as well as the play *The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda* (2019).

In the first essay of Part IV, Caroline Rody examines Safran Foer’s *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) and *Tree of Codes* (2010) as examples of works predicated on “the trope of the magical surviving book-within-the-book [...] in which an old, often hallowed, and mysterious survivor text is positioned within the contemporary fictive setting as object of wonder or longing, source of knowledge, and access point to a longed-for continuity with Jewish traditions of literature and of the sacred” (335). Nicole Rizzuto provides us with an astute reading of Bessie Head’s magical realist

aesthetic in *A Question of Power* (2009), *When Rain Clouds Gather* (2014), and *Maru* (2014) while Chad B. Infante examines the magical realist intimacy between Blackness and Indianness in Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). Keming Liu then analyses the influence of Marquez in Mo Yan's *The Republic of Wine* (2000), highlighting how this writer's fiction "delves the underbelly of today's China" (419). In an echo of Claudine Raynaud's essay on the same writer, Johanna X. K. Garvey examines Toni Morrison's reliance on "magical embodiment" as "a means to disrupt ontologies that inform colonization and plantation logic" (435). She contends that "magical realism in the twenty-first century perhaps recognizes and addresses the need for decolonization more fully and directly than earlier iterations" (455).

Lorna L. Perez's essay, "Out of Time: Resisting the Nation in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*," introduces us to Part V. Perez offers us an anti-allegorical reading of Marquez's iconic novel. She argues that "the use of time within *One Hundred Years of Solitude* suggests a resistance to the magical thinking of the nation as imagined nation" (470), as the novel's magical realist aesthetic invites us to view "the emergence of nation-states in Latin America" as "only the most recent iteration of centuries of violent colonial and imperial impositions" (476). The following three essays adopt a cosmopolitan perspective on magical realism. Mai-Linh K. Hong concentrates on Vietnamese American Quan Barry's 2016 novel, *She Weeps Each Time You're Born*; Marion Rohrlitner examines the works of Salvador Plascencia, an American writer of Mexican descent. She shows how his 2005 novel, *The People of Paper*, "highlights the violence undocumented Mexican and Central American migrants, especially women and girls, face before, during, and after crossing the US-Mexico border" (504). She analyzes magical realism in this novel as a symptom of Édouard Glissant's "aesthetic of turbulence," which "privileges the still unknowable, and continuously troubles limiting binaries" (505). This aesthetic of turbulence enables magical realism to produce "alternative ways to perceive and live reality as always already relational" (509) and thus to question "the status quo of immigration policy in the United States" (510). In the next essay, Fadia F. Suyoufie makes us travel to Iraq through her detailed analysis of the role of paintings in Kurdish novelist and poet Salim Barakat's *The Captives of Sinjar* (2016), a novel originally written in the Arabic language.

The final Part VI comprises essays on satirical magical realism (Maggie Ann Bowers), on magical realism in the Homeric Epics (Lorna Robinson),

and on magical realism as postmodern fairy tale (Dana Del George). Del George examines recent magical realist short stories by American writer George Saunders, regarding them as “postmodern fairy tales that recall a premodern understanding of human frailty and the vicissitudes of life” (623). This scholar views these stories as examples of metamodernism, “a term recently proposed for what follows postmodernism [...]. It is characterized by an oscillation between modern sincerity and postmodern irony” (627). The most fascinating contribution of this concluding part of the anthology is certainly Kim Anderson Sasser and Rachael Mariboho’s co-written chapter on the pedagogical dimensions of magical realism in the twenty-first century. This essay, looking towards the future, emphasizes the comparative potential of magical realism – a feature that will not fail to appeal to all practitioners of our discipline. The authors argue that this comparative capacity is embedded in the writing mode’s ability to develop “usages that are distinct and contextualized in their particular incarnations” (564). Summing up, *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century*, as an endeavor of monumental architectural complexity, offers a vast survey of the present state of the magical realist aesthetic on the global stage.

The two excellent books reviewed here offer complementary perspectives on the magic realist mode of writing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They both demonstrate that this mode of writing should now be examined from a cosmopolitan perspective, as in the twenty-first century it has clearly moved away from its European and Latin American roots. The fascinating case studies contained in these books compel us to rethink the boundaries of the truly polymorphous aesthetic of magical realism. As they showcase the fluid contours and the formal as well as geographical diversity of magical realism, these volumes invite us to consider its enormous appeal from the angle of plurality: magical realism cannot be regarded as a rigid entity. Rather, it would be more accurate in the twenty-first century to talk about magical realisms. Comparatists worldwide will need to adopt a future-oriented research stance towards this aesthetic, by focusing on its ever-evolving reconfigurations in years to come. *Magical Realism and Literature* and *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century* will prove indispensable and benchmark instruments for the scholars who seek to assess the evolution of a literary aesthetic prompting us to continuously question our perception of what constitutes the real.

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**NEW METHODOLOGIES IN LITERARY
HISTORIOGRAPHY: A FORUM
GUEST EDITED BY KAREN-MARGRETHE SIMONSEN**

Introduction

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In the twentieth century, the end of history was proclaimed and “old historicism” was heavily criticized for being too Eurocentric, too linguistically and literarily narrow, as well as too narrative and linear. Many and diverse advances in spatialized and radically experimental literary histories aimed to question the very foundation of history (Valdés and Hutcheon; Hollier; Gumbrecht; Cornis-Pope and Neubauer, etc.). Some of these experiments were conducted within the framework of CHLEL (Coordinating Committee for Comparative Literatures in European Languages)¹ under the auspices of ICLA.

Today, there is a renewed enthusiasm for history and time, both inside and outside academia. This is detectable in the strong interest in memory studies, decolonization, historical novels, historical figures and monuments, reenactments, and museums’ experiential exhibitions of the past. But how do we as literary scholars historicize today? How do we perform literary periodization in light of world literature? How do we *tell*, *structure*, and *temporalize* a global literary history? How does recent criticism of comparatist methodology challenge our way of writing literary histories? And how do developments in different theoretical fields, such as intermedial studies, the Anthropocene, transcultural studies, digital humanities, and book history, change our approach to comparative literary history?

In this forum on “New Methodologies in Literary Historiography,” six essays offer new answers from very different perspectives. They focus, respectively, on the urgency of comparatist literary history in light of

¹ <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/chlel/>

the self-conscious Anthropocene and world literature, on a comparative intermedial literary history, on the problem of postmonolingualism in a global world, on literary drafts in literary historiography, on the reconceptualization of colonial archives, and on comparative literary history in the context of slavery.

All essays are written by members of CHLEL (the ICLA *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* research group) who either have participated in or are currently contributing to major research projects on comparative literary historiography, and all of them envision a dynamic and critical role for literary history. While we remain fully aware of the many pitfalls of the genre of historiography, including its original Eurocentric teleology (Chakrabarty; Rancière), we seek to revitalize its potentially progressive and critical force. Literary history emerged as a performative genre with a political impact in the nineteenth century. Literature in all its forms keeps shaping our social imaginary and often gives the fullest and most complex picture of contextual challenges. Literary histories should reflect that aspect. At its best, literary history does not merely register past developments of literature in a passive fashion: it forges new links between disparate literatures and rethinks geopolitically determined units, temporality, and periodization in light of complex global and theoretical developments.

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World Literature and the Self-Conscious Anthropocene

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Anthropocene discourse depicts the historical present as a moment of world-shattering rupture. My article explores this assumption and calls attention to the ways in which debates in the sciences and humanities have focused on perceived turning points, stories of origin and stratigraphic “golden spikes” (Yusoff 23–64). Since its inception in 2009, the multidisciplinary Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) has considered three possible beginnings for the “Age of Man”: the Columbian exchange (Lewis and Maslin), the Industrial Revolution and the so-called “Great Acceleration” since 1945 (Thomas, Williams and Zalasiewicz). From the perspective of literary and cultural studies, these hypotheses are less interesting than the idea of a new Anthropocenic *cultural dominant*: the claim that our cultural logic has been re-shaped, since approximately 2000, by a collective, growing awareness of catastrophic environmental degradation, and that new forms, genres and themes have emerged in response to the anthropogenic violation and destruction of non-human species and more-than-human habitats.

For two decades, the concept of the Anthropocene has reverberated powerfully across the arts and humanities (Bonneuil and Fressoz). Faced with the gravity of the unfolding planetary environmental crisis, scholars and artists have turned their attention to Paul Crutzen’s and Eugene Stoermer’s influential neologism (Crutzen and Stoermer). An inspiration for creative practice, the Anthropocene has also served as a transdisciplinary vector for the emergent framework that links comparative literature, critical theory and the modern languages (DeLoughrey, Didur and Carrigan; Heise, Christensen and Niemann). It marks a conspicuous challenge to the traditional humanities, but also serves as “a useful

trigger for a variety of approaches that are interested in the nonhuman and post-human” (Parikka 52). Earth scientists and bioscientists have become increasingly attentive to political, economic and cultural structures, in a manner that cuts across established disciplinary boundaries. Similarly, artists have focused on natural processes that are affected by human activities and impinge upon them: extreme weather events, rising sea levels, pollution, mass extinction, and so on (Trexler; Johns-Putra). In the literary domain, this includes a flurry of new genres and modes: eco-poetry, climate elegy, environmental satire (Seymour), the New Weird, the *cartonera* movement and, of course, cli-fi, which has gained popularity as a commercial genre since 2013. As novelist Amitav Ghosh has famously pointed out, “the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination” (Ghosh 9).

Borrowing from North American literary scholar Lynn Keller, I call these two most recent decades of cultural and literary history “the self-conscious Anthropocene” (Keller). This historiographic term serves to display, but also to displace anxieties over geological origin stories. It focuses critical attention on the period when the Anthropocene comes into view as an influential generative concept. As Keller explains, “the phrase acknowledges that, whatever the status of the Anthropocene as a geological category [...], [the term] signals a powerful cultural phenomenon tied to the reflexive, critical, and often anxious awareness of the scale and severity of human effects on the planet” (Keller 1–2). My understanding of the self-conscious Anthropocene, moreover, builds on the work of philosopher Donna Haraway and literary critics Elizabeth DeLoughrey and Steve Mentz. It embraces the sense of extreme urgency that typically characterizes debates about climate change but questions the teleological structures of thought that have shaped many contemporary accounts of the “Age of Man.” Instead of focusing on “the apocalyptic story in which Old Man Anthropos destroys the world” (Mentz 1), I call attention to the vulnerability and value of human and non-human life on a warming planet, and suggest that the climate emergency must be understood as a dynamic opening: an invitation to re-think categories of place and space, not in terms of eschatological closure, but as a state of protracted uncertainty that necessitates and activates new political, artistic and epistemic modes (Mussnug “Planetary Figurations”; “Species at War?”; Dell’Aversano and Mussnug).

As a historical and cultural period, the self-conscious Anthropocene is precisely coextensive with the years when world literature has come to

be understood as the global production, translation and cross-cultural reception of genres and texts. The study of world literature, in this emergent sense, is coeval with advanced capitalist globalization, but many of its practitioners have been critical of the totalizing perspectives that are commonly associated with the latter. The transnational circulation of goods and ideas, from the perspective of world literature, has enabled new forms of cosmopolitan belonging that are diametrically opposed to the political and cultural aberrations of narrowly bounded nationalism. “Contemporary globalization,” writes Pheng Cheah, “has created a genuinely transcultural zone that undermines the territorial borders of cultural and literary production, thereby leading to the emergence of a global consciousness” (Cheah 23). But the growing interconnectedness brought about by global markets has also perpetuated and enhanced inequalities between and within nations, cemented regimes of coercion and constraint, and erased meaningful cultural diversity. Attention to these negative trends, and to a wide variety of diverse geopolitical, cultural and temporal contexts has established world literature as an important, dynamic site of transdisciplinary inquiry and cultural and political activism. Beyond the universalistic and Eurocentric inflections of mid-twentieth-century literary scholarship, comparatists have propagated new coordinates of spatial and political belonging.

The contemporaneous emergence of world literature and the Anthropocene, both as objects of transdisciplinary study and as practices of scholarly inquiry, is not coincidental. Recent definitions of world literature and debates about the Anthropocene are similarly attentive to transnational chains of ecological, political and cultural interdependence. Researchers have employed the two terms in analogous ways to advance a decolonial critique of capitalist globalization. In the field of literary studies, Emily Apter, Pheng Cheah and Aamir Mufti, among others, have pressed the attack against naively celebratory visions of cultural globalization. Cheah, for instance, points out that “contemporary flows of money, especially humanitarianism and environmental and world preservation funds [...] violently destroy worlds despite their humanizing claims” (Cheah 13). Similarly, Mufti has criticized scholars of world literature for clinging naively to the utopian ideal of a borderless world instead of addressing the harsh realities of growing inequality (Mufti). Apter, meanwhile, contends that transnational chains of economic, cultural and political connectedness are not sufficient conditions for social justice, and that “translatibility” – one of the ideals of an earlier generation of world

literature scholars – has become associated, in the twenty-first century, with an “entrepreneurial, bulimic drive to anthologize and curricularize the world’s cultural resources” (Apter 3).

At the dawn of the self-conscious Anthropocene, world literature criticism was characterized by a growing attention to international markets and by “a renewed appetite for addressing the question of literary totality” (Etherington and Zimble 4). Inquiries into the transnational circulation of literary texts – by Franco Moretti (2000), David Damrosch (2003) and Pascale Casanova (2004), among others – notoriously emphasized the importance of globalization as a socially and culturally unifying force. Such totalizing methodologies quickly came under attack from critics, who questioned their usefulness as a way of navigating and highlighting cultural diversity. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s influential idea of the planetary, for example, was conceived in direct, polemical response to the lingering Eurocentrism of comparative literature programmes (Spivak). Where Casanova, Damrosch and Moretti focused on the characteristically modern and Western conflict between nationalism and liberal cosmopolitanism, Spivak demanded greater attention to “demographic, rather than territorial, frontiers that predate and are larger than capitalism” (Spivak 15). In this manner, her planetary approach sought to foreground latent, historical temporalities that run counter to Eurocentric, teleological narratives of the modern emergence of the global.

Similar political concerns have been voiced by researchers in the environmental humanities. Beyond the specific expertise of Earth Scientists, the Anthropocene has become a staging ground for controversies about environmental justice and crisis of global capitalism. Elizabeth DeLoughrey, for example, contends that a “lack of engagement with postcolonial and Indigenous perspectives has shaped Anthropocene discourse to claim the novelty of crisis rather than being attentive to the historical continuity of dispossession and disaster caused by empire” (DeLoughrey *Allegories* 2). While conventional Anthropocene discourse periodizes the present as a unique break in the human relation to the planet, De Loughrey reaches out for perspectives that can revitalize and reformulate the bonds between seemingly disconnected and incompatible categories: present and past; the global and the local; human and non-human nature. This is particularly evident from the author’s attention to decolonial knowledge practices which, in her work, serve as a reminder that “catastrophic ruptures to social and ecological systems have already been experienced through the violent processes of empire. In other words, the

apocalypse has already happened; it continues because empire is a process” (DeLoughrey *Allegories* 2).

In summary, Anthropocene discourse and twenty-first century world literature studies are best understood as closely related fields of inquiry, which are similarly rooted in a common political and ethical critique of advanced globalization and colonial slow violence. Beyond their immediate concern, respectively, with anthropogenic environmental degradation and global cartographies of cultural production, they share a specific concern with spatial and temporal knowledge production. In light of such similarities and shared orientations, a more intensive dialogue between the two subject areas appears desirable and long overdue. In comparative literature, this challenge has been taken up with considerable vigour by Ursula Heise, whose numerous contributions map the growing transdisciplinary significance of environmental history, environmental philosophy and cultural geography, and their direct relevance to cultural and literary production (Heise *Sense of Place; Imagining Extinction*). Following Heise’s lead, Alexander Beecroft, Michael Cronin and Jennifer Wenzel, among others, have similarly explored the methodological and political influence of ecological thinking on world literature. This growing interest from literary scholars, however, has not, until now, been fully reciprocated by environmental researchers in other disciplines, who have paid relatively little attention to world literature. The emergence of the Anthropocene as a distinctive reference point for cross-disciplinary dialogue therefore marks a particular challenge for comparatists, whose contribution, in Heise’s words, “arrived belatedly” and who have done little, until now, to prove the specific relevance “of their multilingual and cross-cultural research” (Heise “Comparative Literature” 6–7) to Anthropocene studies at large. In the fast-moving cultural landscape of the self-conscious Anthropocene, this challenge needs to be addressed as a matter of considerable urgency.

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Intermediality and Literary History

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In contemporary culture, the general attitude towards literature appears extremely ambivalent, in an almost paradoxical way. On the one hand, literature and the humanities at large have definitively lost any hegemonic position in our educational system and social life, and they suffer from a quite drastic marginality, if not isolation. On the other hand, crucial literary concepts – such as narration, rhetoric, or empathy – play an increasingly significant role in various sciences, from philosophy to psychoanalysis, from neurobiology to legal or social sciences, from anthropology to historiography, including the new media. We are certainly witnessing a massive dissemination of literary techniques that redefine literature no longer as a circumscribed field, but as an omnipervasive and fluid phenomenon.

There are two different ways of facing this paradoxical ambivalence: either through a traditional and “apocalyptic” approach, or through a more dynamic and “constructive” one. While many intellectuals continue to complain about the decline of the humanities and to defend the irreplaceable purity of literature (often implying its intrinsic superiority to other artistic languages), intensive studies on translation, adaptation and intermediality strive to reconfigure the role of literature in contemporary polymorphous imaginary by focusing on hybridizations. Although I remain persuaded that literature does possess some specific expressive force, I am inclined to pursue the second trend. I am deeply convinced that the future of comparative literature lies in such methodological approach that traces the fragmentary dissemination of literature in every artistic language and cultural setting.

In the last decades, visual studies have challenged comparative literature in multifarious ways, far beyond the canonical comparison between

literature and painting. Two crucial theoretical presuppositions organize visual studies as an open and complex field of research characterized by an interdisciplinary dialogue: first, the cultural nature of the image; second, a constant interaction between word and image that involves memory, perception and emotional life (Mitchell).

Recalling Roland Barthes' theory of *écriture*, this fluid vision of textuality has become more radical after the digital revolution, which transformed and is still transforming the classical notions of author, text, public, and intellectual property. Studies on intermediality are facing the continuous hybridization that emerges out of this process, the multisensory environment in which we constantly live: namely the "convergence culture," as defined by Henry Jenkins. It is a perspective that must certainly affect comparative literature, since the literary text is gradually becoming a part of a complex galaxy of media and languages. This calls for a multidirectional method of comparison very close to the "diffractive reading" proposed by Donna Haraway in 1997, which aims at disrupting any linear temporality and fixed causality, and at transcending disciplinary boundaries. Similar suggestions have been made by scholars developing the theory of contemporary visual art, a field characterized by radical experimentation. I am thinking especially of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Radicant* (2009): Bourriaud uses the botanical term "radicant," which denotes a process of root producing in an unusual part of the plant (e.g. ivy), as a metaphor to propose a model of art for the contemporary age based on simultaneous enrooting and on incessant transcoding and translating images, ideas, and behaviours.

The Research Committee on Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages (CHLEL) has already published a very valuable book on this subject: *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression* (2014). Edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope it deals with the drastic contemporary transformations of key notions, such as literacy, text, and creativity. The digital revolution, which gave birth to so-called digimodernism, also produced new forms of writing and reading, thereby expanding the notion of text in a multimedia and hybrid direction, and breaking down the boundaries between arts through massive cross-pollination. While space constraints prevent me from discussing here thorny questions such as the transition from postmodernism to digimodernism, or the tension between the global and the local in cyberliteracy, I mostly agree with these reflections and with the idea that comparative literature should deal

not only with textual literacy, but also with visual, electronic, gestural, performative and even social literacies.

I would like to develop and broaden this position by means of a two-fold proposal. First, I prefer to use the concept of intermediality; second, I will extend this perspective to a historical level, imagining an intermedial comparative history of literature in specific ages and movements, for example the baroque.

First defined in 1966 by Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, the concept of intermediality labels any kind of synergy between different artistic languages: it is no mere juxtaposition, as in the case of multimedia, but a potential fusion, a profound interaction. Fluxus was an avant-garde group, which worked on happenings and performance: the poetics of intermediality was conceived in reaction against the purism of modernist research (in particular, the theory of abstract art and separation of languages sustained by Clement Greenberg and inspired by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon*). At the same time, this poetics introduced a new aesthetic and cultural pattern based on fluidity and on less rigid categorizations. The term "Intermedia" was borrowed from Romantic poet Samuel Coleridge, but the concept recuperates the utopia of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. First conceived by Wagner as a way to retrieve the synthesis of arts at the core of Greek tragedy, the total work of art played a significant role, first in Symbolism and Aestheticism (the poetics of synesthesia), and then in the various avant-gardes and their utopian subversions. The main goal was regenerating the public function of the artistic creation, which is strongly opposed to mass culture and technology, but which depends on them at the same time. This an ambivalent relationship, is noticeable in the various realizations of the total work of art in the twentieth century (Eisenstein, Brecht, Riefensthal, Stravinskij, Artaud, Disney, Warhol, and even the delirious aestheticization of Nazism as well as Stalin's propaganda). In today's era characterized by the end of utopias and avant-gardes, and by fragmentations and disseminations, the total work of art can be read as "a specific variation of intermediality, a practice that subverts any essentialist vision of artistic languages," aiming at "a complex [...] blending of perceptions, amplified by new media and by the syncretic nature of the cyberspace" (Fusillo and Grishakova blurb; also see Smith; Finger and Follett; Imhoof, Menninger and Steinhoff).

On the one hand, intermediality is deeply rooted in this historical and aesthetic context; on the other hand, it has quickly become an abstract and synchronic category, which includes any kind of synergy between

media in any given timeframe and culture. Among the huge scholarship examining this category, Irina Rajewsky's theory of a ternary pattern brilliantly enlightens its wide range of applications. She distinguishes between: 1) medial transposition, which describes a medial product transformed into another medium, as in cinematic adaptations or novelizations; 2) medial combination, which gives birth to new media products, such as the iconotext (e.g. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, a novel interwoven with photos made by the same author), or opera and cinema, synthetic arts in their intrinsic structure; and finally 3) intermedial reference, which designates a medium describing or evoking another medium, as in the case of ekphrasis, a literary description of visual (or musical or cinematic) works of art; cinematic cut scenes in videogames; or musical strategies in narrative and poetry (Rajewsky "Intermediality" 51–52).

What would an intermedial comparative history of literature look like? We all know that to make (literary) history always implies a clear positioning and strongly depends on cultural and social contexts. All history is contemporary history, as Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce aptly put it (1938). The various CHLEL projects vividly exemplify this idea, if one thinks of the various similar choices of topics displayed by contemporary theories and attitudes, such as the absence of strong teleological and organic patterns, the preference for figures and motifs, the highlighting of margins and details. Since intermediality defines today's era, as Cornis Pope's collection clearly shows, and since it is also a trans-cultural category which can describe different experiences, I argue that an intermedial comparative approach could shed new light on the practice of literary historiography, from various points of view. The concept of medium is certainly not a simple synonym for text or art: it is a social institution, a communicative practice. This is the reason why the mediology advocated by Marshall McLuhan's pioneering studies has often been applied to pre-modern contexts, from Homer to the Renaissance.

With the label "comparative intermedial history" I do not simply refer to a literary history which gives enough space to other arts; it must highlight, as its first programmatic point, the synergy between arts and the rewriting into different codes through an anti-hierarchical approach. Adaptations must be considered not as a cultivated curiosity, or as a marginal proof of how an author or a text can be successful; but as a significant part of textual metamorphosis, which can have retroactive effects on the reading of the original. In order to show how this approach cannot be confined to the contemporary digital world, I will briefly focus on

one significant example. More than any other time in modern European history, the period that roughly coincides with the seventeenth century and falls under the definition of “the Baroque” was crucial in shaping the modern idea of “mediascape” and in constructing the system of interrelations between the arts that is still active today (Lyons). Nevertheless, the very notion of “mediascape,” together with the hermeneutical tools provided by intermedial studies, has seldom been applied to the study of the Baroque, although the similarity between the baroque age and ours has been stressed many times, which led to the creation of a new category, the neo-Baroque. An intermedial comparative literary history of the Baroque should focus especially on 1) visuality, including the ekphrasis as a genre, pictorial effects so beloved by poets and narrators, common themes in painting and literature (e.g. metamorphosis, the double), and other rhetorical strategies; 2) music, including the opera as a mixed genre, but also other forms of exchanges; and 3) on performance, since the baroque shows a predilection for feasts, ephemeral happenings, and new theatrical practices sometimes linked to specific literary genres, such as tragicomedy.

Tragicomedy is perhaps the genre that most condenses the experimental anxiety of Baroque literature and its search for new expressive strategies. Along with its increasing success, tragicomedy at the same time triggered intense controversy, especially in countries most indebted to the classical tradition. The Aristotelian system of literary genres was based on a clear (stylistic and ideological) distinction between tragedy and comedy: Horace’s *Poetics* (vv. 91–92) recognized only comedies displaying a slightly serious tone, while Cicero (*De optimo genere oratorum* 1, 1) radically opposed any contamination between the two genres. A century later, at the beginning of mature modernity, the questioning of a rigid binarism between tragedy and comedy is at the core of the two new literary forms that will characterize late modern history, drama and the novel: both focused on a new stylistic category beyond the tragic and the comic, i.e. the serious. A profound cross-fertilization between the tragic and the comic underlies the Romantic revolution, and it is no coincidence that the category of tragicomedy re-emerges in the twentieth century in an extreme, radical and tragic writer, Samuel Beckett. Through this term Beckett defined his masterpiece, *Waiting for Godot*, indicating a grotesque, metaphysical void beyond categories. Tragicomedy therefore shows the Baroque synergy between literature, theatre, and general aesthetics, as well as its diffraction in modern and contemporary artistic

praxis, ranging up to the radical mixture of styles in the neo-baroque visual art, which is full of grotesque contaminations (Peter Greenaway; Jake and Dinos Chapman).

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The Postmonolingual Turn

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It is a silent shift, apparently concerned with questions at a high level of abstraction. What is a language? How do we identify “a” language and distinguish between languages in the plural? What happens if we consider monolingualism (and its counterpart, multilingualism) not as an empirical fact, but as an ideological construction with a rather short and politically dubious history? These are rarefied matters, and yet, the increasing attention that literary and other scholars have devoted in the last ten to fifteen years to such theoretical concerns could have far-reaching practical consequences for the study of literature. If language be the food of literature, to paraphrase Shakespeare, then a revised conception of language will call for a reconsideration of some basic tenets both of literary history and literary practice. In this short article, it is our intention to review some implications of current approaches to multilingualism in literary scholarship and practice. We begin with a brief overview of the critique of monolingualism. Subsequently, we look at a few instances of multilingual practice in Anglophone writing, and will then conclude with some methodological remarks.

In her widely cited *The Postmonolingual Condition* (2012), Yasemin Yildiz established some central coordinates of the debate. Monolingualism, Yildiz writes,

constitutes a key structuring principle that organizes the entire range of modern social life, from the construction of individuals and their proper

subjectivities to the formation of disciplines and institutions, as well as of imagined collectives such as cultures and nations. According to this paradigm, individuals and social formations are imagined to possess one “true” language only, their “mother tongue,” and through this possession to be organically linked to an exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture, and nation.

(Yildiz 2)

Current changes in theoretical and ideological conceptions of language are therefore best understood as “postmonolingual,” or “a field of tension in which the monolingual paradigm continues to assert itself and multilingual practices persist or reemerge” (5). The emphasis on tension is productive, we believe, as these matters have neither been resolved nor lend themselves to clear-cut normative statements. Indeed, even as Gramling dismantles the “mythic logic” (Gramling 11) that sustains monolingualism, he remains somewhat agnostic with regard to its cost-benefit calculus. Both Yildiz and Gramling seem to accept that their own critique can only proceed *through* and *with* the monolingual logic “by which a given speech collectivity [...] becomes recognizable by, transposable into, and symbolically substitutable for, any other such collectivity” (Gramling 11).

As we can see, the stakes for comparative literature are extremely high. Theoretically, pedagogically and institutionally, the modern study of literature has two related beginnings. One is Romanticism’s deep investment in the mother tongue as the locus of aesthetic originality; the other is nineteenth-century comparative philology. Romanticist aesthetics has undergone numerous transformations in the course of two centuries, yet remains with us through the persistence of the “author function,” or the default perception of the author as the creator of an “original” work. Comparative philology is a more submerged legacy, but building on Michel Foucault and Edward Said, recent work by Aamir Mufti, Baidik Bhattacharya and Siraj Ahmed has argued that the assumed grid of functionally equivalent, discrete languages by which world literature and comparative literature tend to organize their objects of study can be traced back to the early discoveries by William Jones in colonial Calcutta in the eighteenth century. Given this colonial grounding, the further implication is that the assumed equivalence of languages is accompanied by a historicist *hierarchy* of languages, hence managing difference by also relegating most languages of the world to the status of “vernaculars” that

may either be marginalized or politically valorized as symbolic and affective resources for nation-building. The slant of this argument, we should note, differs from Yildiz's and Gramling's: less directed at the monolingual paradigm as such, it is more about how linguistic difference becomes a tool of a geopolitical distribution of power.

These current critiques emerge, of course, at the very historical moment when one particular language enjoys an unprecedented, and growing, global dominance as a lingua franca – as the title of Mufti's book, *Forget English!*, indicates. This assumed single language can and should be disaggregated into the plural “englishes” or the composite notion of a “language complex” (Mesthrie and Bhatt 1). But even a refined attunement to the fluidity of practices that go by the name of “English” must reckon with the fact that this set of practices has greater currency, wider geographical spread and is more visible and audible in globally circulating media than any other set of language practices today. This is all the more important given that English is not the biggest first language in the world but the *biggest second language*. Humanity's contemporary cultural diversity is, in other words, to an astonishing degree, managed and negotiated through English, which, as Mufti points out “is never written or spoken out of the hearing range of a number of its linguistic others” (Mufti 160).

Where, then, do we as literary scholars go from here? Leaving the larger institutional question of comparatism to one side, the remainder of this brief article will first turn to some recent “multilingual” Anglophone literary texts and then, in the concluding paragraphs, reflect on the methodological implications of such multilingual reading in the context of English studies. It is argued here that by grounding their narration in the “multilingual local” (Orsini), current literary forms of multilingualism achieve genuinely imaginative configurations of language. The notion of “a” language is thereby turned into open and inevitably polymorphous practices of “linguaging” (Chow), resulting in texts that may be described as multilingual but are perhaps best read as “translingual events” (Helgesson and Kullberg), with “trans-” indicating the traffic across and along linguistic boundaries that normally are treated as impermeable.

To be sure, the critical engagement with English as the language of colonization and Euro-American hegemony has long since shaped Anglophone postcolonial writing. A plethora of Anglophone literatures has been committed to appropriating the English language and subverting singular standards. The literary texts that we have in mind are however not primarily interested in such acts of appropriation or “speaking back.”

Quite to the contrary, they frequently challenge what Jacques Derrida calls “appropriative madness” (Derrida 24), or the very idea that language can be owned and mastered. And rather than endorsing an oppositional stance, they energetically turn English into a language of encounter (cf. Young “English”; Walkowitz “Less Than One”). Literary texts from across the Anglophone sphere, such as Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* (1998), Junot Díaz’ *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Afterlives* (2020) and Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor’s *Dust* (2014) and *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019), aesthetically re-configure English as a multilingual contact zone with no clear boundaries (cf. Young “English” 209–10; “That Which is Casually Called a Language”). Beyond this shared concern, the texts differ in their emphases, which crystallize in three different scenarios of languaging: 1) multilingual encounters; 2) the provincialization of English; 3) partial fluency and strategies of ex-appropriation.

The revisionist historical novel *Dust* (2014) by Kenyan writer Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor offers one example of a poetics of multilingual encounters, which dismantles notions of linguistic separatism. It incorporates Kiswahili words, phrases, and songs, which are at times translated and at others left untranslated. Step by step, the mixing of English and Kiswahili, the lingua franca in the region, conjures “a multiplicity of history [...] and experiences of a diverse landscape” (143), as Owuor phrases it in her essay “O-Swahili – Language and Liminality,” and thus invites readers to negotiate between these languages, their histories and world-making potentials. Cultivating crossings as the operative principle of “languaging,” the novel enacts mutually transformative encounters between Kiswahili and English. The novel’s mediation between unequal languages challenges readers to reconsider English, its signifying capacities, sounds and rhythms from its presumed exteriority (Neumann “The Worlds of Afropolitan World Literature”) and to acknowledge its non-European manifestations. One might tentatively suggest that this thereby turns English into “one language among many” and thus deprives it “of the ecumenical status of the global” (Gikandi 13). To be sure, as scholars in the field of multilingual literatures have argued (Tidigs and Huss), the specific effects of *Dust*’s multilingual poetics considerably hinge on the reader and their respective knowledge of languages. And yet, the relevance of multilingualism in fiction cannot be reduced to discursive signification. The multilingual poetics works by difference, producing communicative transparency and proximity for some readers, and

opacity, distance and puzzlement for others. While the multilingual constellations might not be comprehensible to all readers, they are meaningful in the sense that they produce aesthetic friction, which, according to Monika Schmitz-Emans in her essay “Literatur und Vielsprachigkeit,” may encourage readers to engage with linguistic otherness.

In her recent novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), Arundhati Roy provincializes English to remodel the relation between language and community. The sprawling narrative reflects on English in India as a language both of opportunity and exclusion. Simultaneously, it seeks to retrieve English as a mediator, which makes possible the encounter among different Indian languages (Neumann “An Ocean of Languages”). But the English that the multilingual novel configures and eventually claims as an Indian language, is neither the previously European colonial language nor the idiom – the “killer-language” – of the global Anglosphere. Rather, it is an inherently differential English, a “small” kind of English that resists imperial, neo-colonial and nationalist governmentality. As it continually reaches out to Urdu, Hindi, Bangla, Tamil, and Malayalam, English itself becomes a multilingually constituted idiom. Written in a moment in which the world literary sphere has become a market-driven Anglosphere, *The Ministry* makes clear that Anglophone literature can no longer be understood in terms of the monolingual paradigm. The novel’s poetic idiom is one that is most likely unreadable to any single reader. Rather than enabling full comprehension and producing transparency, it is an invitation to consider language beyond its merely referential function and take seriously its material dimension, its possible sounds, rhythms, literalized forms, and typography.

A third set of literary texts mobilizes multilingualism to enact scenarios of “partial fluency” (Walkowitz *Born Translated* 42) and sometimes even of linguistic ex-appropriation. Xiaolu Guo’s 2007 novel *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, for instance, explores what it means to live in a “borrowed tongue” (Karpinski 2). The novel features a Chinese female narrator-protagonist, Zhuang Xiao Quio, who comes to London to learn English; its poetic idiom is modelled on Z’s – as she is called by English people – grappling with English and, accordingly, at the beginning, it abounds with syntactical inconsistencies, misinterpretations and mistranslations. Only gradually does Z’s English become more idiomatic and less fragmented, eventually giving rise to a new kind of trans-, bi- or interlanguage, which bends English according to the lexical and grammatical structures of Mandarin (Gilmour 183). This interlanguage,

that remains in the process and open to embodied particularity, sheds critical light upon the fixity of language, a notion perpetuated through the genre of the dictionary. But while they are committed to transgressing linguistic boundaries, Guo's politically evocative strategies of partial fluency also acknowledge the persistence of what Emily Apter calls linguistic "checkpointization" (Apter 57). It is against the backdrop of such linguistic checkpoints and respective gate-keeping functions that Guo's fragmented multilingualism acquires its socio-political significance.

These current Anglophone novels present us with an intriguing dilemma. On the one hand, their readability across continents is itself a sign of the global prominence of "one" language, English. Their circulation is conditional on the global structure of literary publishing, dominated as it is by six or seven corporations, but with internally differentiated markets and a variety of target readerships. On the other hand, at a textual level, they offer clear challenges to the machine of global English and, by extension, to the procedures of literary pedagogy and scholarship. Our main suggestion, then, is that postmonolingual reading of necessity must become a mode of *comparative* reading, but that comparison, here, must not be thought of as a conjunction of bounded and given entities. Rather, comparison should be turned into a practice through which the reader traverses shifting stages of comprehension, puzzlement and, ultimately, a transformed conception of what language can do.

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The Draft in Literary Historiography

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Reading notes and literary manuscripts are a constant in literatures of all ages and linguistic areas, and yet their role in writing processes in various traditions has seldom been the subject of systematic scrutiny in comparative literary studies. Likewise, literary histories usually do not take the writing process into account, leaving this domain largely within the purview of either palaeography or genetic criticism (the study of modern manuscripts). Tackling this double (comparative and historiographic) gap is the idea behind the project called *Towards a Comparative History of the Literary Draft in Europe*, run under the auspices of ICLA/CHLEL and expected to be completed in 2022. The project focuses on literary drafts in European languages but transcends the continent's geographical borders by including draft material from North American and postcolonial literature. In conceptualising the project's reach, we opted to focus primarily on aspects relating to the literary draft (i.e. the textual aspects of creative processes), but other, non-textual elements such as different kinds of material bearers (including born-digital texts) and non-literary drafts (i.e. aspects of creative processes that are not necessarily textual) are also included, in order to show that creativity at work crosses genre and media boundaries, and that comparing text production to other art forms can generate valuable insights.

In this article, we would like to present the conceptual framework for the project, discuss its organising principles and elaborate on the reasons

why a comparative history of the draft is an important missing link in today's literary historiography. One of the reasons for this gap is the disparate nature of literary manuscripts. In order to be able to produce an effective and comprehensive comparison of such a disparate cohort of manuscripts, we propose eight categories of comparison, five of which (temporal, spatial, linguistic, generic, and editorial) relate mainly to the text of the manuscripts and three of which are non-textual in nature (material, intermedial, and conceptual).

For the temporal comparison, the eighteenth century is an important watershed that is often used in genetic criticism to distinguish modern manuscripts (i.e. private documents) from earlier (e.g. ancient, medieval) manuscripts, which are often scribal copies, i.e. meant for public dissemination. But even though holographs are rarer in the pre-modern period, they do exist: for example, Petrarch revised the scribal copies of his poems *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* in the so-called "codex of sketches" (*Codice degli abbozzi*) of the *Canzoniere* (Chartier qtd. in Van Hulle *Comparative History* 3). Similarly, the era of the "modern manuscript" needs to be confronted on the other end of its temporal spectrum with the era of the "digital manuscript" – the born-digital holograph, so to speak. By comparing drafts across periods (from early medieval documents to twenty-first century born-digital texts), the project seeks to establish a dialogue between what are traditionally considered separate disciplines. The question to be asked and answered here is whether the function of the literary draft changes over time.

In any historiographic investigation, the temporal component is inextricably connected to the spatial one. In Europe, different traditions of textual scholarship are based on different archival situations. For instance, the German tradition is to a large extent shaped by editions of Goethe's works and the relative abundance of his extant manuscripts, whereas Shakespeare, whose works are marked by the relative lack of holograph manuscripts, has served as a paradigm for the long-standing Anglo-American tradition of bibliography and copy-text editing. In Italy, the concept and practice of *filologia d'autore* took root and blossomed due to the abundance of well-preserved manuscripts, some of which date back to the thirteenth century. A comprehensive comparative survey of these different traditions shows how particular influential archival situations have had an impact on various attitudes to manuscript studies in different regions in Europe and on postcolonial literatures. The project's relatively narrow focus on Europe has the potential of acquiring more

global dimensions. In countries such as China and Japan, as well as in many Arabic traditions, manuscripts are often preserved because of their calligraphic qualities (Marchand 575). The invention of paper in China remained a well-kept secret for almost one thousand years until the technique of producing it was assimilated via Korea in Japan in the seventh century, in a similar way as the technique of writing had been borrowed from the Chinese four centuries earlier (de Biasi and Douplitzky 39). Interestingly, the Arab culture was quick to use Chinese paper, but reluctant to adopt printing techniques, resulting in the continuation of a situation in which textual variance remained a general rule since every copy was unique.

Along with geography comes linguistic variety. If – as many linguistic paradigms claim – language has an impact on our cognitive and creative processes, a comparative perspective on writing processes in different languages should uncover notable differences in the creative process depending on the language in which a work is written. The most inviting cases for such a comparison are works by translingual authors, such as Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov. Because in most cases these authors are also translators of their work, the process of literary translation itself deserves a closer look, which leads us beyond translingual authors and into translators' archives more generally. Very few translators actually preserve their manuscripts, but the few extant translators' archives are treasure troves for a genetic investigation, as the burgeoning field of genetic translation studies testifies. A comparative analysis of the translation process generates valuable insights into the cognitive processes of writing and helps reassess the somewhat undervalued status of the translator in literary historiography. Besides, translators' drafts reveal to which degree the translation process is a collaborative affair between the author and the translator (Hersant).

While collaboration for translation purposes may seem logical and therefore not unexpected, the nature of authorship itself is (perhaps too easily) branded as solitary. At the same time, there are obvious differences in conceptualization depending on the literary genre: for instance, creating a theatre play is universally acknowledged as a collaborative effort that involves many different agents. By contrast, writing poetry and prose are generally considered to be the fruits of an author's solitary labour – no doubt the legacy of the deeply entrenched Romantic notion of "genius." A genetic comparison across genres, i.e. a comparative investigation into the writing processes involved in poetry, fiction and drama, furnishes us

with tangible evidence that helps refine these stereotypical assumptions on the nature of authorship.

One such refinement is the discussion of the role of the editor in the creative process. Contrary to popular opinion, the writing process does not end at the moment the manuscript is dispatched to the publisher but continues in the no-man's-land between the author's desk and the publishing house, involving editors and, consequently, editorial intervention. Despite Stephen King's famous saying that "The editor is always right" (13), the role of editors in the writing process is often underrated and rarely studied. The editorial comparison allows us to revisit the editor's contribution to creativity and foreground the sociology of writing (Van Hulle *Genetic Criticism*) that marks the creation of every text. Apart from the collaborative nature of authorship, such a comparison fleshes out a wide range of editorial interventions into the writing process: from seemingly more mundane matters of orthography and punctuation to drastic pruning, to such a degree that it ends up defining the author's typically curt style.

As mentioned above, creativity is not an exclusively textual matter, as it is influenced to a large degree by non-textual, material and medium-specific possibilities and constraints. Both the temporal and spatial comparisons uncover a great variety of materials, from stylus tablets to tablet computers, from parchment to paper, from papyrus to pc. When Nietzsche started using an early precursor of the typewriter, he famously suggested in a letter to Heinrich Köselitz that writing tools have a cognitive impact: "unser Schreibzeug arbeitet mit an unseren Gedanken" ["our writing tools assist in our thought processes"] (qtd. in Van Hulle *Comparative History* 15). More recently, research conducted in writing studies revealed that college students deploy different planning and revision strategies depending on whether they are using pen and paper or a word processor (Hayes; Van Waes and Schellens). If it is true that our writing tools have an impact on our thought processes, the material comparison of literary drafts may offer us a rare insight into the workings of the creative mind, and a comparative history might uncover cognitive patterns as we are moving from paper-based to born-digital literatures.

Similarly, a genetic comparison across different media gives us a more precise idea of how medium-specific properties affect the genesis of a work of art. The intermedial comparison covers a wide range of the audiovisual spectrum: architecture, visual arts, film and television on the one hand, and music and radio on the other. For many of these media,

the notion of adaptation will be of importance: as Ian McEwan reflected on his role as screenplay writer for the film version of his novel *On Chesil Beach*, “it’s a sort of demotion from God to a little cherub, or General to Corporal. [...] Writing a novel is to address yourself to a finished literary form. The screenplay is not a finished form, it’s part of the recipe, it’s not the meal. It’s very, very different” (McEwan and Howle n.p.). Other forms, such as music and architecture, furnish us with useful models for comparative genetic criticism.

Among this wealth of perspectives and angles, one should not lose sight of one of the textual agents at the core of any genetic investigation, namely the author. How do authors see their own writing methods, and how do they convey their views? Authors often express themselves in conceptual metaphors, which can be broadly divided into organic (e.g. the “embryo,” “birth,” “growth,” “germ” of a work) versus constructivist metaphors (e.g. writing as “a factory” or as “bricolage”). As the example of the former, Paul Valéry refers to the start of the writing process as a “fertilized embryo” (Van Hulle *Comparative History* 14); for the latter, Edgar Allan Poe’s well-known description of his composition of *The Raven* as solving “a mathematical problem” (14) serves as a good illustration. A more detailed comparative study of such metaphors fleshes out new insights that not only further shape the current models of genetic criticism, but – perhaps more importantly – give us a sense of how these metaphors change over time, which is illuminating for discerning future trends from past and present experiences.

This glimpse into the future of authorship that the historiographic project intends to provide ties in with the two central questions it poses:

1. *How does the project change the idea of literary history?* The study of writing processes (genetic criticism) focuses less on literary successes and finished products than on conceptual hesitation, writer’s block, creative undoing and revision processes. Many literary drafts never led to a publication. A history of writing processes will therefore imply a welcome alternative to traditional literary histories, which tend to focus on (the reception of) successfully published works.
2. *What are the consequences of this new comparative historiographic perspective (on the literary draft) for the future of manuscript research and literary criticism more generally?* Are born-digital texts fundamentally different from ‘analogue’ texts in terms of their writing

processes? What is the impact of digital technologies on the creative process? When a poet sends drafts of their new poem to friends on their smartphone; when a novelist like Jeroen Olyslaegers shares all of his preparatory research for his new novel online, how does that affect the concept of authorship?¹ What is a draft in the case of a born-digital text? Recovering earlier versions can become more challenging as it is so easy to erase text, seemingly irrevocably, in a digital environment. Fortunately, we have new technologies (digital forensics and keystroke logging software) to help us shape the future approaches and methodologies of genetic criticism, armed with the insights from a historiographic perspective.

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Reconceptualising the Colonial Archive: War, Subaltern, and the “Literary”

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“Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. [...] It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments.”
(Walcott n.p.)

What is a colonial “archive”? Is it a noun or a verb, a building or an exercise, an imperial will to power and knowledge or a haunted testimony to absent presences? Is it like the train, that other Victorian invention, divided into neat compartments and working on straight-tracks, or is it like an over-burdened bullock-cart plodding its weary way towards an impossible destination? The colonial archive has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. While Ann Laura Stoler has called it the “supreme technology” of the “imperial state” and taught us how to read along the archival grain to see the “connections between secrecy, the law and power” (Stoler 97),¹ recent scholars have drawn attention to its “equivocation, ignorance and incoherence” and stressed the necessity of reading, comparatively, “across different archives” (Lowe 4–5). But what does “read” mean in a context where the majority of the world’s colonised people was non-literate? What role does comparative literary historiography have to play in uncovering a history of experience and feeling from below?

¹ Also see Stoler’s monograph, *Along the Archival Grain* (2009).

The project of recovering marginalised or “subaltern” voices has largely been associated with a group of powerful South Asian scholars (Guha and Spivak). In her celebrated essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” Spivak pointed to the (im)possibility of subaltern speech subjected to the “cathexis of the elite.” More recently, Saidiya Hartman, writing in the context of slavery, has noted: “to read the archive is to enter a mortuary; it permits one final viewing and allows for a last glimpse of persons about to disappear into the slave hold” (*Lose* 17). To address such gaps and recover the voices of the enslaved women, Hartman proposes a method of “critical fabulation” – a combination of historical and archival research, on one hand, and critical theory and imaginative fiction on the other (“Venus” 11).

Such a method is apposite for recovering colonial histories too but it needs a corresponding expansion or rather reconceptualisation of what constitutes the “archive.” In the colonial context when the archival knowledge is woefully asymmetrical, the histories difficult and painful, and the local actors largely non-literate and silent, it is important to go beyond official documents and consider a wider range of cultural material – objects, photographs, sketches, paintings, songs, gossip, rumour, alongside historical fiction – and initiate a dialogue which is interdisciplinary, intermedial, and comparative. The aim of this reconceptualised “archive” is not to recover just facts or events but to reimagine the texture of experience, “the grain in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs” (Barthes 185). In this “narrative of fugitive fragments,” the literary plays a privileged role both as source-material – at once filling in gaps in historical knowledge and opening up a sensuous representational space – and a mode of enquiry rooted in close, comparative “reading.”

What I mean by “reading,” in this context, is sustained investigative engagement along, against, and across the grain of different kinds of cultural sources, both European and non-European, conventional and non-conventional, visual, aural and written, alongside conventional documents; the need to attend to the formal and sensuous dimensions of each; and to let the various sources speak – and

even argue – amongst themselves, pointing to a past that is necessarily messy, often ambivalent and incorrigibly plural (Das 3–36). Second, we must know what questions to ask of this new archive: we need to de-Eurocentricise both our tools and our sources. The burgeoning field of life-writing, with its increasingly porous boundaries between autobiography, biography, history and fiction, provides us valuable clues (Lee 3). Let us consider some of these questions with reference to just one (not so) small group of people caught up in one of the most momentous events in world history and the possibilities of resurrecting their thinned presences.

Colonial Representations: Reading Along, Against, Across

Over three million men of colour, from Asia, Pacific, Africa and the Caribbean islands, were recruited into the European armies the First World War. Of all the colonies, undivided India contributed one and half million soldiers or “sepoys,” including combatants and non-combatants, who served in places as diverse as France, Belgium, Salonika, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli and East Africa (see Das). Some 170,000 Indians served on the Western Front on whom my story will primarily turn.

Most of these men did not know how to read or write and did not leave behind the voluminous letters, poems and memoirs which form the corner-stone of European war memory. Paucity of sources, rather than Eurocentrism, is the main problem for the contemporary scholar. But amnesia is not absence. In a private archive in Chandernagore, a former French colony in India, one comes across a pair of blood-stained spectacles by an Indian student-combatant killed in France (Fig. 1), while in Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, one sees a German helmet, adorned with horns and hair, found with the Naga labour-battalion (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1: Artefacts, including a pair of “blood-stained” glasses, of Jogendra (“Jon”) Sen, Dupleix House and Museum, Chandernagore, India. Photograph copyright Santanu Das.



Fig. 2: Dance hat from Nagaland, north-east India, comprising a German military helmet brought back from the Western Front by a Chang Naga labourer and adorned with horns and hair. Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, UK. Photograph copyright Santanu Das.

These tantalising sources tell us little more, but they provide the much-needed touch of “warm life” to recruitment statistics and Victoria Crosses and names of divisions and battalions that mark official archives: these objects are the archives of touch and intimacy, the contact-zones where testimony is born.

These sepoy were subjected to a variety of visual documentation: photographs, postcards, sketches, paintings, pastels and cartoons. These images, taken for propagandist purposes, often depict the men as primitive brutes, pressed into the service of the empire. Reading “along” the grain, one can see the connections between war, race and imperial masculinity: as Europeans descended to a “gang of murderers,” as Sigmund Freud noted, a beleaguered white masculinity projects its fears and fantasies onto the racial other (Fig. 3).

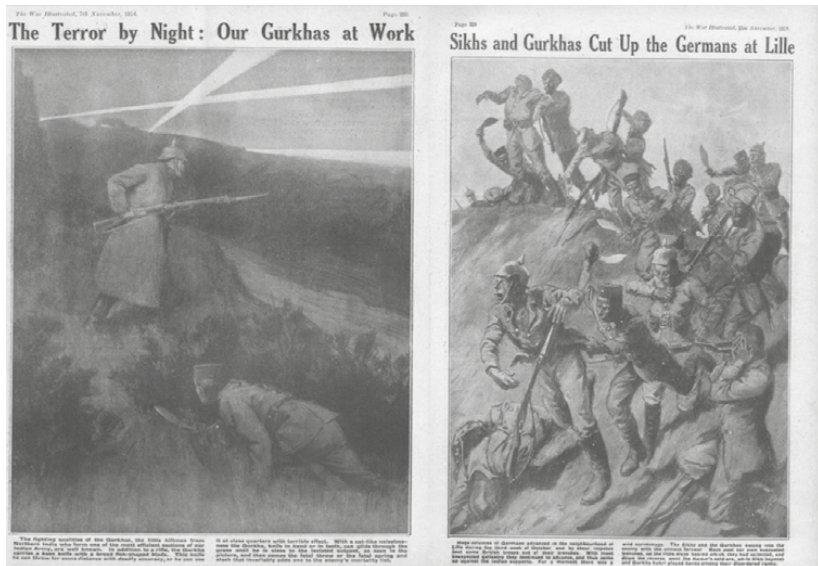


Fig. 3: Left to right: “The Terror by Night: Our Gurkhas at Work.” *The War Illustrated*. 7 Nov. 1914; “Sikhs and Gurkhas Cut Up the Germans at Lille.” *The War Illustrated*. 21 Nov 1914. Out of copyright.

Yet, there are images which allow us to dig deeper and read against the grain to recover some aspects of subaltern subjectivity. Consider the photograph of the solitary sepoy paying homage at a makeshift memorial, head bowed and hand touching a long pole-like object. The caption of the Imperial War Museum reads: “An Indian Sepoy pays a visit to the grave of two British airmen who were brought down in the desert by the enemy who erected the propeller of their machine as a memorial to them” (Fig. 4). This is a sepoy as the mourning subject – solitary, elegiac, contemplating – feeling the need to touch the propeller, at once memorial, debris and relict, even though the cartridge-magazine reminds us of his own killing role. Such moments can be found “across” other visual archives, as in the delicate field-sketches of Paul Sarrut, a young French artist. In contrast to conventional heroic depictions, Sarrut depicts the sepoys in moments of interiority in everyday life: waiting for an ambulance, lying together, or watching the kettle boil (Fig. 5)!



Fig. 4: An Indian soldier visits the grave of two British airmen brought down in the desert by the enemy who erected the propeller of their machine as a memorial to them. Copyright Imperial War Museum, Q 24255.



Fig. 5: Pen and ink drawings by Paul Sarrut, *British and Indian Troops in Northern France – 70 Sketches 1914–1915*. Out of copyright.

Instead of narrative embellishments or proxies for history, the sepoys can be read as visual palimpsests. If postcolonial historians are often wary of using “European” images to recover the subaltern subject, it is important, I think, to register but go beyond a solely Foucauldian-Saidian analysis of power, read in multi-directional ways, and try to excavate the sepoy body. For subaltern agency can leak onto the European canvas, and the colonised body can pulse under the imperialist’s touch.

Literature provides similar examples. Rudyard Kipling’s *The Eyes of Asia* (1918) takes the form of four short stories, in each of which Kipling imagines himself to be a semi-literate Indian soldier writing back home the wonders of Western civilisation. It initially reads as propagandist, jingoistic and Orientalist. But placing Kipling’s text alongside the actual sepoy-letters reveals fresh intensities of meaning. Consider the following two extracts, each describing the lady of the house where an Indian sepoy had billeted: the first was written by Sher Bahadur Khan, a sepoy in France on 9 January, 1916 and the second by Kipling’s imaginary soldier:

Of her own free-will she washed my clothes, arranged my bed [and] polished my boots [...] Every morning she used to prepare and give me a tray with bread, butter, milk and coffee [...] When we had to leave that village the old lady wept on my shoulder.

(Omissi 135–36)

Of her own free-will she washed my clothes, arranged my bed, and polished my boots daily for three months [...] Each morning she prepared me a tray with bread, butter, milk and coffee. When we had to leave that village the old lady wept on my shoulders.

(Kipling 36)

We realise Kipling had access to the letters: this is imperial propaganda lurching between critical fabulation and blatant plagiarism. But instead of focussing on militarism, Kipling dwells repeatedly on the sepoy’s separation from his mother: “Mother, think of me always [...] I shall come in the dead of the night and knock on your door [...] Oh my mother, my mother” (Kipling 77). Kipling himself was born in Bombay and, as a child, was sent to a board-school in England and separated from his mother in India. Is he revisiting his childhood separation while also infantilising the sepoy? At the same time, the reality of the sepoys, who

formed deep bonds with their “French mothers,” as they called them, also moves under Kipling’s text.

Subaltern Testimonies

The original letters of the sepoy, mostly dictated to scribes, are now lost (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: A wounded soldier dictating a letter to a fellow soldier or scribe on the grounds of the Brighton Pavilion hospital. Copyright Imperial War Museum, Q 53887.

What have survived, however, are extracts, as translated by the colonial censors. What was then used as an instrument of imperial surveillance can now be read as rare documents of life-writing, palimpsests where one can still detect echoes of the sepoy-heart. Consider the following letters:

The condition of affairs in the war is like leaves falling off a tree, and no empty space remains on the ground. So it is here: the earth is full of dead men and not a vacant spot is left. [...] the bullets flew about more thickly than drops of rain.

(*CIM* 245)

Cannons, machine guns, rifles and bombs are going day and night, just like the rains in the month of Sawan. Those who have escaped so far are like the few grains left uncooked in a pot.

(*CIM* 394)

In many ways, these letters are the Indian literature of the trenches: these men might have been non-literate but were intensely literary. The images are repositories of feeling, showing how the cognitive and narrative processes of these peasant-warriors were still rooted in the agrarian world of Punjab.

These letters can be read alongside the recently unearthed archive of over two thousand wartime audio recordings of the colonial POWs held in Wünsdorf, Germany. It was part of a wartime ethnological project by the Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission: the prisoners were made to stand in front of a phonograph and asked to recite or sing (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: Voice-recording of a POW in progress at the POW camp at Wünsdorf, Germany. Out of copyright.

One such prisoner, Mall Singh, turned the ethnological experiment into a haunting record of life-writing (Tab. 1).

Line	Transcription	Translation
1	<i>Ek ādmi si...je makhan khāndā si Hindustān mein</i>	There was a man who would have butter back in India
2	<i>Do ser dūdh peendā si</i>	He would also have two sers of milk
3	<i>Usne Angrejān ki naukri ki</i>	He served for the British
4	<i>O ādmi Europe ki ladāi'ch aa gayā</i>	He joined the European War
5	<i>Us ādmi nū Germany ne qaid kar leyā</i>	He was captured by the Germans
6	<i>Us nu India jāna chāhtā hai</i>	He wants to go back to India
7	<i>Je oh Hindustan jāūgā to usnu oh khānā milegā</i>	If he goes back to India then he will get that same food
8	<i>Oh ādmi nu teen baras ho gaye hain</i>	Three years have already passed
9	<i>Khabar nahin kab sulah hovegā</i>	There's no news as to when there will be peace
10	<i>Je Hindustān mein oh ādmi jāyega usko khana oh milūgā</i>	Only if he goes back to India will he get that food
11	<i>Je do sāl oh ādmi etthe hor reh gayā tā oh ādmi mar jāūgā</i>	If he stays here for two more years then he will die
12	<i>Mahārāj kripā kare tā eh chheti sulah kar lein te assi chale jāiye</i>	By God's grace, if they declare peace then we'll go back

Tab. 1: Transcript of Mall Singh's voice-recording translated by Arshdeep Singh Brar. Sound Archives, Humboldt University, Berlin. PK 619.

A plaintive voice – high-pitched, breathless, full of trepidation – breaks out, bridging the gap between technological reproduction and lived experience. Such emotional reality finds its most eloquent articulation in the writer Mulk Raj Anand's First World War novel *Across the Black Waters* (1940). Anand draws on stories he had heard from his father's soldier-friends who served in the war. If a literary reading of the above archival fragments prepares the ground for Anand's narrative, the novel, considered along the fugitive fragments, draws us into the archive of sepoy experiences, lost and reimagined, through the sensuousness of form.

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A Difficult Heritage. A Comparative Literary History of Slavery

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“There is a ghost on guard at Memory’s door.”
(Anyidoho 6)

How to Handle the Ghosts

The issues of slavery, race, and colonial inequality as well as the repercussions and after-effects of historical slavery in present-day society have received enormous attention in the last 30 years in America and increasingly in Europe and Africa. They no longer constitute a silenced history of “the darker side of modernity” (Mignolo), but rather a difficult heritage that raises many questions about historicization. The transatlantic slave trade was a border-crossing international phenomenon that lasted for more than 400 years. It is inscribed in a history of atrocities, systematic violence, and radical inequality. How is it possible to tell this story? Does the literature about transatlantic slavery form one coherent history? How does one compare widely different literary texts and developments within this history? How do conflicts, trauma, and traumatic aftermath affect it?

The fraught heritage of slavery was also influenced by many current national and international agendas. It counts an unusually large number of stakeholders (Donkoh 190) hailing from various spheres: i.e. political movements such as Black Lives Matter, slave tourism, national memory politics, the economy of museum experience, education, international humanitarian organizations, etc. Some of today’s important conflicts are framed through the lens of slavery. Likewise, such discussions and

conflicts affect the historicization of slavery and the way it can be temporalized. Unsolved problems haunt history like ghosts that stand “on guard at Memory’s door,” to use Ghanaian poet Kofi Anyidoho’s evocative image. This constitutes a challenge for the historian, as Reinhart Koselleck reminds us: “Historical processes are driven forward only so long as the conflicts inherent in them cannot be solved. As soon as a conflict dissolves, it belongs to the past. A historical theory of conflicts can be sufficiently developed only by bringing out the temporal qualities inherent in the conflict” (Koselleck 8–9).

Since the history of slavery remains unsolved, it is ridden with incongruous, displaced, and anachronistic or achronic temporalities. While its *longue durée* can be narrated in broad empirical terms, its internal history is marred by pending riddles and conflicts. The historian’s aim is neither to solve these conflicts nor to shut out the “ghosts” of history. On the contrary, the historian must include these hauntings and open historiography to the living conflictuality of history itself. While anachronism is generally regarded as an error in the historian’s methodology, it may also enable us to capture the conflictuality or complexity of history (Rancière; Didi-Huberman). Past events reappear in the present as if they were contemporary. The simultaneity of the non-simultaneous deconstructs the linearity of history from within.

Another way of opening up history is to reinforce comparative approaches in an effort to undermine the traditionally strong national compartmentalization of this history (Emmer 450, 452–53; Elliott 234–35) – namely, by comparing different national developments (in both major and minor “slave” nations) on the four continents, different forms of slavery, and various forms of texts and rhetorical discourses about slavery. As Robin Blackburn and Marlene Daut have demonstrated in their studies of the “American crucible” and the Caribbean region respectively, many figures and tropes about slavery are not (only) nationally determined, but are border-crossing rhetorical discourses. The following question then arises: how can the comparative methodology of the literary history of slavery handle both conflictuality and border-crossing interconnections? In an ongoing project entitled “A Comparative Literary History of Modern Slavery,” under the auspices of ICLA, CHLEL aims to address some of these methodological problems (Dobie, Baggesgaard and Simonsen).

Planetary Relational Comparatism

Global connectivity offers a challenge to comparative methodology since it makes the isolation of compared items less manageable, and sometimes impossible. Extreme connectivity undermines the false opposition between the local and the global as well as practices of national (or any other) compartmentalization. The phenomenon of slavery is an early example of such international connectivity that hinders the isolation of cultures. This appears as a paradoxical dynamic, since the race-based ideology underlying transatlantic slave trade served to segregate ethnic and cultural communities. Yet, this type of slave trade has also fostered cultural hybridity and intercultural exchange, albeit through conflicts, as the transnational literature on the subject demonstrates.

The overlapping cultures that emerge out of this interconnectivity can be represented thanks to a Venn diagram, a method often favored by global comparatists. But in order to capture the conflictual nature of intercultural exchange, it would be more appropriate to work by means of dialectical juxtaposition, which, as explained by Susan Friedman, is the opposite of a Venn diagram. Instead of documenting overlaps and differences, dialectical juxtaposition dynamizes the relation in a contrapuntal or reciprocal comparison, thereby avoiding both the passivity of a list of similarities and disparities and “the categorical violence of comparison within the framework of dominance” (Friedman 40).

In her seminal article on planetary comparison, Gayatri Spivak makes a useful distinction between globalization, which she envisions as “the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere,” and a planetary system, i.e. a “differentiated political space.” This system allows for an imaginary or figurative literary rethinking of the globe as both a *heimlich* and *unheimlich* space (Spivak 73–74). Planetary comparisons focus on the interdependence of human beings and are attuned to the alterity of the global (Spivak 2). Through such planetary lenses, we therefore move from a comparison of globalized phenomena to a comparison of relations; from a comparison between cultures and passively described, generalized mechanisms to dynamic and interdependent positionalities. Importantly, because alterity is produced by a social imaginary, it also opens up the field of planetarity to literature (the imagined connections between people) and for more dynamic comparisons.

The Complex Case of Olaudah Equiano

Let me briefly illustrate what this reconceptualization implies for the comparative reading of an individual text. Published by the formerly enslaved sailor Olaudah Equiano in the symbolic year of 1789, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* counts among the most famous slave narratives. It tells the dramatic story of Equiano's life from his happy childhood (in today's Nigeria) to his kidnapping, enslavement, and eventual emancipation.

Most of the research on this book has been confined to questions of compartmentalization, either in national or racial/ethnic terms: debates have interrogated whether Equiano was primarily African, West-Indian, American or British, and, more importantly, whether he should be placed within a black or white context. While it was important for the abolitionists to underline his true African descent and his oppression by white slave owners, other critics have pointed out his Western cultural education, which was thoroughly Christian (Potkay 684 ff), and his British writing style (Kelleter 72). In other words, much of the discussion has revolved along a polarized black-or-white axis that tries to isolate the black and white aspects of Equiano's work.

Recent research strives to nuance this understanding. Some now argue that, after being freed, Equiano participated in the slave trade and bought slaves himself (Brown 199). Moreover, the racial setup was not simply binary, but also triangular: in the text, upon meeting with Native Americans, Equiano adopts the position of colonizer, notably by quoting Christopher Columbus. Yet, he also becomes a strange Native American when he suddenly finds himself with the scalp of a Native American chief in his hand. He fights almost like a British captain and is compared to Lord Nelson, although he also uses his position as colonizer to criticize the violent colonization by Europeans (Field 20). This constant shift in identificatory patterns and exchange of tense relations considerably add to the protagonist's complexity. Equiano endlessly negotiates his identity between African, British, American, and Native American cultures. He connects cultures that are seen as essentially different. In fact, he even claims a similarity between his childhood Igbo culture and Jewish and Christian cultures on the basis of their legal systems and religions.

Another recent argument posits that the most important identity of Equiano's was social in nature and related to his work as a sailor. Boats

constituted, as in Gilroy's terminology, "hybrid linguistic and political microsystems" (Gilroy, qtd. in Kelleter 75), which linked distinct geopolitical spaces. By crossing the Atlantic Ocean, sailing into the Mediterranean area as far as Turkey, and participating in an expedition to the North Pole, Equiano established a huge contact zone and acquired knowledge about other cultures.

Thus, through Equiano's experiences, slavery simultaneously triggered feelings of internal hybridity and external connectivity. Equiano's complexity is further epitomized in the hybridity of styles and genres characterizing his book: it is an autobiography, yet also a fictional text; it is not only a slave narrative, but also a picaresque adventurous novel, a travel report, a military story, a gothic romance, a sentimental novel, an allegory, etc. (Davidson 19). It is often considered a forerunner of both Black Western literature and the white sea novel, later developed notably by Melville, Conrad, and Cooper.

All these various aspects significantly complicate the critic's comparative methodology. Since this book defies clear-cut categories, there are obvious choices of texts with which it could or should be compared. Equiano of course represents a special case: he enjoyed a privileged position as a sailor, was able to buy his freedom, and became an important writer. Yet, despite his uniqueness, his case illustrates general tendencies: the international connectivity *and* the inner hybridity defining of the phenomenon of slavery; the genre-hybridity often found in texts about slavery; and issues of authorship. Equiano also deconstructs the black-or-white axis of culture that his contemporaries – ironically both slavery supporters and abolitionists – wanted to uphold. Equiano's multifaceted work and identity evidence the necessity for literary historians to develop a more finely tuned relational comparativism that works strategically with dynamic juxtaposition.

Relational comparativism is thus an important "tool" to apprehend the dynamics of interconnectivity and interdependence in the literary history of slavery. Such apparatus is not without possible pitfalls, as it may prove challenging to negotiate relational comparativism in the practice of historiography. As mentioned above, interconnectivity is ridden with conflicts and incongruous temporalities. This concept nonetheless has the merit of opening up rigid methodological frameworks and confined cultural worldviews; an openness which is vital when approaching cases of difficult heritage and border-crossing texts.

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COMPTES RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

**Elizabeth Outka. *Viral Modernism:
The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature.*
New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.
Pp. xii + 326. ISBN: 9870231185752.**

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I have reviewed a fair number of books in my life by this point, but I have never reviewed a book whose content was so incredibly timely with regards to current global events. There was something deeply uncanny in the experience of reading Elizabeth Outka's expertly-crafted and well-researched tome on the aesthetic responses to the influenza pandemic of 1918–1919, all while my children remote schooled for over a year. Descriptions of the pandemic changing public life ring true: "In most communities, the schools, theaters, churches, and factories were all shut down, and many public services simply stopped" (15). The volume includes multiple historical photographs and reproductions: on pages 14–15 there are photos of masked female nurses seated around a pile of mask materials and of male policemen lined up wearing cloth masks that clearly loop around the ear, and my notes in the margins are something to the effect of "Woah – I saw photos just like this on Facebook last week!" So yes, it's safe to say that I found this book interesting for a wide variety of reasons, and I feel fairly confident that any contemporary literary scholars would have a similar experience, whether or not they happen to specialize in the modernist literature that is Outka's primary focus.

Outka begins by introducing the 1918–1919 pandemic, contrasting its stunning death toll against the losses of World War I. She wants to understand why such a significant event, on par and even surpassing the First World War in terms of lives affected and lives ended, doesn't seem to appear with equal weight in the interwar literature of Britain, Ireland,

and America. In reading this literature *for* the pandemic, attuned traces we might otherwise overlook, Outka examines the ways in which loss, trauma, suffering, and grief are permissible and even expected in narratives focused on topics deemed inherently interesting: the violence and conflict of the historical-political machine. As she states,

The millions of flu deaths didn't (and don't) count as history in the ways the war casualties did, and *Viral Modernism* examines how and why such erasures happen. When we fail to read for illness in general and the 1918 pandemic in particular, we reify how military conflict has come to define history, we deemphasize illness and pandemics in ways that hide their threat, and we take part in long traditions that align illness with seemingly less valiant, more feminine forms of death. [...] Recovering the pandemic in the literature requires recognizing these traces and seeing their spectral quality as inherent to a tragedy that fundamentally differed from the war's more obvious manifestations. (2)

In taking this approach, Outka performs a series of thoughtful and thorough readings in order to trace both explicit references to the pandemic as well as experiential references – “the sensory, the atmospheric, and the affective” (3) – through which the pandemic as “spectral presence” is developed. And while the readings of the individual works are fresh and insightful, it is this trajectory of spectral presence that is particularly useful and well worth following.

The book is divided into three main sections. In Part 1, “Pandemic Realism,” Outka looks at a group of texts that take up the pandemic explicitly: Willa Cather's *One of Ours*, Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*, and William Maxwell's *They Came Like Swallows*. Although these works appear historically later than many of the other texts subsequently taken up, Outka's decision to begin her study with texts that overtly represent the pandemic allows her to probe the ways the pandemic atmosphere is rendered visible through specific aesthetic choices. She sees these works as doing three things that set the stage for continued investigation of the literary pandemic:

First, they expose the challenges of representation the pandemic produced. [...] Second, the works expose the miasmic world the virus created, detailing through deathbed scenes, damaged bodies, and depictions of airborne menace how the pandemic blurred distinctions between life and death. [...] Finally, these authors establish how tropes of viral resurrection capture particular elements of the pandemic's legacy, including the hallucinatory delirium the virus produced, the need for visual markers after so much sudden

and unrepresented loss, and the eerie sense that memories of the pandemic were being both buried and relentlessly remembered. (40–41)

Each of these elements will continue to reappear and be reexamined throughout the course of the book.

Part 2, “Pandemic Modernism,” takes up iconic modernist works and then reads them with the newly cultivated sensitivity to the previously unseen, spectral traces of the pandemic. I found it fascinating to revisit Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and W. B. Yeats’s “The Second Coming” in the pandemic’s light. Outka reads the pandemic and modernism itself in a “symbiotic atmosphere of influence” (101) in which the residue of the pandemic experiences with its seemingly random, unseen attacks on the body and the associated experience of dread produce a perspectival shift that manifests aesthetically in modernism’s fragmentation of realist referentiality and the resulting textual lengthening of sentence, form, and plot. In reading the modernist techniques traditionally understood to challenge received literary aesthetics (such as formal experimentation and temporal disruptions as well as the diffusion of the subject and/or identity) alongside the pandemic, it becomes evident that these aesthetic choices simultaneously work to reflect upon the experiences of illness and the trauma of loss in which ambiguity, disorientation, and dissolution come to bear. Outka is not arguing that the pandemic created literary modernism. Rather, “the pandemic is an essential presence in the style and structure of these works, and they in turn help define and confront the experience of the pandemic in its immediate aftermath” (101).

Finally, in Part 3 (“Pandemic Cultures”), Outka amplifies the specific literary pandemic paradigm developed in Part 1 and the practice of re-reading texts in light of that paradigm deployed in Part 2 and pushes out further to examine the ways interwar popular culture explores the miasmatic quality of the pandemic experience itself. Outka centers her exploration around the popular traditions of spiritualism and zombies, both of which are centered around concepts of resurrection in which the uncertainty of illness and death in the pandemic experience are reframed and reconfigured in ways that promote a sense of narrative cohesiveness and closure absent in the lived suffering and trauma of the pandemic itself. The post-pandemic interest in spiritualism of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is framed against a larger discussion of the cultural practice itself, and the emergence of the zombie in Abel Gance’s film *J'accuse* and in

H. P. Lovecraft's horror stories provide a thought-provoking way to reexamine the provenance of these contemporary figures and reconsider the significance of their continued popular appeal. In Outka's reading, these texts demonstrate a specific type of reimagining, in which the threat of the pandemic is reworked into something more, something excessive: an excess of life that, depending on the framework, can provide either the comfort of a continued existence beyond the grave or the horror of an unnatural life after death.

Throughout the entire project, Outka traces two specific tropes she identifies as present in each of the three groups of interwar literature. The first "centers on 'miasma' as a central way to recognize and to describe the pandemic's absent presence" (5); the second, identified as "viral resurrection," draws out the interwar interest in resurrection generally and reworks its significance. While death in war is routinely understood as sacrificial, even noble, the pandemic "eroded the pretense of death as a meaningful sacrifice while at the same time magnifying the loss and thus the desire for some meaning or return" (6). In the context of a pandemic in which a deadly virus's ability to replicate appears unchecked, the "viral" quality of the resurrection trope is evident in the "recurrent, pandemic-infused tropes of resurrection marked by their links to disease" (6). Outka's careful cultivation of these two tropes – miasma and viral resurrection – bears fruit in her final reading, an examination of the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf. There, Outka demonstrates how this project of re-reading interwar literature while consciously paying attention to the seemingly attenuated influence of the pandemic enriches the interpretive breadth of seemingly distant texts. She is not arguing that Woolf is "really" talking about the pandemic, but rather that "Woolf uses elements closely aligned to illness to express the scope and scale of the era's losses. [...] Not only does history look different, but what we thought was history in the first place, what we assumed counted as context, changes when we see as foundational a structure that is made of the body's private, internal experiences exponentially repeated. As Woolf observes in 'On Being Ill,' we need a new language to convey such histories" (245). The language of miasma with its associated imagery of borderless contagion, combined with the language of viral resurrection and its inevitable replicative excesses provide readers with a framework and vocabulary applicable not just to the study of interwar literature and the pandemic, but to the universal experiences of illness, loss, and trauma.

It is tempting to view Outka's conclusion as almost quaint from the 2021 perspective: "As scientists and researchers continually remind us, we are not ready for the next severe global pandemic, which – as they also remind us – is most assuredly coming" (254). But I think we miss the impact of the work Outka accomplishes in this volume if we stop there. For while she certainly appears, in hindsight, to be stating the obvious, Outka continues to drive her larger argument home:

And in the United States, as budgets for health care programs are reduced, funds for military spending have increased. The willingness to tolerate this discrepancy echoes the difference I have traced throughout this study between the attention war received and the attention the pandemic received. For all the reasons I have analyzed, military threats, political conflict, and human-based violence are typically treated, represented, and seen far more clearly than threats posed by disease; the pandemic killed more people, but it's the war we remember. (254)

This is the real heart of Outka's project: to question the gendered associations of both disease and war, and the ways an underlying culture of sexism and even misogyny shaped the world's response to and remembrance of the influenza pandemic of 1918–1919.

As we continue to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020–2021, I cannot help but carry these same questions regarding the relation of aesthetic response and gender with me. Outka's argument boils down to the fact that despite significant aesthetic engagement on a variety of levels, our normative assessment of the literary response to the 1918–1919 pandemic fails to register the magnitude of the trauma and loss there depicted in large part due to an inherited interpretive pattern that reads these texts as dealing primarily with the war to the degree that the simultaneous trauma of loss due to disease is hidden, and even forgotten. Outka argues that the assumption of gendered spaces – (male) war and (female) home – in the early twentieth century facilitated and encouraged these interpretations, and so I wonder: what will our contemporary literary engagement and aesthetic assessment of our pandemic be, and even more pointedly, will it likewise be received along these politicized lines? I think that anyone seriously interested in taking up the project of the literary response to Covid-19 that is, at this very moment, beginning to emerge and that will continue to reverberate throughout the contemporary literary landscape in the years and perhaps even decades following, must read Outka's work. Not only to examine the skill with which she deftly sifts through the significant amount of both historical and literary scholarship

surrounding her topic, but also to engage and assess the ways in which gender and politics shape the emerging literature of our post-Covid-19 world. Outka asks important questions informed by serious scholarship that would be helpful even without the context of recent global events; with them, *Viral Modernism* becomes essential reading.

Adele Kudish. *The European Roman d'Analyse. Unconsummated Love Stories from Boccaccio to Stendhal.* London : Bloomsbury, 2020. Pp. 218. ISBN : 9781501352225.

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L'étude d'Adele Kudish propose une lecture transversale d'un ensemble de textes narratifs, profondément différents entre eux – non seulement par leurs époques respectives de composition, mais aussi par le contexte culturel –, textes considérés comme des exemples à travers le temps et l'espace de « romans d'analyse ». L'auteure utilise également l'expression *analytical fiction*, qui est peut-être plus appropriée. En effet, dans ce livre l'acception de roman d'analyse diverge de celle qui est courante : il ne s'agit pas seulement, pour reprendre la définition de Paul Bourget mentionnée dans l'Introduction, d'étudier les ouvrages qui se proposent « de mettre à nu les nuances individuelles » d'un ou plusieurs personnages – comme c'est le cas dans le roman « psychologique » du XVII^e siècle (dans le genre de celui de Madame de La Fayette, à qui est dédié le troisième chapitre) et surtout dans la tradition des autobiographies fictives du XIX^e (de *Adolphe* de Constant à *La confession d'un enfant du siècle* de Maupassant, de la *Vie d'Henri Brulard* de Stendhal aux *Carnets du sous-sol* de Dostoïevski) et du XX^e (*Les cahiers de Malte* de Rilke, *La conscience de Zeno* de Svevo, etc.) – mais de façon générale d'analyser des textes narratifs où prédominent des personnages incapables de se connaître, maladroits, dépourvus d'une foi et d'un véritable but, profondément narcissiques. Leur personnalité semble souvent marquée par une forme chronique d'inhibition : la difficulté de concrétiser leurs passions. L'on pourrait dire, à la manière de Flaubert, que l'action « pour certains hommes, est d'autant plus impraticable que le désir est plus fort : la méfiance d'eux-mêmes les embarrasse, la crainte de déplaire

les épouvante » (*L'éducation sentimentale*, deuxième partie, chap. III). Ces amours non consommées sont considérées par Kudish comme une métaphore de l'incapacité de se connaître.

Le premier chapitre est consacré à l'*Elegia di madonna Fiammetta* de Giovanni Boccaccio, qui peut être considérée comme un roman, même s'il s'agit d'un ouvrage qui est le fruit d'une poétique incomparablement différente de la tradition moderne : c'est un texte narratif lié à la culture classique et à l'héritage culturel de l'œuvre de Dante (de la *Vita nuova* au chant de Francesca, dans l'*Enfer*). Dans le cas de l'*Elegia*, il serait d'ailleurs impossible de parler de *unconsummated love* (Fiammetta, à l'instar d'une héroïne ovidienne, a été séduite et abandonnée) : l'auteure préfère donc, à juste titre, parler de *unconsummated life*. En effet, pour le lecteur de l'*Elegia*, l'amour de Fiammetta a une existence purement mémorielle : Fiammetta est un personnage, d'une certaine manière, « posthume ». Elle peut seulement revivre sa passion, formuler des conjectures sur un possible retour de Panfilo, maudire son destin et prêter foi aux rumeurs sur la nouvelle vie de son amant qui parviennent, malgré tout, à ses oreilles de femme mariée apparemment fidèle. Le sien est un monde « enfermé », dominé par les pensées et les mots, opposé à celui des hommes, qui – comme le note Kudish – est ouvert et caractérisé par l'action. Ces deux dimensions – l'éloignement forcé de la réalité et un amour vécu de manière exclusivement solipsiste – permettent à l'auteure de rapprocher idéalement Fiammetta des personnages romanesques de la branche de la tradition du roman d'analyse mentionnée ci-dessus.

C'est à deux textes qui ne sont pas, à strictement parler, des romans, que se consacre le deuxième chapitre : la dixième nouvelle de l'*Heptameron* de Marguerite de Navarre et *Le curieux impertinent* de Cervantes. Dans la nouvelle de Florinde et Amadour, l'auteure considère les deux formes d'inaptitude à la communication expérimentées par les deux protagonistes : Florinde, restée aveugle pendant des années à ses sentiments d'amour est ensuite incapable de renoncer au culte de l'honneur ; Amadour, conscient dès le début de sa passion pour Florinde, entame une stratégie désastreuse – composée d'actions maladroites (un mariage et des amantes de couverture) ou violentes (deux tentatives non réussies de viol, en contradiction avec ses sermons sur l'honneur et la vertu) – et s'écarte, jusqu'à la rendre définitivement impossible, de la satisfaction de son désir. Le lien supposé de cette nouvelle (les caractéristiques du comportement « honorable » des hommes et des femmes) avec le célèbre récit de Cervantes, une longue digression qui occupe les chapitres 33–35 du

Quijote, est à vrai dire plutôt faible : parmi les textes du *corpus* constitué par Adele Kudish, *El curioso impertinente* est le plus étranger aux thématiques évoquées dans l'Introduction au volume. Ni Anselmo ni Lotario – les deux chevaliers protagonistes de la nouvelle de Cervantes – ne sont des héros marqués par l'incertitude, l'inhibition, l'incapacité d'agir. La « curiosité » d'Anselmo, désireux de mettre à l'épreuve la fidélité de son épouse Camila (un motif maintes fois exploité dans la littérature, du mythe ovidien de Céphale et Procris jusqu'au chef-d'œuvre mozartien *Così fan tutte*), a peu à voir avec l'incapacité de se connaître ou de parvenir à ses propres buts. Même si elles s'éloignent du discours développé tout au long de son ouvrage, les observations critiques de l'auteure autour du texte de Cervantes sont subtiles et pénétrantes. La clé de lecture proposée, inspirée de l'étude de René Girard sur le mensonge romantique et la vérité romanesque, se base sur l'idée de la logique du désir triangulaire : inconsciemment, Anselmo, plus que la fidélité de son épouse, semblerait vouloir tester celle de Lotario ; la relation entre ces deux amis nous est en effet présentée par le narrateur, au début du chapitre 33, dans les termes classiques d'une amitié « sentimentale ». Et si Lotario, en séduisant Camila, finit par trahir son ami, sa « déshonnêteté », note justement Kudish, coïncide avec ce qu'Anselmo « lui avait demandé » (90).

La troisième étape du voyage littéraire d'Adele Kudish concerne l'ouvrage de Madame de La Fayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*, souvent considéré comme un des prototypes du roman d'analyse moderne. Les traits saillants de l'interprétation avancée par Kudish confirment cette proximité idéale, surtout sous deux angles : d'un côté, l'impossibilité de trancher sur les sentiments des personnages (et surtout sur ceux de la protagoniste), troublés par une sorte d'ambivalence affective, qui deviendra un motif récurrent dans le roman d'analyse de Benjamin Constant à Italo Svevo ; de l'autre, l'idée, également « moderne », que la réalité, peuplée par des fausses apparences, reste mystérieuse, insaisissable, subjective. À cela s'ajoutent les capacités bien reconnues de pénétration psychologique de Madame de La Fayette, préceuseure des enquêteurs des maladies de l'âme, à la manière de Paul Bourget. Adele Kudish n'est pas la première à avoir mis en lumière les possibles liens entre *La Princesse de Clèves* et *Clarissa*, le deuxième roman de Samuel Richardson, à qui est dédiée la partie la plus significative du quatrième chapitre du livre. Mais Kudish, poursuivant son discours, arrête son attention surtout sur la construction psychologique des deux protagonistes – l'héroïne éponyme et l'ineffable Lovelace – portés tous les deux à confondre, chacun à sa façon, la réalité

avec la fantaisie (Lovelace est aussi, en plus, un menteur, même si parfois il semble l'ignorer lui-même) et à éprouver des sentiments mêlés et confus. Clarisse est prisonnière, nous le savons, de Lovelace, et contrainte à l'inaction ; mais son ravisseur, observe l'auteure avec perspicacité, semble être pris lui-aussi au piège : « he is trapped by his inability to read Clarissa properly. Because she is not interested in participating in Lovelace's games [...], Lovelace feels frustrated and thwarted. Thus, Clarissa ends in also trapping Lovelace in the same kind of inaction that she suffers throughout the novel » (141).

Dans *Persuasion* de Jane Austen et dans *Armance* de Stendhal (auxquels est consacré le dernier chapitre), le danger, écrit Adele Kudish, vient essentiellement de l'extérieur (le milieu familial, la « bonne » société), mais les protagonistes des deux romans – respectivement, Anne Elliot et Octave de Malivert – ont tendance à intérioriser leurs peurs et à revivre perpétuellement dans le présent, tout en les projetant sur le futur, les angoisses du passé. C'est une analyse qui est absolument partageable en ce qui concerne le roman d'Austen mais qui fonctionne moins bien, à mon avis, pour celui de Stendhal. Le poids écrasant du passé qui rend impossible toute forme de bonheur est une variante du mal de vivre destinée à une grande fortune dans la littérature européenne (pour ne citer qu'un roman, les *Cahiers de Malte* de Rilke) : Anne, convaincue huit ans plus tôt de briser ses fiançailles avec Frederick – en réalité forcée de le faire –, ne peut se libérer de son passé même au moment où, dans le dernier chapitre du roman d'Austen, ce mariage raté, qui a été la source pour elle d'un long chagrin enfoui, redevient possible. Mise à l'écart par sa famille d'aristocrates arrogants et hors du temps (son père est défini par Austen comme « a foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him »), habituée à vivre en analysant ses souvenirs, Anne semble empêchée de sortir vraiment de son impasse même quand le destin lui réserve un bonheur inattendu, qui paraissait désormais perdu. C'est le poids du regard malveillant de sa famille et de son milieu d'origine, un monde dont il lui est impossible, malgré tout, de se détacher, qui prive Anne d'un réel bien-être (« There she felt her own inferiority very keenly. [...] to have no family to receive and estimate him properly, nothing of respectability, of harmony, of good will to offer in return for all the worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters, was a source of [...] lively pain »). C'est une condition qui est vécue aussi par *Armance*, l'héroïne éponyme du

roman de Stendhal, qui pendant longtemps juge préférable de renoncer au seul amour de sa vie (Octave), pourvu qu'elle puisse se soustraire – en tant que pauvre orpheline de bonne naissance – aux calomnies de la haute société où elle est condamnée à vivre. Le cas du vrai protagoniste, Octave, est légèrement différent : même en souffrant des devoirs imposés par son milieu, il se montre parfaitement capable de maîtriser le regard d'autrui et de réagir, si nécessaire avec violence, aux médisances : pour réussir à exercer vraiment une influence sur lui, son oncle est contraint à recourir à un pénible subterfuge (lui faire trouver une lettre rédigée avec la même écriture que celle d'Armance). En réalité, depuis le début jusqu'à la fin, Octave est conditionné par son inavouable secret – l'impuissance – qui ne sera jamais révélé à personne (le lecteur d'aujourd'hui le connaît grâce à deux lettres de Stendhal qui jettent une lumière sur cette énigme).

Anne et Frederick dans *Persuasion*, Armance et Octave dans le roman de Stendhal, semblent tous destinés, comme le remarque Adele Kudish, à ne pas saisir le fond de l'âme de leurs bien-aimés. Une caractéristique qui est un peu le fil rouge qui unit la plupart des personnages évoqués dans ce beau livre, riche de suggestions, d'idées et d'analyses critiques.

**Thomas Buffet. *Le Renouveau de l'écriture
élégiaque chez Friedrich Hölderlin et André
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Thomas Buffet is a comparatist in the grand tradition of the Sorbonne where he offers courses ranging across mainly European literatures from the eighteenth through the twentieth century and from Britain to Russia. Expanding upon his doctoral thesis of 2011, this twinned study of Hölderlin and Chénier spins dense webs of textual explication and historical context and juxtaposes them in the greater flow of their era. French serves as the base language, while quotations in German and all other languages whether modern or ancient, including in annotations, are accompanied by a French version, often Buffet's. He holds in prospect a second volume that will chronicle the reception stories reciprocally on both sides of the Rhine. This first volume consists of chapters which range over the traits of the poetic heritage of the elegy as of the eighteenth century, Hölderlin's and Chénier's important shared Graecophilia, and cultural and personal factors ultimately distinguishing their poetry. Buffet underscores that, as an investigator of elegiac poetry, he avoids an even greater complexity which would inevitably have resulted were he also to have considered, in triadic juxtaposition, a high-ranking Anglophone poet of the age, when the English elegy also manifestly flourished. In parallel, aside from some collections of poetry, his copious annotations and bibliographical lists omit titles from the enormous English-language critical repertory. The profuse direct citation of Hölderlin and Chénier and of many critical comments over the centuries lends this book a distinctive character as text-oriented rather than theory-oriented.

Whether he is citing writings by his two central poets or by other writers and commentators over the centuries down to the present, Buffet offers a French version of non-French citations in every instance. This is not a trivial labor, even though he quotes mainly from the French and German streams and virtually excludes the English entirely, while also usually avoiding direct citations of the ancient Greeks who figure prominently, but more readily giving quotations in Latin.

The variation of chapters by type is very free in order to accommodate the radical difference in potential coverage between the subject matter of the elegiac tradition at large and the specifics of a contrast between Hölderlin and Chénier. Buffet wisely starts out from their tendency in common to prefer the vein of melancholy. This is a productive critical direction since, as Buffet soon reminds us, the newer romantic subjectivism, manifesting itself in both the German and the French poet, qualitatively alters the predominant tone and feel of the tropes handed down from humanist predecessors. Among other things, Buffet is eager to show how each great poet not only carefully presents himself in a modern language as a proponent of the ancient Greek spirit, but also captures his own life experience as a sentimental biography in and distinctly of his own times. Buffet sees a greater tendency in Hölderlin toward grief and anxiety over solitude, and in atheist Chénier toward disdain of suffering and death; he emphasizes Hölderlin elaborating his idealist program as a neomythology, and Chénier grasping for his individual dignity as a free poet. Some readers may feel that Buffet downplays the complicated subject of Hölderlin's adaptation of Boehmean theosophy and pansophical thought in his own poetic mystical dialectics, an astonishingly complex system of cultural history, to which his fellow schoolmate Hegel's very important dialectical philosophy of history is a first cousin (not to speak of such secular knock-offs such as that later proposed by Marx in his theory of "dialectical materialism"!).

There are a number of special contributions which Buffet brings in his expansive look at two poets. One is what we could term a compressed "sub-monograph" on the historical development of the elegy in France, matched up against its fortunes in Germany (with the implicit possibility of expanding such comparison to other parts of Europe). From this threshold early in the book we move into the nineteenth century as the home territory we want to reach. Here we are served a truly constant series of large chunks of German and French poetry on which to refasten our gaze and consider how each of our two poets not only is developing

his own themes, but often is very carefully assuring the reader of how, with full awareness of ancient writers, his poem intentionally is operating in his own modern world. Buffet is interested in how each poet strives gradually to achieve an equilibrium, given each poet's awareness of the past with its relevant poets versus his own individual position in time. There is an intensely aesthetic focus by Buffet in the late section of the book on how each of these two great poets of the romantic age manage to delight and surprise their own assumed audiences. Today's readers will delight in the minutiae which surface as Buffet looks into the themes and motifs, the linguistic niceties and turns of phrase and image, with constant reference to specifics of text. It is a pleasurable walk through many charming, and often beloved, lines carefully gathered to illustrate the two poets' personalities, experience, and development. The present volume about the "renewal" (*renouveau*) of a great tradition may well have shown how to solve some operational matters, if, as is to be hoped, Buffet turns to the elegiac tradition in the romantic age in Britain in a possible later volume.

Buffet's present volume, in essence a twinned exploration of Hölderlin and Chénier, carries a categorized bibliography of some forty pages, listing almost exclusively German and French critical literature and translations, plus translations of relevant classical authors whom the French and German poets have in mind. It also offers a useful page index of literary and philosophical writers cited in the course of Buffet's analyses. The here (deliberately) "missing" critical literature that we would want to cite for a parallel dip into the English elegy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would indeed be vast. Meanwhile, Buffet has demonstrated quite well by the examples he offers why a further expansion of our interest in the elegy, whether in France and Germany, or in Britain, or indeed in other realms and languages, is an attractive proposition.

Morton D. Paley and Sibylle Erle, eds.
The Reception of William Blake in Europe.
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As Alexander Gilchrist indicated in the subtitle of his 1863 biography, *The Life of William Blake*, “*Pictor Ignotus*,” Blake’s unique visual and literary talents were little known within his lifetime (1757–1827); the turnaround in Blake’s critical fortunes is commonly said to have begun only late in the nineteenth century, through the attention first of Gilchrist and his Pre-Raphaelite friends, and subsequently of W. B. Yeats and his circle. The exponential growth of Blake’s cultural presence through the twentieth century shows no sign of slowing down in the present time. This is evidenced by the burgeoning sub-genre of Blake scholarship focusing on his reception history, whose geographic and thematic scope is indicated by titles such as *The Reception of Blake in the Orient*, edited by Steve Clark and Masashi Suzuki (2009), and Linda Freedman’s recent monograph *William Blake and the Myth of America* (2018). This is the immediate critical context within which *The Reception of William Blake in Europe* appears.

Uniquely among the authors in Bloomsbury’s “Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe” series, Blake’s oeuvre and reception history encompass not only literature but also the visual arts. However, readers may be surprised to realize the extent of Blake’s influence on a third cultural form, namely music, in several popular and classical varieties. This is apparent within many of the country-specific chapters, and is further highlighted by the decision of editors Morton Paley and Sibylle Erle to include a standalone chapter on “Blake and Music,” authored by Jason

Whittaker, a scholar who has played a leading role in the development of Blake reception studies.

The chapter on Blake's reception in Portugal is wittily entitled "Enough! or Too much," and it is perhaps inevitable that there are sections within this large book where the sheer weight of research across such a range of areas makes Blake's aphorism from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* seem rather apt. Clearly, this expensive double volume is aimed squarely at the academic library market, and is not necessarily intended to be read cover to cover. However, the quality of research within its twenty-six chapters is impressive, providing numerous fascinating insights into Blake's cultural significance across Europe, and in the process also illuminating the history, culture and politics of the twenty-four countries covered. As series editor Elinor Shaffer writes in her preface, "Blake's varied discovery abroad shows wonderfully how diversely a writer not firmly associated with a particular age or movement appears in different eras"; Blake is an author and artist for whom "no label or temporal category is adequate" (xiii). Before I turn to the individual chapters within which Blake's various identities are explored, I want to highlight some of the common themes that emerge.

The inclusion of four chapters dealing with different aspects of Blake's reception in German-speaking countries (chapters 9–12) reflects the fact that interest in Blake took hold in Germany unusually early (sometimes in relation to specific works, but often also as biographical exemplar of a supposedly "mad poet"). It is therefore appropriate that Susanne Schmid, in her excellent chapter "The Reception of Blake in Germany and Austria in the Nineteenth Century," should explicitly challenge the "prevailing view [...] that Blake attracted little attention prior to Alexander Gilchrist's biography" (230). Schmid's work reinforces the conclusions of much recent scholarship on Blake's British and American reception, which likewise draws attention to previously unknown (or ignored) examples of Blake's impact in the first half of the nineteenth century. While few other chapters in this book are able to trace Blake's reception so far back in their respective countries, the book as a whole exemplifies a broader version of the same point, that Blake's outsider status is something of a myth, within popular culture if not the academy; in several of the countries covered by this book, it is clear that Blake today has a cultural footprint larger than that of the other British Romantic poets, in whose company he has come to be included.

Another thread running through this book is what the editors in their introduction describe as “the curse of Babel” (20), although this “curse” could also be explained in terms of the linguistic laziness of the Anglophone world. We encounter through this book multiple fascinating texts, both critical and creative, which would certainly enrich Blake studies if translated into English. Several notable examples are mentioned in Robert Rix’s chapter on Denmark and Norway (a region that is also revealed as a hothouse of Blake-inspired music), while the extent of Blake’s reputation in Poland is indicated by the fact that explicitly Blakean creative works by two Polish winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature (Czesław Miłosz and Olga Tokarczuk) *have* been successfully translated into English. In terms of scholarly work on Blake, one of the heroes of this book is the Austrian Helene Richter, whose meticulously researched 1906 book *William Blake* is a foundational work of Blake scholarship in any language, having a long-lasting positive impact on Blake’s reputation across Europe, and correcting previous errors made by English-language scholars. Her tragic death in Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1942 throws into sharp relief the political contexts of Blake’s European reception in the twentieth century.

While French knowledge of Blake proves to have somewhat shallower roots than in Germany, the various international avant-garde and esoteric scenes that overlapped in Paris in the early twentieth century frequently made use of Blake. Indeed, it is apparent throughout this book that one of the easiest ways of finding Blakean enthusiasts in any country is to investigate esoteric movements or figures, whether local or transnational; thus, for example, anthroposophists throughout Europe developed a keen interest in Blake, even though, as Sibylle Erle finds in Chapter 11, there is little evidence that Blake had much direct influence on the movement’s founder, Rudolf Steiner. Another pan-European aspect of Blake’s reception is his adoption by countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In many cases, a direct link can be traced to the enthusiastic proselytizing of the American Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, who had adopted Blake as his “guru,” but it is notable that Blake found a place not only within the countercultures of western and northern Europe, but also in the very different contexts of southern and eastern Europe in this period, where underground movements sought to escape the “mind-forg’d manacles” of their authoritarian governments.

Turning to the individual content of the book’s twenty-six chapters, the first of these is given over to co-editor Morton Paley’s essay “Editing

Blake.” As expected from such a major figure in Blake scholarship, Paley provides a solid and well-written history of the major editions of Blake’s work, from the first typeset edition of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in 1839, through to the work of David V. Erdman, whose *Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (most recently revised in 1988) is the standard source today. Because Blake’s works were mostly self-published in a non-typeset form in his lifetime, the decisions of Blake’s posthumous editors have played a significant role in his reception history. Nevertheless, this is not the most obvious choice of topic for the opening chapter of *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, which might have been better served by a comparison of the European reception histories of other Romantic poets, perhaps in combination with a discussion of Blake’s own rich and strange explorations of the relationship between Albion and Europe, or indeed the broader themes of nationalism and internationalism in his work.

Chapter 2, “The Reception of Blake in Ireland,” is likewise authored by a major figure in Blake scholarship, Edward Larrissy. However, as one of the shortest chapters in the book, this also leaves some questions unanswered. Larrissy skilfully summarizes the influence of Blake on Yeats and of Yeats on Blake’s international reception, drawing attention to the tension between the Symbolist esotericism of Yeats’s Blake and his desire to co-opt Blake into the Irish nationalist cause. The chapter also touches on the influence of Blake on two other key figures of the Irish Revival, Eva Gore-Booth and her sister Constance, Countess Markievicz; other traces of Blake are discovered in Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, James Joyce and Seamus Heaney, as well as the Dublin-born artist Francis Bacon. But it remains a mystery why these important aspects of Blake’s European reception are covered so briefly; perhaps Larrissy was overly cautious not to repeat his previous publications on this topic, or perhaps this was a decision on the part of the editors, but whatever the reason, the book would have benefited from a longer chapter on these crucial Irish contexts.

As already mentioned, the intersections of various strands of Modernism, Symbolism, Surrealism and esotericism in Paris played a key role in Blake’s twentieth-century reception, although the effect was felt as much outside France as within. In Chapter 3, Gilles Soubigou and Yann Tholoniati introduce us to several earlier missed opportunities for Blake to take hold in France, including a letter from Algernon Swinburne to Stéphane Mallarmé begging him to translate Blake into French: “since

we've lost Baudelaire, you are the only one who would be worthy of undertaking this glorious task" (56–57). Later, Blake would be translated by both André Gide and the Surrealist Philippe Soupault, who clandestinely introduced a Blakean poem of his own into his translated edition of Blake's *Songs*.

The influence of Blake on Symbolism and Surrealism is explored further in Chapter 4, on Blake's reception in Belgium. Franca Bellarsi's critically acute chapter stands out as particularly rich; she finds multiple points of Blakean influence within both Francophone and Flemish Belgium, providing fascinating extended case studies of August Vermeylen (1872–1945) and Marc Eemans (1907–1998). Bellarsi concludes that "Blake remains a latent presence in the collective consciousness of the country" (123).

The following chapter, on Blake's reception in Italy, is equally well written. Here, Luisa Calè shows the surprising extent of interest in Blake within Italian Fascism, where esotericist approaches to Blake were mixed with far-right politics to transform Blake into "a Nietzschean poet-prophet for the new century" (131). The unique nature of the relationship between literature and politics in twentieth-century Italy is indicated by the fact that the most influential translator of Blake was "hermetic poet" Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888–1970), who had been part of Futurist and Surrealist circles in 1920s Paris and a supporter (like his friend Ezra Pound) of Mussolini, but by the mid-1960s was writing admiringly about Allen Ginsberg and his links to Blake. Indeed, Calè neglects to mention that when Ginsberg met Ungaretti alongside Pound at the Spoleto Festival in 1967, he returned the compliment, describing the Italian as the "nicest old poet I met since W.C.W. [William Carlos Williams]" (Ginsberg 332).

Blake's reception in the Iberian peninsula followed an entirely different trajectory to that in Italy. In Chapter 6, Cristina Flores explains that despite some translations by Pablo Neruda in 1934, widespread Spanish popular and critical interest in Blake had to wait until the period of political and cultural liberation resulting from the end of Franco's dictatorship in the 1970s. Flores does however point out that Blake was an artistic influence on Joan Miró (and probably Salvador Dalí), and even raises the possibility of earlier influence on Francisco Goya. Similarly, in Chapter 7, Pinheiro de Sousa and João Carlos Callixto note that despite Fernando Pessoa owning heavily annotated copies of Yeats's *Poems of William Blake* (1905) and Tatham's *Letters of William Blake* (1906), there

is little evidence of Blake having any impact on Portuguese culture until the end of Salazar's dictatorship.

Chapter 8 on Romania is necessarily short, and largely redundant, its tone set by author Cătălin Ghiță's comment that "Romanian readers, who are either ignorant of or else uninterested in the psychological and religious escapades of a renegade English Protestant, must feel little affinity with Blake's dense prophetic style" (216). Ghiță does however note with some surprise that in common with several other Eastern European countries, a postage stamp was issued to commemorate Blake's bicentennial year, the authorities having added him to their list of "progressive" international artists (217). The fact that the Romanian version of this stamp seems to have appeared a year late, in 1958, is indicative of Blake's status in the country.

As already mentioned, Blake's impact in German-speaking countries has been considerable, with awareness of Blake's work dating back even to his own lifetime, and so it seems appropriate that the four chapters dealing with this region sit at the centre of this book (at the end of the first volume). All are written by experienced Blake scholars; Susanne Schmid's chapter on Blake's nineteenth-century reception benefits from her in-depth knowledge of Blake's reception history in Britain, and she is also able to make useful comparisons with the European reception of other English Romantics such as P. B. Shelley. As Schmid notes, a key event in Blake's reception history, influential not only in Germany but also elsewhere (including in Britain), was the publication in 1811 of Henry Crabb Robinson's article "William Blake, Künstler, Dichter und religiöser Schwärmer" [William Blake, artist, poet and religious enthusiast] in the Hamburg journal *Vaterländisches Museum*. This article ran to twenty-four pages and included translations of several of Blake's poems. However, as Schmid points out, the German reception history of Blake's work as an illustrator of the poetry of Thomas Gray and Robert Blair predates even Robinson's article.

In Chapter 10, David Bindman considers the lasting significance of the major exhibition of Blake's art which took place in Hamburg and Frankfurt in 1975, which Bindman himself curated. Part of a series of exhibitions staged between 1974 and 1980 under the rubric *Kunst um 1800*, the Blake exhibition was "a decisive turning point in the rise of Blake's reputation as an artist" (259), not only in Germany but internationally, putting Blake on an equal footing with the subjects of the other

exhibitions in the series, including Fuseli, Flaxman and Goya, and for the first time placing Blake's art in its wider European Romantic context.

Sibylle Erle's chapter, on Blake's post-1900 German and Austrian reception, covers (as previously mentioned) the extraordinary archival and critical work of Helene Richter (1861–1942), as well as the surprising attempts by the Nazis (at whose hands Richter was murdered) to use Blake for their own purposes. Erle quotes from an article published in 1939 which imagines Blake's revolutionary character Orc fighting on behalf of Germany: "If he rises against the nine-fold Damned darkness of Urizen, he will break into England" (276). This chapter is followed by Angela Esterhammer's investigation of Blake's reception in Switzerland, which notes that Blake himself was directly influenced by two of his Swiss contemporaries, the artist Johann Heinrich Füssli (known in his adopted England as Henry Fuseli) and the philosopher Johann Caspar Lavater. Another key point in Esterhammer's chapter is that "Blake's Swiss-German reception was also coloured by the similarities between his archetypal mythology and the psychoanalytic theory of Carl Gustav Jung" (300).

The second volume of *The Reception of William Blake in Europe* has a somewhat inauspicious start, as Chapter 13 struggles to find significant evidence of Blake's influence in The Netherlands, in marked contrast to neighbouring Germany and Belgium. However, this is followed by one of the highlights of the collection, Robert Rix's chapter on Denmark and Norway, in which he uncovers a wealth of fascinating creative and critical responses to Blake. He is also one of several authors in this book to consider in detail the choices and challenges involved in translating Blake, a topic which he examines particularly well. Rix convincingly argues that Scandinavian responses to Blake are not only plentiful, but also have a unique character, giving the work of the English poet and artist the status of "shared text" in those countries (435). Rix is also one of very few authors in this collection to show their familiarity with the recent critical works in English which attempt to provide a theoretical framework for Blake's reception history, for example the work of Mike Goode.

The next chapter, in which Bo Ossian Lindberg tackles the remaining Nordic countries of Sweden and Finland, is highly unusual in style, as Lindberg uses an engagingly forthright, often colloquial tone, and seizes the opportunity to settle a few personal scores relating to recent Swedish and Finnish translations and exhibitions of Blake. However, the chapter

is no less enjoyable or informative for it, and Lindberg clearly knows the subject, and Blake's work, very well.

The next two chapters, on Blake's Czech and Polish reception, reveal that in this part of Eastern Europe, Blake has enjoyed a particularly rich reception history, both before, during, and after the communist period. As Martin Procházka shows, interest in Blake within the early twentieth-century Czech artistic movement of Catholic Modernism had a lasting influence on Blake's reputation, and we are introduced to a familiar mix of avant-garde and esoteric circles, with Czech Modernists eager to situate Blake within a native tradition of Christian mysticism, sometimes in combination with esoteric influences derived from the Kabbala, Hinduism and Buddhism. It therefore seems surprising that the author makes no mention of one of the most intriguing archival discoveries in recent Blake scholarship, namely the discovery that Blake's mother had belonged to an English branch of the Moravian Church. While this apparent confirmation of a historical link between Blake's mysticism and Czech religious traditions would have added an interesting extra thread to the material, this is a fascinating and informative chapter, also benefiting from a reproduction of a woodcut from Josef Váchal's Blake-inspired series of prints *Mystikové a visionáři* [Mystics and Visionaries] (1913). Meanwhile, as Eliza Borkowska explains, Blake has benefited from many decades of critical and creative responses to his work in Poland. As previously mentioned, Polish literary and novelistic responses have been particularly significant, including the work of two Nobel Prize winners, although Borkowska is unaccountably reluctant to praise Olga Tokarczuk's 2009 novel *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*, the English translation of which appeared in 2018.

Blake's Russian reception is divided between two chapters. In the first of these, Vera Serdechnaia and Evgenii Serdechnyi show that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – the so-called “Silver Age” of Russian art and literature – responses to Blake emphasized the mystical aspect of his work; this approach immediately fell from favour after the Russian Revolution, although Blake's progressive politics meant that Marxist literary studies of his work were eventually approved. The British Marxist historian and literary critic A. L. Morton (1903–1987), who completed several lecture tours behind the Iron Curtain, was the only Blake scholar whose work was published in the USSR and East Germany. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the work of the British-based Russian composer Dmitri Smirnov, whose extensive series

of compositions based on the works of Blake are also featured in the chapter on “Blake and Music,” and who sadly died of Covid-19 in 2020. In Chapter 19, more narrowly focused on Blake’s art, Tatiana Tiutvinova discovers several previously uncatalogued examples of Blake’s commercial engravings in Russian collections, but emphasizes that in comparison to his poetry, there was relatively little popular or critical attention to Blake’s art until the large Moscow exhibition *William Blake and Visionary Art* which was coordinated by the Tate Gallery in 2011.

There are some similarities between Blake’s reception in Hungary, covered in Chapter 20, and the pattern of Blake’s Czech reception. In an interesting chapter, Ágnes Péter outlines Blake’s adoption by early twentieth-century avant-garde artists and esotericists (in this case the Gödöllő school), followed by a period of cautious state-sponsored scholarship in the communist period, interspersed with interest in Blake amongst figures associated with the 1956 Hungarian uprising (notably the poet and artist Béla Kondor) and 1970s underground countercultures. This is followed by Tanja Bakić’s chapter on Blake in the Balkans. As might be expected in a region whose historical and cultural influences have come from several different directions, the relatively minor traces of Blake discovered here mostly come from elsewhere in Europe, including via French Surrealism and André Gide’s Blake translations, Helene Richter’s German-language scholarship, and more recently a translation of an article by Polish author Czesław Miłosz. However, Blake has retained his power to stir up controversy: in 2003, the Orthodox Christian author Vladimir Dimitrijević condemned what he termed Blake’s “demonic preaching” (600).

Chapter 22 is particularly interesting, both for its analysis of Blake’s surprisingly rich Bulgarian reception, and for the broader insights that it gives into Bulgaria’s unique history and culture. As Ludmilla Kostova and Lubomir Terziev explain, the desire to leave behind the country’s Ottoman history made Bulgarians particularly receptive to Western European and American literature, and to some extent this continued even under state socialism. The reception of Blake (alongside other English authors) was also helped by the establishment in the 1950s of a well-organized network of state-sponsored English-medium schools, which still exist in Bulgaria today. A further unique aspect of Blake’s reception in Bulgaria is the persistent interest in linking his apparent Gnosticism to the mediaeval Bogomil dualist heresy, which continues to be a source of national pride.

The final two country-specific chapters, on Greece and Turkey, find relatively limited Blakean influence, although both are thoughtful and well-written explorations of their material. Maria Schoina argues that “William Blake’s impact on Greek culture can be traced mainly in the way he influenced and inspired two major poets of the twentieth century, Odysseus Elytis (1911–1996) and Zisimos Lorentzatos (1915–2004)” (635). She shows how different these two contemporaneous poets are to one another, despite their common interest in Blake. Meanwhile, William Coker’s chapter on Turkey reveals how Blake is mainly known in that country through his aphorisms, which are regularly used in a variety of political contexts. Coker notes that as a “poet of revolution and of obscurely programmatic statements, Blake has a somewhat better chance of being heard in a country where writers are often called on to generate a world view and comment on current events” (649). For this reason, his work is more widely known in Turkey than that of other English Romantic poets.

The book concludes with Jason Whittaker’s necessary chapter on Blake’s European musical influence, and finally Tate curator Martin Myrone’s chapter which catalogues all the public exhibitions in continental Europe where Blake’s artwork has been displayed, beginning with the 1927 Vienna exhibition. It should be apparent that *The Reception of William Blake in Europe* is a monumental work of scholarship, and will be a vital reference book not only for Blake scholars but also for comparatists working in many fields of European literature.

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**Fionna Barber, Heidi Hansson and Sara
Dybris McQuaid, eds. *Ireland and the North*.
Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang, 2019. Pp. 326.
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This collection of essays explores the longstanding interactions between Ireland and the Nordic countries, from the Viking raids in the early Middle Ages to contemporary political negotiations and from nineteenth-century Antiquarian exchanges to twenty-first-century artist residencies. This vast temporal scope is matched by the collection's comprehensive disciplinary range, as it studies these Irish-Nordic relations from a variety of perspectives: art and art history, literature and cultural studies, history and politics. This multi-disciplinary approach is one of the hallmarks of Peter Lang's *Re-Imagining Ireland* series of which this is already the ninety-first volume. Launched in 2011 by editor Eamon Maher, the series has successfully opened up the field of Irish studies beyond its traditional literary focus and restricted canon. *Ireland and the North* is a worthy addition to the series and the book's multi-disciplinarity is one of its chief delights, not least because of the many colour photographs of paintings, bronze artefacts and tourist postcards that illustrate this collection.

The editors, whose own background reflects the book's multi-disciplinary focus, made the wise decision to structure the book in three main sections: "Visual and Material Culture" gathers essays on art, art history and film; "Political Culture" is concerned with issues of nationalism and transnational relations; and "Print Culture" looks at Scandinavian influences on Irish literature. Yet even within these sections, the essays still cover a wide range of topics. Part I, for instance,

contains Maria Panum Baastrup's fascinating description of new archaeological finds in Southern Scandinavia which pinpoint intense interactions between the Viking tribes and the Atlantic Archipelago between 750 and 1050 AD. The metal artefacts that were traded, or often looted, from English, Scottish and Irish shores were typically adapted for use in the households of the Viking chieftains, but still retain visible traces of Celtic or Anglo-Saxon design. An entirely different form of transnational exchange is described in Fionna Barber's excellent chapter on Rita Duffy's *Severance* (2011), a group of paintings and drawings that were inspired by Duffy's extended artist residency at Kysten Arts Centre, near Tromsø in Northern Norway. While the paintings reflect Duffy's encounters with Sami culture and the Arctic winter, Barber argues, they also draw on her personal experience of conflict, trauma and loss in Northern Ireland. She concludes, "[t]he themes of both home and homelessness are displaced from Northern Ireland to a fictive space loosely situated in the far North of Norway, resulting in the opening up of a confrontation with maternal loss and issues around the survival of traumatic memory in post-conflict Northern Ireland" (92). Two other chapters within that first part deal, respectively, with the influx of tourists in Northern Ireland in the wake of the popular *Games of Thrones* series and with the Dublin visit of a Danish antiquarian, Jens Jacob Asmussen Worsaae, in 1846. About that particular Danish-Irish exchange, Ciaran McDonough convincingly demonstrates that it was not just motivated by antiquarian interests, particularly Worsaae's desire to promote the newly established Museum of Northern Antiquities in Denmark, but also by nationalist ones, as Worsaae courted "the support of Irish nationalists for Danish claims to Schleswig-Holstein" (17).

The Irish-Scandinavian travels evoked in part I find echoes in the other sections as well. The final chapter of part III, co-written by David Gray and John Wilson Foster, investigates the obsession with Scandinavia of the Northern Irish writer and activist, Constance Malleeson, which resulted in lengthy Swedish sojourns, an extended network of Scandinavian acquaintances and clear Nordic influences in her writing. A much shorter visit is the topic of the first chapter of Part II, where Andrew Newby retraces Michael Davitt's week of sightseeing in Helsinki, Stockholm, Christiana and Copenhagen on the basis of Davitt's own diaries and papers. Even though, as the Dublin antiquarians in McDonough also recognized, late nineteenth-century Scandinavia could have taught a lot to Irish Republican activists, Davitt's own journey was probably too short

to really inspire him. Moreover, as Newby shows, his lenient view on Russia clearly put him at odds with Scandinavian nationalist sentiments.

As several of the chapters in Part III explain, however, the cultural nationalists involved in the Gaelic Revival proved much more receptive to Scandinavian models. Anne Karhio shows how W.B. Yeats repeatedly invoked the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* as a model for re-establishing a unified national culture on the basis of an ancient folk tradition. Similarly, Padraic Colum's retelling of old Norse myths in *The Children of Odin* (1920) aimed to inspire Irish and American children with myths of heroic resistance and male valour, as Julie Anne Stevens demonstrates. Both Stevens and Karhio also point to the inevitable distortion – or “creative misinterpretation,” as Karhio puts it (243) – that accompanies such acts of cultural translation and appropriation. The same holds true for the use that Irish writers made of the innovative aesthetics of Henrik Ibsen, Knut Hamsun and August Strindberg. In his chapter, Eoghan Smith gives a helpful overview of these Scandinavian influences, while underlining that they proved inspirational not just to Irish modernists, like Joyce, George Moore and George Egerton, but also to Irish revivalists, like Yeats and Sean O'Casey. This in itself serves to challenge the traditional division between the Gaelic Revival and (international) modernism in Irish literary history.

The case studies offered in these chapters are clearly but a tip of the iceberg. Yet they succeed in relaying a good sense of the extended intellectual networks of artists, activists and journalists which connected Ireland and the Nordic Countries, but also included metropolitan centres in Britain and continental Europe. Regardless of whether the motivation behind these exchanges, travels and adaptations was aesthetic, political or economic, they were of crucial importance in developing culture and the arts in Europe, but also in paving the way for greater European collaboration.

It is ironic then that the specter of Brexit also hovers over this essay collection. Brexit is the explicit context of Sara Dybris McQuaid's interesting comparison between, on the one hand, the institutions of British-Irish interparliamentary cooperation that were set up in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement and, on the other, the collaboration between Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland in the Nordic Council. In her conclusion, McQuaid recommends that British-Irish cooperation in post-Brexit times take its cue from the very successful regional cooperation of the Nordic countries. Brexit also haunts several other chapters in

this collection, particularly those that deal with Northern Irish writers, activists, artists and tourists. Indeed, “the North” invoked in the title of this book not only refers to the Nordic countries and the “idea of the North” they inspire in the rest of Europe, but also to “The North” as it is used colloquially within Ireland to refer to the six counties of Northern Ireland. Most of the chapters focused on Northern Ireland manage to connect both meanings of the term in interesting ways. In his reading of Seamus Heaney’s poetry collection *North*, most notably, Eugene O’Brien persuasively argues for an extension of the scope of Heaney’s title from its localized meaning as Northern Ireland to a larger, more symbolic and intertextual “Nordic” connotation of the term. At a stretch, Stephen Joyce’s investigation of the impact of *Game of Thrones* on Northern Ireland’s tourist image also manages to connect Ireland’s North to the Nordic North through his attention to the fusion of Celtic and Norse mythology in the series’ presentation of Westeros’ North region.

One chapter in *Ireland and the North*, however, remains ineluctably “local” in its focus on Northern Ireland: Stephen Hopkins’ analysis of memoirs written by IRA members from the Republic of Ireland about their involvement in the Northern Irish “Troubles.” I really failed to see the link between this chapter and the rest of the collection’s focus on the interactions between Ireland and the Nordic countries. Given that these interactions are already very diverse in terms of time frame, character and aim, it is a pity that these two quite distinct meanings of “the North” should further weaken the common focus of this collection. Conversely, it would also be a pity if readers interested in the Northern Irish peace process and its aftermath would fail to find this interesting chapter in a book that more specifically addresses the Nordic sense of “North.”

More in general too, one would hope that the original material presented in several of the chapters in this book will find its way to the right readers. The chapters would have to be properly indexed and made available through databases so that scholars interested in, say, Constance Malleon or Michael Davitt will find their way to the interesting biographical facts presented in these chapters. Similarly, it is to be hoped that feminist critics will pay attention to Julie Anne Stevens’ perceptive comments on the gendered norms found in the distinct retellings of the same Norse myths by male and female writers. Likewise, Danish art historians will hopefully regard Ciaran McDonough’s chapter as a compelling discussion of their nineteenth-century compatriot. For, even though the wide scope and multidisciplinary focus of *Ireland and the North* are

definitely to be commended, individual scholars and students are often predominantly interested in one discipline, one period or one literary movement in particular. Given the high quality of most of the chapters in this diverse and fascinating book, it is to be hoped that it will also reach these readers.

**Tiffany N. Florvil and Vanessa
D. Plumly, eds. *Rethinking Black German
Studies: Approaches, Intervention and
Histories*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018. Pp. 330.
ISBN: 9783034322256.**

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As its title suggests, this volume reflects on and critically examines concepts pertinent to our understanding of the field of Black German studies, since its inception from the kitchen table forums to the vibrant field that now regularly convenes for seminars and conferences. Each of the essays under discussion adds something distinctly important to our repertoire of knowledge by giving us insight into the approaches and interventions employed by the contributors (mostly Black American scholars) to enhance their visibility and articulate their positions as being both Black and German. The discussions attempt to answer questions about topics such as nation, race, and identity. The volume is divided into three sections: “German and Austrian Literature and History,” “Theory and Praxis,” and “Art and Performance.” These three categories expound on the subtitle of the volume, namely: “Approaches, Interventions and Histories.”

Part one, devoted to German and Austrian literature, consists of three chapters which provide insights into the exclusionary nature of historical accounts of Afro-Germans in German-speaking Europe. The first chapter, by Silke Hackenesch, deals with the objectification of the Black body by German colonialists through images that were repeatedly circulated (e.g. postcards) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She analyzes these images and the constructs that were derived thereof, whereby Black bodies were portrayed as

signifiers of consumable products (e.g. chocolate) and fetishes, thus disempowering and commoditizing the Black body. Hackenesch clarifies that “the equation of chocolate with Black people found in many historical trade cards and its continuity in today’s popular parlance had nothing to do with any perceived similarities of skin colour and the colour of curtained products [...] instead Europeans learned this association through endless repetition, which in turn normalized and naturalized these images” (42). She further argues that, even though the Germans were not successful in their venture of producing cocoa themselves, they nonetheless produced imagery that cast them as superior over Black bodies. This, in the scholar’s view, was an attempt to further disempower Black bodies and to disseminate the notion that Black bodies could be ranked on the same level – if not lower – than the commodity they were responsible for producing.

Nancy P. Nenno delves into discussions on the “forgotten” Black Austrians in German academic discourses. In her astute analysis of their works, she foregrounds the racialization and alienation that Black Austrians have experienced in this predominantly white country. In this way, Nenno illustrates how Black Austrians are actively rewriting their history and making themselves visible and consequential: “events surrounding the death of the twenty-six-year old Nigerian asylum-seeker Marcus Omofuma during his deportation in 1999 conclusively demonstrate that the Black Community in Austria, and particularly in Vienna is organized, politically active and vocal” (74). Further, she critiques the Museum exhibits of 2016, which erroneously tried to downplay the presence of Blacks in Austria before World War II and the arrival of Black GIs during the American occupation of the country. Nenno discredits this notion by showcasing several chapters of Black History in Austria that trace the presence of Black people as far back as the 1500s.

Concluding this section are autobiographical accounts by former Namibian-GDR kids of their lives as “beneficiaries” of the “solidarity politics” agenda in East Germany. Meghan O’Dea unravels the ambivalent meanings attached to the term “solidarity politics” in East Germany, arguing that these works reveal how these children were instrumentalized to portray the *Solidaritätspolitik* as inclusionary and humanitarian, while at the same time embracing radicalized and exclusionary notions. O’Dea draws our attention to the Namibian children’s history and to the discrepancies between the official politics of solidarity and the actual realities of “everyday racism” experienced by these so-called “beneficiaries”: “In

their narratives, they lay the complexity of solidarity bare by not merely applauding the positive intensions of *Solidaritätspolitik*, but by further exploring the exclusionary and prejudicial institutional practices and attitudes they experienced in GDR" (107).

Part two of the volume, "Theory and Praxis," opens with Kimberly Alecia Singletary's chapter, which elucidates the concept of haunting (the existence of unfronted racialized pasts) in relation to the terms "American Blackness" and "Afro-Germans." She argues that the presence of Afro-Germans in Germany undermines the use of whiteness as an organizing concept for a German national identity (139). In addition, she postulates that the constant association of Afro-German (Blackness) with American Blackness deliberately segregated Afro-Germans from the wider German national identity. Singletary purports that the hypervisibility of American Blackness in Germany could be due to the fact Germans are still hesitant to accept that Blackness and Germanness are no longer mutually exclusive concepts. Citing her own experience in Berlin as an example, she illustrates how Germany has not dealt with the issue of "race" as a determining factor for an individual to be considered German. She concludes that "Afro-Germans are a living proof that Blackness and Germanness are one in the same and that Germanness does not solely rely in the province of whiteness" (160).

Kevena King focuses on the profiling of Black bodies in transit and on police brutality in Germany. According to her analysis, Black bodies are regarded as deviants and misfits: they supposedly pose a threat to what white power has constructed as seemingly safe spaces devoid of danger prior to the "deviant" black subject's entrance into them. As a Black German scholar residing in the United States, she draws some parallels between the incidents of racial profiling in the United States and in Germany. She argues that these incidents are not isolated cases as claimed in public discourse. On the contrary, they have become part and parcel of the "Black German" daily experience. She is of the opinion that these incidents go unnoticed because they have been institutionalized and are perpetrated by the very same people meant to enforce law and order and safeguard the rights of all, regardless of their race or colour. She eventually remarks that "[t]he accounts detailed [here] suggest how law enforcement officials, courts and media stand in the way of honest and critical engagements with this topic" (193). Both Singletary and King reiterate that Black bodies are not regarded as being a part of Germany, hence the exclusionary measures imposed on them.

The third and final section examines the interrelationship between “Race, Art and Identity” and the use of art as an awareness campaign. Kira Thurman, who has published widely in this field, problematizes the role of African American spirituals (during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) as a means of deconstructing the perception that Africans were unable to produce “beautiful music.” She highlights the strategies deployed by African American musicians to gain admittance into the European world of High Art, a world in which Germans and Austrians were primarily responsible for setting the standards as to which musical genres were accepted. Thurman gives voice to the dilemma the musicians found themselves in while trying to reach a balance between sounding “European” and safeguarding their authenticity. On the one hand, the more European the music sounded, the more accolades musicians received. On the other hand, they were then branded as “inauthentic.” Thurman’s analysis brings out the struggles faced by the musicians in this era and the ever-shifting obstacles created to exclude African American spirituals/ Black musicianship from the category of High Art.

In the following essay, Vanessa D. Plumly interrogates the art of self-fashioning noticeable on the covers of Samy Deluxe’s album as modes of style which aimed to destabilize certain benchmarks used to define white German masculinity. She argues that the rapper and hip-hop artist, born to a German mother and Sudanese father in Hamburg, displays multifaceted identities as reflected in his album covers and his choice of lyrics. This strategy unsettles certain notions or patterns that have been used as organizing tools for white German masculinity: “[i]n deconstructing race, both gender and sexuality must also be scrutinized, as they are inextricable in history, especially in the German context. One cannot be undone without the undoing of others” (272). According to her, these multifaceted and performative identities leave a lot of room for ambivalent interpretations of what it means to be a white heterosexual male because they “expose the fact that gender and race are just ‘identity covers’ under which any true self – a self that is undergoing constant change – might seemingly lie” (272).

Finally, the last contribution, penned by Jamele Watkins, derives from her three-year research on “real life Deutschland” and brings to our attention the use of theatre as a pedagogical tool for empowerment and activism. With the aim of providing Black German youth with a platform to tell their own stories and engage with their personal experiences of racism, a series of workshops take them through Paulo Freire’s theory of

the communal learning of improvisational strategies designed in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. These trainings culminate in the Black German Youth producing spontaneous theatrical pieces that not only depict their daily struggles with racism, but also offer avenues for reflection and approaches to combat racism. Watkins argues that the staging of these pieces provided the youth with the much-needed opportunity to engage with each other and the audience in practical ways in order to counter the negative impacts of racism and to build a supportive community around such negative experiences. Indeed, "[i]ntegrating these different pieces and perspectives of the diaspora helped the YoungStars negotiate their own identities. More importantly these pieces empowered the teens. The teens (as performers) are able to look within and focus on themselves and to include the audience in the journey of refashioning their identity" (183).

In conclusion, the fact the material covered in this volume is quite introspective in nature constitutes, in my view, a deliberate effort aimed at representing Black German studies as a critical hermeneutic field of inquiry. To this end, the essays call for continuous (re)thinking and positive associations as far as the notions of Blackness, racialized and gendered discourses as well as Black diasporic identity are concerned. Moreover, editors Tiffany N. Florvil and Vanessa D. Plumly raise some pertinent questions as to whether white scholars can effectively engage with historically embedded notions of race and ethnicity (10), given their privileged position. As they already enjoy inherent advantages by virtue of being white, they may not be able to relate with the daily struggles arising from being Black in predominantly white societies.

It is worth mentioning that the contributions aptly explore the topics announced in the title of this volume, as they seek to promote recognition of and produce critical knowledge about Black German History and culture within the "German nation." Moreover, they also awaken the readers' ability to question beliefs and notions about Blackness that have come to be accepted as "truths." However, the introduction specifies that this volume does not claim to offer an exhaustive study of all the intricate details in this field. The editors rather highlight the importance of a continuous engagement and interrogation of the tenets of Black German studies. Further, they state very articulately that they are not oblivious to the possibility of being biased in the way they portray and analyze the Black German actors' perspectives and experiences. They advocate for the need of a broader engagement in the field in order to "reject categories

that often exclude [and] silence” (12). The contributors make the most of their positions as “activists-scholars” to unpack labels and to de- or reconstruct the narratives built around Blackness and being Black within the European context.

In addition, the essays offer new approaches to understanding Black Germany by scrutinizing from a broader perspective matters related to race, Blackness, space, gender and activism within central Europe. They investigate the significant role played by Black personalities’ lived experiences. They also analyze narratives about Black Germans and German realities (both past and present). However, the volume does not lay emphasis on the Black American narratives as its sole point of reference. It derives its perspectives from other diasporic sources as well as different time-spaces from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. This methodology is quite commendable, given that Black American History has been for a very long time the main point of reference for studying Blackness in central Europe. This approach opens up a space for divergent views and narratives, lending a more balanced and holistic outlook to the project of reconstructing Black History in Europe.

One must applaud the scholars involved in this project for having taken up activists’ roles to interrogate and possibly destabilize certain entrenched narratives and practices leading to the silencing and dismissal of minority voices. As such, they emphasize the need for US-based critics to move beyond the silence that has kept Black Germans in the periphery. However, more research by Afro-Germans should have been included in order to enrich the findings of the researchers represented in this volume. I also submit that “rethinking” Black German studies might be too precocious a project at this stage, since this field of inquiry is still relatively new. Nevertheless, I would highly recommend this volume to those seeking to understand the development of the field of Black German studies since its inception as well as its core conceptual premises.

**David Stephen Calonne. *Diane Di Prima. Visionary Poetics and the Hidden Religions.*
London: Bloomsbury, 2019. Pp. 313 + ix.
ISBN: 9781501342905.**

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In the wake of the strange, spontaneous visionary experiences induced for Allen Ginsberg by his reading of William Blake in 1948, followed ten years later by Jack Kerouac's popularization of Beat mysticism in *The Dharma Bums* (1958), the spiritual quest of the Beats was one of the first subjects to be privileged when serious and more systematic study of the Beat Generation finally began in the 1970s. Today, Beat scholarship has diversified beyond recognition, with newer perspectives like transnational, queer, feminist, media-based, post/decolonial, and ecocritical/environmental approaches to the Beats tending to displace this earlier line of enquiry. However, scholarly exploration of Beat religiosity and spiritual syncretism is anything but a closed chapter, as spectacularly evidenced by David Stephen Calonne's *Diane Di Prima. Visionary Poetics and the Hidden Religions*. Indeed, in the best paradoxical logic of a Zen koan, this monograph published in 2019 suggests that nearly half a century after the first analyses of Beat mysticism started to appear, the "real work" might actually only be just beginning.

Within the area of Beat studies, Calonne's book on the recently deceased poet, polymath and activist Diane Di Prima (1934–2020) is undoubtedly one of the most important monographs to have been written in the last twenty years. Extending the chapter devoted to her in his equally ground-breaking *The Spiritual Imagination of the Beats* (Bloomsbury, 2017), Calonne's monograph doubles as a critical spiritual biography of Diane Di Prima and chronicle of the Counterculture of the

Long Sixties, with a particular emphasis on the impact of its West Coast expression. Amidst the constellation of works taking the Beats' syncretic exploration of mysticism and neo-shamanic practices seriously, Calonne has authored a seminal and vital addition to earlier studies like Paul Portugés's *The Visionary Poetics of Allen Ginsberg* (1978), John Lardas's *The Bop Apocalypse* (2001), Tony Trigilio's *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics* (2007), Nancy M. Grace's *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (2007), and Max Orsini's *The Buddhist Beat Poetics of Diane Di Prima and Lenore Kandel* (2018).

Supported by an extremely rich array of factual knowledge and period documentation, Calonne's penetrating understanding of the Beats' simultaneous contribution to American letters and religious history blends three complementary strands of analysis: a) giving a prolific female Beat writer the full central place too long denied her in the Beat pantheon and historical record; b) establishing a detailed cartography of her spiritual universe and how it translates into her writing; and c) enshrining her vision within its ebullient matrix of the Sixties' Counterculture by mapping out her rich network of mentors and kindred spirits. Instead of devoting a separate part to each of these three foci, Calonne has chosen to interweave them in all the chapters, thereby creating a sort of web-like effect that adequately reflects the vibrant interaction that Di Prima had with her immediate contemporaries as well as with formative figures from the past.

Thus, Calonne's first angle of approach is to contribute to the still ongoing effort to bring into the spotlight central but unjustly marginalized female figures of the Beat Generation. Indeed, no matter how much its male writers and artists may have had to depend on its women's creative and editorial energies, the Beat avant-garde's ingrained sexism did not prove kind to the imaginative female minds in its midst. In this instance, to rectify the record, Calonne portrays Di Prima as an independent spirit who refused to have her inner voice crushed by sexual abuse and family trauma, on the one hand, and who, on the other, boldly affirmed her experimental creativity in defiance of the highly restrictive middle-class stereotypes of ideal domesticity that prevailed as behavioural norms for (mostly white) women in the U.S. of the 1950s. Calonne reminds us of Di Prima's life as a working woman and social activist, as a prolific writer excelling at but not limited to the genre of poetry, and as a committed editor of small magazines bringing to light mostly marginal avant-garde works of literature and art.

As if this did not already suffice, Di Prima, moreover, is shown to have anticipated many of the alternative lifestyles with which the Great Sixties' Counterculture would experiment in its effort to re-invent social relationships: for example, she embraced her bisexuality, raised children as a single mother, opted for a communitarian existence and extended family structures subverting racial and sexual norms, as well as cultivated an early ecological awareness. Calonne makes a strong case for Di Prima fundamentally trying to fuse the more humanist values of her Italian ancestry, which she never relinquished, with the utopian aspirations of the Beat Generation, including its characteristic endeavouring to transform beaten-down existence into potential for ecstasy and the "beatific." As a result, there was no boundary for Di Prima between mind and body, the holy and the profane, poetic creativity and sordid, daily living. In the typical mould of Beat utopia, everyday existence could and should be turned into a form of experimental art and mental deconditioning.

Bringing Di Prima out of the more obscure pages of the chronicle of Beat bohemianism naturally prepares for the second, most innovative and inspiring strand within Calonne's argument: his sketching of Di Prima's extraordinarily complex spiritual map, a number of its constituents being here identified and explored for the first time, as are their poetic ramifications. Thanks to a wealth of mystical and esoteric sources as well as little known historical details, Di Prima is revealed here as a major contributor to Beat spirituality and as a *systematic* explorer of a variety of occult traditions. To use the notorious, derogatory phrase coined by Norman Podhoretz in 1958, the enduring shibboleth of Beat writers just being "know-nothing bohemians" is here definitely put to rest. Calonne explains that Di Prima "amassed a library of some 4,000 volumes and preferred to own her own books rather than borrow from a library since she was fond of copiously annotating her texts" (8). In so doing, she brought to new, often unsuspected levels the Beat hallmark of cultivating a personal, syncretic matrix of religious belief and practice merging the sacred and the profane.

Indeed, Calonne draws a spiritual cartography whose breadth and depth spectacularly defies the usual dualisms cherished by doctrinal purity and orthodoxy: Di Prima delved into a variety of spiritual paths of esoteric dissent, from alchemy and medieval cosmology to the Tarot and the *I-Ching*, from magic and witchcraft to Theosophy, from Hermeticism and Gnosticism to Rosicrucianism and the Kabbala, from Yoga to Zen meditation and Tibetan Buddhism, from the thought of Heinrich

Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535) and John Dee (1527–1608/9) to that of Robert Grosseteste (c. 1168–1253) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). The list is not exhaustive. Chapter after chapter, Calonne usefully isolates the fundamentals of each of these belief systems to highlight how Di Prima managed, paradoxically, to achieve some sort of coherence in her chosen heterogeneity of the heretic. Importantly too, Di Prima's intellectual history is not developed at the expense of the attempt to understand her as a poetic maker: finely balancing analyses of better known and less familiar works, Calonne enlists Di Prima's formidable esoteric arsenal to study many of her texts in close reading, none of her major periods of creativity being left out. In the process, Calonne's main thesis – i.e. that Di Prima's poetics are rooted in the so-called “hidden” religions and strove for a synthesis between the hermetic traditions of East and West – never ceases to gain in credence and clarity.

As a result of this spiritual cartography and its poetic ramifications made visible, Di Prima comes across as a ground-breaking figure who early on – as early as Kerouac and Ginsberg – had the courage to tread upon marginal spiritual paths that completely flew in the face of American post-war orthodoxy and established religion. In addition, we also discover her as a pioneer of what could be called a “New Age” syncretic sensibility, the term “New Age” corresponding here to anything but a “light” version of spirituality amounting to superficial appropriation. Indeed, one of the great merits of Calonne's work is to remind us of the possible profundity of this so-called “emergent” form of spirituality, whose impure blend of exacting traditional practices can truly prove at odds with the narcissistically reductive, caricature-like version of it encouraged by consumerism and advertising. In unveiling the complexity of Di Prima's personal spiritual map as a poet, Calonne actually makes an important contribution to religious studies too, since his monograph offers a fascinating case study of emergent, alternative religiosity in action.

The complexity of Di Prima's syncretic spirituality is only matched by the diversity characterizing the cartography of her literary and artistic universe, the third stream explored by Calonne. As a direct consequence of Di Prima's esoteric affinities, this map too spans both past and present forces, as Calonne charts connections ranging from William Blake (1757–1827), John Keats (1795–1821) and William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) to more contemporary, American figures like poets Charles Olson (1910–1970) and Robert Duncan (1919–1988), dancer Merce Cunningham (1919–2009), visual artists Willem de Kooning

(1904–1997), Wallace Berman (1926–1976) and Jasper Johns (1930–) – again, the list is anything but complete. Calonne’s re-anchoring of Di Prima’s spiritual quest in a matrix of original creative temperaments past and present gives more than a rich rendition of the effervescence of the countercultural times in which Di Prima matured as a poet and religious seeker. The network of human interactions documented here is any reception studies scholar’s dream. In both the near and distant future, the web of human relationships recorded here will be essential help to anyone embarking upon a history of the reception of Di Prima’s work, both inside and outside the U.S.

In summation, through Calonne’s detailed investigation of the spiritual cartography underpinning her life and writing, Di Prima acquires a towering stature not just in relation to Beat writing, but also in the much broader landscape of twentieth-century U.S. poetry and esoteric history. Calonne notes that “Di Prima did not engage in ‘identity politics’ in that she conceived of her activity as essentially humanist and anarchist in orientation and indeed was essentially supporting a ‘coalitional ethos’ in both her work and life” (126). As an adjective, “*coalitional*” would most aptly capture the dynamics pervading the kind of personal spiritual syncretism that Di Prima created by her bridging of bygone mystical quests with more contemporary ones. In this richly documented study, Calonne truly deploys a formidable erudition to immerse us in Di Prima’s highly original inner world, one successfully overcoming some of the false and artificial dualisms whereby East and West, as well as a number of other conceptual categories often tend to be opposed.

In the last analysis, the reader discovers a major writer of our time who built an individual path of transformation that did not ignore questions of class, gender and race, but that nevertheless also went beyond them: as repeatedly emphasized by Calonne, Di Prima strove to integrate and renew not just the “ego” but a more-encompassing entity, one alternatively called the “self” in theistic traditions or referred to as the “non-self” in non-theistic ones. Therein also lies one of the vital legacies of Di Prima’s multi-layered experimentalism as explored in the three converging streams that inform Calonne’s study: with varieties of discourse rooted in identity politics sometimes prevailing to the point of relegating to the shadows forms of art and writing approaching self-realization from other perspectives, both the Beat poet and Beat scholar remind us here that next to being a “tool of the social” and a “tool of the psychological,” literature and *poiesis* have always been and also remain a “tool of the sacred.”

**Lila Bujaldón de Esteves, Belén Bistué and
Melisa Stocco, eds. *Literary Self-translation
in Hispanophone Contexts: Europe and
the Americas / La autotraducción literaria en
contextos de habla hispana: Europa y América.*
Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. Pp. 378.
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Trois universitaires de la Universidad Central de Cuyo/Mendoza, toutes trois également membres du CONICET (Centre de la recherche scientifique argentine), ont coordonné ce volume consacré à la question de l'auto-traduction dans des contextes de langue espagnole – Péninsule ibérique et Amérique hispanique. Je ne puis m'empêcher, en mentionnant l'Université de Cuyo, au pied des Andes, d'évoquer la mémoire de Nicolás Jorge Dornheim, l'ami trop tôt disparu, fondateur d'un centre de recherches comparatistes et d'une publication, *Boletín de Literatura comparada* qui ont été repris avec dynamisme, pendant de longues années, par Lila Bujaldón de Esteves.

Pour ce volume, elles ont fait appel à une autre universitaire argentine (Paula Simón CONICET/Cuyo), à deux universitaires, l'une allemande et l'autre français (Eva Gentes de Düsseldorf et Marcos Eymar d'Orléans) ainsi qu'à cinq universitaires et chercheurs d'Espagne : Xosé Manuel Dasilva (Vigo), Josep Miquel Ramis (Barcelone), Julio-César Santoyo (León), Garazi Arrula-Ruiz et Elizabete Manterola Agirrezabalaga (Univ. del País Vasco). Notons que Dasilva, Ramis et Santoyo avaient déjà participé à un volume collectif, *Traducción y autotraducción en las literaturas ibéricas* (2010, dir. Enric Gallén, Francisco Lafarga et

Luis Pegenaute), pour moitié consacré à l'auto-traduction, qu'il convient de rappeler comme une initiative quasi pionnière, tandis que la dernière collègue mentionnée figurait aussi dans ce volume, mais dans le cadre de la traduction (en l'occurrence la littérature basque traduite en catalan).

En fonction du double champ géographique retenu, de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique, les responsables du présent volume ont opté pour un plan en trois parties qui tient compte de cette double réalité linguistique, culturelle et littéraire. Dans un premier temps, l'accent est mis sur les dialogues entre langues indigènes et espagnole, avec une attention particulière posée, bien évidemment, sur le problème de l'identité. Une deuxième partie est focalisée sur l'Amérique hispanique selon une double perspective : celle de l'histoire littéraire et celle du multilinguisme ; enfin, la question de la multiplicité linguistique est reprise pour être examinée dans le seul cadre européen et péninsulaire.

L'intérêt porté à cette dimension particulière de la traduction est récent et il faut reconnaître que pendant la dernière décennie les recherches se sont multipliées, surtout dans le cadre hispanique. En 1984, le spécialiste français Antoine Berman signalait les contributions à l'auto-traduction comme des « exceptions » (cité par Julio-César Santoyo au début de son intervention) et Lila Bujaldón de Esteves souligne la part réduite occupée par cette question dans le fameux *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (1975) sous la direction d'Anton Popovič. Bien plus : la définition première, traditionnelle de l'auto-traduction (« la traduction d'un texte original dans une autre langue réalisée par l'auteur lui-même ») s'est considérablement modifiée, étoffée par la mise en place d'une taxinomie critique dont le présent volume se fait le témoin et par de nouveaux pré-supposés et questionnements.

On notera, en premier lieu, une tendance, très significative, à remettre en cause la hiérarchie ou le processus de hiérarchisation entre texte original et (auto)traduction. Mieux : la frontière entre traduction allographe et auto-traduction ou traduction « propre » a de plus en plus tendance à s'estomper, indépendamment de la stratégie de la traduction dite « opaque » (notion proposée par X. M. Dasilva) qui renvoie à l'effacement de la réalité et de la spécificité de l'*auto*-traduction, en l'absence par exemple d'indications paratextuelles, souvent du fait de l'écrivain lui-même. De même, une autre ligne de réflexion s'est imposée portant sur la question de la distance ou du décalage chronologique entre la rédaction de l'original et l'auto-traduction, à partir du cas le plus simple : l'auto-traduction « simultanée ». Autre orientation de recherches : les motivations (ou *teloi*)

qui poussent à l'auto-traduction ou la favorisent. Elles sont diverses : éditoriales, économiques, commerciales, mais aussi esthétiques, idéologiques, sociales ou simplement d'ordre individuel (incluant le refus de l'auto-traduction, comme on le verra avec le « cas » basque). Par ailleurs, les réflexions sur l'auto-traduction ont bénéficié de questionnements connexes sur l'interculturalité, le bilinguisme et, plus encore, le « post-monolinguisme ». Enfin, l'auto-traduction permet de reposer sur de nouvelles bases des questions quelque peu oubliées ou mises sous le boisseau : l'auto-traduction abordée comme une expérience poétique personnelle, le « retour » à l'auteur, par voie de conséquence et, de façon moins nette, le rappel utile que tout « dialogue », « relation », « échange », domaines chers à la littérature comparée, ne sauraient être étudiés sans la prise en compte de « rapports de force » inhérents à tout phénomène interculturel. Parce que le mot renvoie possiblement à quelque manichéisme, parce que le binôme dominant/dominé peut apparaître, non sans raison, réducteur, la notion de « directionnalité » a été avancée, mais elle ne renvoie que très partiellement à la notion simple, mais capitale, de « rapport de force ». On en aura un exemple, dès la première partie, avec l'étude de Melisa Stocco qui, en évoquant la situation contemporaine du Chili, reprend la catégorie significative de « bilinguisme post-interdiction » / *bilinguismo post-interdicción*.

Cette première partie s'ouvre avec un large panorama des langues indigènes en Amérique « latine » dressé par Julio-César Santoyo. Quelques exemples, parmi les plus significatifs : au Mexique, 62 langues identifiées et enregistrées par la « *Ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas* » ; au Pérou, 42 ; au Guatemala, une vingtaine, sans compter le Paraguay bilingue (espagnol/guarani) et le très large usage de l'aymara et du quechua en Bolivie. Santoyo parle, à juste titre, d'une « renaissance » des langues indigènes, en précisant que ladite renaissance est « intérieure ». Le mot renvoie, pour moi, à ce « comparatisme intérieur » pour lequel j'ai souvent plaidé, à partir du moment où la frontière ou la dichotomie « national » / étranger (pour faire bref) ne concerne plus des phénomènes *inter-culturels*, mais *intra-culturels*. C'est ce qui justifie, dans la deuxième partie de l'ouvrage, les trois études « monographiques », consacrées à trois noms et trois œuvres qui, en eux-mêmes et en leur sein, ont une dimension d'altérité susceptible de devenir un objet d'étude comparatiste.

La plupart des noms retenus par Santoyo vont être repris dans les deux autres articles, respectivement consacrés au Mexique (Eva Gentes)

et au Chili (Melisa Stocco). A ce titre, les trois contributions dialoguent et se complètent. Il est intéressant de relever l'origine sociale et la formation de ces écrivains nouveaux, en majeure partie poètes. Ils sont souvent d'origine paysanne. Citons le nom de Humberto Ak'abal, berger qui a refusé le prix Miguel Angel Asturias parce que ce dernier aurait offensé dans certains de ses écrits les peuples indigènes. Il y a bien sûr des professeurs, mais aussi des responsables de compagnies théâtrales, comme la Chilienne Rosa Zurita/Rayen Kvyeh, directrice du théâtre de Concepción. Citons aussi Elicura Chihuailaf, traducteur de Neruda en mapuche, Lino Trinidad Sanabria, traducteur de *Platero y yo* en guarani, Natalio Hernández qui écrit en náhuatl et en espagnol, auteur du *Canto nuevo a Anahuac* (on se souviendra de *Visión de Anahuac* du grand Alfonso Reyes), couronné par de nombreux prix. Retenons la belle formule de Santoyo pour définir nombre de ces nouveaux écrits : « un dialogue devenu un monologue intérieur en deux langues et *entre* [je souligne] deux cultures » (45).

Par rapport à cette contribution générale et inaugurale, Eva Gentes apporte des compléments très utiles concernant la littérature entendue comme institution : par exemple, l'existence récente (1993) d'une association « *Escritores en lenguas indígenas* » / ELIAC, d'un prix littéraire « *Premio de literaturas indígenas de América* » / PLIA et elle rappelle le rôle de médiateur tenu par l'écrivain Carlos Montemayor (1947–2010). Les informations et compléments sont plus nombreux et précieux avec les enquêtes menées au Chili par Melisa Stocco, en terre mapuche. D'un large éventail de noms qui remontent – notons-le – à 1939 et 1961 pour deux anthologies pionnières (le *Cancionero araucano* de Anselmo Quiquero et *Poesía mapuche en castellano* de Sebastián Queupul), retenons à nouveau, sans doute de façon partielle, celui de Elicura Chihuailaf, auteur de *En el país de la memoria* (1988) pour son travail d'auto-traduction « en révision constante ».

Il a déjà été fait allusion moins au contenu qu'à l'esprit qui préside à la deuxième section : mettre en évidence, à travers la pratique de l'auto-traduction dans trois œuvres précises, les traces, les modalités scripturales d'une altérité – on voudrait dire, avec Octavio Paz, d'une « autreté » / *otredad*. Celle-ci prend l'allure de dialogues ou de co-présences entre plusieurs langues (on parlera de multilinguisme) : c'est le cas pour les *villancicos* – poésies au départ populaires, anonymes – composés par Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz – la Dixième muse des Mexicains – à l'occasion des fêtes de l'Assomption de 1676 dont Belén Bistué fait une lecture détaillée.

Sor Juana montre, ici comme dans d'autres productions (les « *loas* », poésies liminaires à des pièces théâtrales, les « *jácaras* », les « *ensaladillas* »), sa formation, voire sa sensibilité polyglotte. On relèvera l'usage de la langue et de la culture náhuatl dans la recreation du « *ticotín* », danse aztèque. Après des lectures attentives de ce corpus limité, mais représentatif, qui montrent toute l'utilité des éditions critiques de Méndez Plancarte et qui renvoient à ce que Dario Puccini, dans son étude sur Sor Juana, nommait « *l'ambiente eterogeneo e multicolore della Nueva España* », l'hypothèse que livre Belén Bistué en conclusion est particulièrement stimulante : la mise en parallèle des pratiques de Sor Juana qui « déstabilisent les hiérarchies des identités » avec celles en usage dans les premiers âges de la colonisation » (167–68).

Avec le « Chilien » Vicente Huidobro, Marcos Eymar reprend pour de nouvelles lectures des recherches brillamment menées dans le cadre de sa thèse (*Le bilinguisme franco-espagnol dans la littérature hispano-américaine*, 2011). A partir d'une situation linguistique et culturelle vécue par le poète, comme par d'autres, à savoir « l'asynchronicité » entre les deux langues, Eymar repart de l'héritage de Rubén Darío pour situer les pratiques de Huidobro : l'idéal « *modernista* », « dévorer le français » (170), la définition de la poésie « *modernista* » de Darío, empreinte de « *galicismo mental* » selon le mot de l'Espagnol Juan Valera, puis le transfert des techniques avant-gardistes françaises en langue espagnole. Huidobro, le « second Darío », selon la formule de Rafael Cansino Assens, se livre, par exemple dans *El espejo del agua*, avec l'aide de Juan Gris, à un travail qu'Eymar définit comme « autohétérotraduction » (179), faisant du bilinguisme un « facteur créatif » (190), une pratique qui fait passer le poète du « *modernismo* » à la modernité, élaborant ainsi un territoire linguistique intermédiaire (mot-clé) qui défie les catégories monolingues habituelles.

Troisième et dernier exemple, ou plutôt « cas », étudié par Paula Simón : celui du Catalan Agustí Bartra, parti en exil au Mexique puis revenu à Barcelone. Ce trajet d'ordre biographique a son équivalent – on n'ose dire sa traduction – au plan de l'écriture, si l'on suit les trois états de son roman sur le camp d'internement des républicains espagnols à Argelès-sur-mer, en France : *Xabola* (1943) d'abord en catalan, puis, comme conséquence de l'exil, traduit en espagnol : *Cristo de 200.000 brazos Campo de Argelés* (1958), enfin retraduit en catalan *Cristo de 200.000 braços* (1968). L'acte d'auto-traduction sort précisé et

nommé : « rétroauto-traduction », pratique qu'éclaircit dramatiquement l'exil et la quête d'un public.

L'objet de la troisième partie est de suivre les aspects et les modalités de l'auto-traduction en situation de « multiplicité linguistique », comme l'est la péninsule ibérique. Il est évident que la complexité du « polysystème » espagnol (notion reprise à Itamar Even-Zohar et qui est bien évidemment utilisée) entretient des relations complexes avec des données d'ordre politique et culturel qu'on ne peut oublier, mais qu'on ne doit pas exagérer. S'agissant de la langue et de la littérature basques, Garazi Arrula Ruiz et Elizabete Monterola Agirrezabalaga ont choisi d'étudier les cas de « refus » d'auto-traduction dont les raisons sont multiples : à la situation d'asymétrie entre langue basque et langue espagnole, peuvent s'ajouter sans doute des raisons personnelles, psychologiques : manque de temps, manque de motivation tout simplement, peur de créer une autre œuvre, préservation de l'imaginaire basque, refus de l'auto-traduction, mais non... de la traduction. Plus intéressantes sont les raisons d'ordre « éthico-politiques ». L'auto-traduction apparaît comme une arme à double tranchant : d'un côté, elle peut contribuer à la diffusion d'une œuvre en langue « minoritaire », de l'autre, agir au détriment de l'identité linguistique et culturelle basque. Là encore, la taxinomie est de quelque secours : le passage de la langue « minoritaire » à la « majoritaire » peut être défini comme « supraauto-traduction », le cas contraire (« infraauto-traduction » étant l'exception).

Il me semble qu'un exemple aurait pu être cité et exploité, du moins au plan métaphorique, donc poétique et romanesque : celui de l'écrivain Ramon Saizarbitoria et de son recueil de nouvelles *Gorde nazazu lurpean / Garde-moi sous terre* (2000), étudié par Ur Apalategui (*Ramon Saizarbitoria, l'autre écrivain basque*, 2013) dont j'ai pu suivre les travaux : la guerre perdue du vieux *gudari* (combattant basque aux côtés des républicains espagnols). Lorsque celui-ci se résout enfin à demander une pension, la traduction en langue « administrative » de sa demande par le notaire, lui apparaît comme une violation de la version originale qu'il a donnée.

Pour l'espace galicien, Xosé Manuel Dasilva (287–306) a choisi l'étude des versions d'un roman de Xavier Alcalá, *Nos pagos de Huínca Loo* (1983), selon un ordre ternaire qui a déjà été envisagé, significativement modifié : texte en galicien, en un premier temps ; ensuite traduction « allographe » et, troisième temps, auto-traduction en 2016. Dasilva présente ce processus comme « retroauto-traduction », de préférence à la simple notion de « retraduction ». La taxinomie est encore ce qui

intéresse Josep Miquel Ramis, pour l'espace catalan (325–48) afin de cerner au plus près les différentes situations, au sens presque existentiel, de l'écrivain catalan, en faisant jouer la notion, la variable qu'il nomme « directionnalité ». Les cas les plus intéressants sont assurément ceux qui rompent ou enrichissent le dialogue hispano-catalan par la présence d'une tierce langue dont l'existence renvoie, là encore, à la biographie des écrivains : le grand poète Josep Carner est *aussi* à étudier, pour certaines productions, à partir du français, troisième langue, suite à son remariage. Pour Roser Caminals, c'est l'anglais, le tchèque pour Monika Zugostová, et le néerlandais pour Larà Fabregas. Pour ces quatre cas, on parlera d'écrivains « multidirectionnels ». Quant à la pratique de l'auto-traduction, elle est tenue pour un « voyage » et comme une possibilité de relecture du texte original ou premier.

Si ces contributions dont on relèvera la richesse et les apports novateurs, peuvent sembler, de prime abord, descriptives ou analytiques, essentiellement à partir de situations d'asymétries linguistiques, politiques, sociales, culturelles, on se rend compte que leur mérite le plus évident est de permettre de reposer sur de nouvelles bases des réflexions sur le processus créatif et, au-delà des divers « états » d'un texte, sur l'acte même d'écrire, sur la réécriture, sur la re-création poétique d'un texte, mais aussi, possiblement, d'entrevoir quelques hypothèses sur l'élaboration de divers imaginaires.

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L'ouvrage collectif *Literatura latinoamericana mundial. Dispositivos y disidencias* s'inscrit dans la continuité de la série *Latin American Literatures in the World / Literaturas Latinoamericanas en el Mundo*, qui a pour but d'analyser la circulation des différentes littératures des pays d'Amérique latine à travers le monde. Comme détaillé dans son introduction, ce cinquième volume, dirigé par Gustavo Guerrero, Jorge J. Locane, Benjamin Loy et Gesine Müller, et publié grâce au soutien financier du European Research Council, ambitionne de mettre à l'honneur le concept de « littérature latino-américaine mondiale » par le biais de 17 études théoriques consacrées aux dispositifs et aux dissidences qui interviennent dans les processus de circulation internationale de cette littérature traditionnellement dite « latino-américaine ». C'est donc en retraçant le parcours de ce premier concept, esquissé par la critique littéraire à la fin des années 1960, que commence l'ouvrage.

La remarquable introduction dévoile un panorama chronologique raisonné qui offre au lecteur non seulement un parcours à travers l'évolution du terme, de sa gestation à sa progressive perte de sens, mais aussi les intérêts politiques, culturels et identitaires sous-jacents. Tout en clarifiant dès la première ligne que le concept de « littérature latino-américaine » est une construction taillée par les théoriciens, la plus grande qualité de cette vue d'ensemble est qu'elle fait ressortir les témoignages de certains des écrivains du *boom latino-américain* et de plusieurs chercheurs

contemporains en mettant en avant les logiques et les bienfaits de cette construction. Pourtant, cette reconstitution indique clairement que, depuis sa création dans les années 1960, la critique littéraire s'est efforcée d'établir des critères géographiques, politiques et culturels afin de délimiter un contour classificatoire. Elle se serait même efforcée de trouver des traits communs entre les œuvres des écrivains hispanophones du vaste continent américain, traits qui auraient par ailleurs été différents des autres littératures et qui, de ce fait, en auraient fait un patrimoine exotique et distinct prêt à être exhibé.

Alors que les origines socio-politiques du concept de « littérature latino-américaine » ont clairement été esquissées et que la composante identitaire ainsi que les conséquences culturelles ont été mises en avant, il convient d'observer l'essoufflement de la rentabilité du terme, puisque vingt ans après, il cesse d'être « vendeur ». En effet, l'introduction détaille comment après la chute du mur de Berlin et la mise en place des mécanismes du projet néolibéral mondial qui a succédé à la bipolarité politique, la marque « littérature latino-américaine » ne correspondait plus ni aux nouveaux paysages culturels en voie de globalisation ni, par conséquent, aux découpages identitaires, et elle devenait un produit difficile à vendre. Le monde, plongé dans sa nouvelle économie de marché, essaierait de brouiller ses frontières. Le volume ne part cependant pas du présupposé que la littérature latino-américaine, en tant que construction, se soit nécessairement désintégré dans le vaste corpus de la littérature mondiale, mais il tente d'examiner les mécanismes par lesquels une partie de la première fait son chemin et s'intègre dans la seconde.

Après ce parcours chronologique remarquable et une exposition claire de la finalité de l'ouvrage, le dernier paragraphe peut sembler déconcertant au lecteur avide de découvrir cette littérature latino-américaine mondiale. En effet, l'introduction s'achève sur l'expression de la volonté d'enrichir le débat autour de la littérature latino-américaine, la littérature mondiale et la globalisation. Il est surprenant de voir surgir ces trois termes séparément, comme s'il s'agissait de trois axes à débattre, d'autant que le deuxième est une conséquence du troisième, et que le caractère obsolète du débat sur l'existence d'une littérature latino-américaine à proprement parler a été exposé précédemment. D'ailleurs, la lecture des articles confirme que le sujet est clos ; cependant, elle dévoile qu'il est certainement intéressant d'observer comment le phénomène du *boom* s'est répandu à travers le monde en fonction des attentes et des dispositions des pays récepteurs, ainsi que des stratégies des *gatekeepers*, et comment

dans l'actualité les différentes littératures des pays d'Amérique latine se fraient un chemin dans le contexte de mondialisation dans lequel nous nous trouvons. Ces 322 pages réunissent des données précieuses permettant d'observer un foisonnement de réseaux qui délocalisent et hébergent les œuvres des écrivains d'Amérique latine, entre autres, en Espagne, en France, aux Pays-Bas, en Allemagne, en Italie, en Norvège, en Suède, mais aussi aux États-Unis, en Russie et en Chine.

L'intitulé du volume, *Literatura latinoamericana mundial. Dispositivos y disidencias*, suggère que tant ces nombreux dispositifs que ces dissidences sont représentés de façon similaire. Pourtant, la division du volume en trois blocs pose question : « 1. *Gatekeepers* » (six articles), « 2. Traduction » (sept articles) et « 3. Littératures locales » (quatre articles). Ainsi, il semblerait que seul le troisième chapitre, qui est par ailleurs le moins fourni, soit consacré aux littératures qui présentent une forte résistance aux flux internationaux ou qui cherchent à rester enracinées dans le pays d'où elles proviennent. En revanche, si deux des articles trouvent effectivement leur place dans cette troisième section (concrètement, le travail de I. Sánchez Prado, qui pointe l'importance de la maison d'édition indépendante mexicaine Tumbona Ediciones, cherchant à publier des œuvres à contre-courant du marché international, et celui de J. Locane, qui s'intéresse à des formes littéraires qui n'aspirent pas à s'intégrer dans les réseaux de la mondialisation, comme la littérature orale ou les éditions artisanales), il est difficile de comprendre la présence des deux autres articles.

En effet, celui de M. Moscardi met l'accent sur le caractère auditif qu'une certaine poésie argentine souhaite réintégrer dans les écrits par le biais de lectures de poèmes filmées et diffusées sur le net. La cadence proposée par l'auteur fait dès lors partie de la composition de l'œuvre. Certes, la reproduction auditive en langue étrangère serait difficile, puisque cette modulation est propre au poète, mais elle n'empêcherait en rien la traduction du poème sous forme de sous-titres, tout en préservant le reste tel quel, car la cadence peut aussi être perçue par le récepteur étranger. D'ailleurs, Moscardi signale que le poète Milton López fait circuler sa poésie en Europe mais, par contre, le bruitage de son poème est interprété comme celui d'une machine à laver et non pas d'un sèche-cheveux. Toutefois, ces lacunes ne font-elles pas partie de toute traduction ? La perte de certaines composantes de l'original est bien ce que présente une bonne partie des articles de ce volume qui traitent des questions de traduction. Il est donc problématique de situer cette étude

dans la section « Littératures locales ». De façon plus substantielle, il est encore plus difficile de comprendre la présence ici du travail de S. Helber. Celui-ci démontre l'aspect *glocal* du roman *Papi* de Rita Indiana, qui propose donc une double lecture : si une bonne partie des références et subtilités ne pourraient être saisies que par des Dominicains, l'énorme succès que le livre a remporté ailleurs en dit long sur son caractère propice à la mondialisation. À nouveau, cet article ne paraît pas trouver sa place dans ce chapitre consacré uniquement aux dissidences. D'ailleurs, il est très semblable à celui de B. Loy situé dans la section « Traduction », puisque lui aussi analyse une littérature en apparence très difficilement exportable (l'œuvre de Roberto Bolaño), mais qui trouve cependant de nombreux lecteurs, séduits par ce qui transcende les spécificités locales. Mais alors, pourquoi avoir voulu à tout prix élaborer une section intitulée « littératures locales » ? De surcroît, pourquoi avoir marqué le volume du sceau des « dissidences » ? N'aurait-il pas été préférable de trouver un titre plus adapté, comme par exemple « les dispositifs et leurs revers » ? Car il est certain que des causes innombrables sont à l'origine d'une bonne ou mauvaise circulation.

Ces réserves fondamentales ayant été exprimées, il faut souligner l'imposante variété de dispositifs analysés dans ce livre, qui offre au lecteur une vision globale des différents facteurs en jeu dans les trajectoires de la littérature latino-américaine à travers le monde. Le volume traite, entre autres, de l'intégration de celle-ci dans l'économie de marché de divers pays, et ce, en fonction de leurs capacités politico-culturelles à la recevoir, mais aussi du poids des maisons d'édition qui déploient divers stratagèmes pour propulser certaines publications, notamment des paratextes stratégiques, des prix littéraires, etc. Il envisage également le rôle des médiateurs culturels qui précèdent les maisons d'édition ou leur succèdent pour faire de l'œuvre un produit de circulation, ainsi que le travail de certains traducteurs en tant qu'agents culturels car, à de nombreuses reprises, ils s'accordent des libertés de traduction pour rendre l'œuvre plus recevable dans le contexte culturel de tel ou tel pays récepteur. Certains articles soulignent avec finesse les problèmes éthiques que posent ces subtiles licences ; d'autres se focalisent sur la métamorphose de l'œuvre et la perte involontaire de données culturelles dans le processus de traduction ; certaines études comparent les stratégies des différents traducteurs pour faire passer l'un ou l'autre aspect culturellement marqué, etc. Une autre partie des chercheurs se concentre sur le caractère intrinsèque de certaines œuvres qui, par leur essence, circulent plus aisément.

C'est au niveau de la forme que le livre présente des faiblesses importantes, car plusieurs des articles relevant du chapitre « Traduction » traitent aussi des questions d'édition ou des *gatekeepers* ; seule une petite partie d'entre eux se concentre exclusivement sur la problématique des traductions. En bref, cette division en trois axes semble beaucoup trop artificielle. N'aurait-il pas été préférable de respecter une logique chronologique et, pour faire honneur à l'introduction, diviser le volume en deux sections, la première comprenant les études sur les œuvres publiées avant la chute du mur de Berlin, et la deuxième de cette période-là à nos jours ? Cette division (de mon point de vue, plus légitime) mènerait naturellement à l'élaboration d'une section que tout lecteur de ce splendide volume attend, et qui malheureusement est manquante : les conclusions. Cette lacune se devrait-elle à la division artificielle en trois axes qui empêche de percevoir le livre dans son ensemble ? Si ce manque est à regretter, il n'enlève toutefois rien aux multiples qualités du livre, car l'apport des articles est indéniable et l'ensemble marque une avancée notoire dans les recherches sur la littérature latino-américaine mondiale. Mis à part un cas (la présence de l'article de L. Díaz Martínez au format très scolaire, qui comporte une partie théorique éloignée de la problématique traitée et très peu référencée, ainsi qu'une analyse faible et un manque de cohérence qui mène parfois à de fortes contradictions, et tout cela baigné d'errata), tous les autres articles sont d'une qualité remarquable, voire excellente (notamment les études de M. Steenmeijer, I. Logie, G. Guerrero, G. Müller, C. Alvstad, A. Louis et A. Gallego Cuiñas).

Une autre caractéristique notable de l'entreprise mérite d'être soulignée : l'ambition « mondiale » du volume transparait non seulement dans la diversité des matériaux et des approches proposées, mais aussi dans le panel des chercheurs sélectionnés. Les éditeurs du livre font dialoguer des figures de nationalités diverses et issues d'un grand nombre d'universités de pays différents. Cette variété, enrichie davantage par cette grande délocalisation, contribue, en accord avec le ton du volume, à l'enrichissement des perspectives. C'est dans ce contexte qu'il faut saluer la présence des notices bio-bibliographiques qui se trouvent en fin de volume.

D'un point de vue philologique, il convient de souligner que les systèmes de citation sont bien uniformisés, les références bibliographiques toujours indiquées et qu'il n'y a que très peu d'errata, ce qui rend la tâche du lecteur agréable. Dans l'ensemble, c'est donc une vraie réussite, mais elle aurait été totale si une attention plus grande avait été accordée à l'harmonisation des traductions. Sur les dix-sept articles, treize sont rédigés en

espagnol et quatre en anglais. Analysons ces quatre derniers : si le choix de la langue ne devrait pas poser problème, il est contestable que G. Müller ait choisi de traduire toutes les citations en anglais, même les textes en espagnol (ce qui est surprenant si nous pensons que le volume est en principe destiné aux chercheurs en littérature hispanique, qui n'ont pas besoin de cette traduction) et de ne garder les originaux qu'en note en bas de page. De même, dans le corps du texte, I. H. Senstad traduit les citations du norvégien en anglais mais, malheureusement, on ne les retrouve pas en langue originale en bas de page. C'est aussi le cas de Y. Chen, qui traduit toutes les citations des chercheurs hispanophones en anglais sans laisser de trace de l'original en bas de page alors qu'elle conserve les originaux quand il s'agit de faire le point sur le travail des traducteurs : les textes en espagnol apparaissent suivis de leur traduction chinoise et de leur traduction littérale en anglais. Cet excès de multilinguisme, même s'il est nécessaire dans ce contexte, peut provoquer une sensation quelque peu chaotique et égarer le lecteur. Ce même procédé, et cette même confusion, se retrouvent dans le texte de C. Alvstad, où les textes en espagnol de Yuri Herrera sont suivis de leurs traductions en suédois et en norvégien et, par la suite, en anglais pour expliquer les nuances que la traduction dans ces langues implique. Si ces auteurs traduisent les citations des chercheurs hispanophones en anglais, il n'en va pas de même pour les textes rédigés en espagnol, dans lesquels les citations anglophones restent telles quelles ; n'est-ce pas le comble pour un volume qui étudie la littérature latino-américaine mondiale ? Pour les autres langues, les auteurs semblent ne pas réussir à se mettre d'accord sur le besoin de les traduire ou non en espagnol : certains gardent la citation initiale en note en bas de page, d'autres n'en gardent pas trace, et le reste fait confiance aux compétences multilingues du lecteur sans proposer aucune traduction.

Ces réserves exprimées, le contenu de ce livre est, à tous égards, captivant ; c'est bien un parcours des mouvements de la littérature latino-américaine du milieu du XX^e siècle à nos jours qui est non seulement esquissé mais exploré. Ce volume n'attend que d'être complété et enrichi encore par l'étude des circulations de cette littérature dans d'autres pays récepteurs.

**Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva and Sandra Guardini
Vasconcelos, eds. *Comparative Perspectives
on the Rise of the Brazilian Novel*. London: UCL
Press, 2020. Pp. 322 + xi. ISBN: 9781787354739.**

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“Brazilian” literature, especially in its form predating Modernism, is not just a “national” literature crisscrossed by all the historical and symbolic turbulences of a former colony – marked by Portugal’s sphingian colonial enterprise –, but one of the most complex and undecipherable at the phenomenonic and symbolic levels. It is, above all, an instrument of “discovery and interpretation” of Brazil (*Formação* 109), according to the classic definition provided by an unsurpassable scholar who dedicated body and soul to its identification, Antonio Candido. Therefore, any critical approach to this literature is always destined to entail a confrontation, both synchronic and diachronic, which adds exogenous elements to a linear and pure exercise of literary criticism.

Any critical positioning vis-à-vis the literature “of Brazil” – I opportunely avoid the adjective form, because it reduces the subjective and objective significance conveyed by the genitive – will never be entirely innocent. It will have to be configured within a map of complex forces where epistemologies, ideologies, factualities, mythologies, and, above all, many ghosts coexist. It will always be a critique, so to speak, in a permanent state of exception, because it will have to identify at all times the sovereign critical decisions that underlie it. This is all the more necessary in a Brazilian context characterized by a strong historically grounded diversity, which implies immense internal margins, both in the sense of culturally porous borders and intricate crossings and of class barriers and extremes, with very complex intersectionalities.

For taking on the task of confronting such a complex tangle of issues at the formation stage of a literature for Brazil, we must applaud the lucid courage of the scholars gathered by Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva and Sandra Guardini Vasconcelos in *Comparative Perspectives on the Rise of the Brazilian Novel*. Their endeavour is especially commendable for its titanic interpretative scope, as the prism of the English language magnifies the potential impact of such mission internationally. Emerging from that effort are fifteen well-structured readings of carefully selected novels, including a good, more comprehensive essay by Guardini Vasconcelos devoted to the subject of Machado de Assis's novels.

The introduction to the project, entitled "A Novel Approach to the Rise of the Brazilian Novel," penned by the two editors, offers significant and relevant critical reflections, especially regarding the rationale which serves as a common ground to the different readings. The concerns pervading this liminal text are, then, reapproached and elaborated on in the collected essays. The intentions of this large mosaic are clearly stated: "The volume is an attempt to reread and reconceptualize the rise of the novel in Brazil, in both a literary and a social sense, from a comparative perspective" (15).

In fact, a twofold axis – but probably with additional articulations – is outlined right from the beginning. On the one hand, there is the configuration of an idea of comparatism that should allow us to read those fictional works from the perspective of the national construction of a literary ensemble. The latter would, however, also show the interactions between the inside and the outside: i.e. the novel in contemporary times as a universal and as a particular model. On the other hand, the second side of that axis offers a survey of a Brazilian canon that has fed much literary historiography, albeit at a time when the community was a delimited and ideologically immune object. This community was not considered as belonging to a context of established worldwide circulation that entirely typifies to another stage of the development of transnational capitalism.

As far as the concept of comparatism is concerned, two important movements emerge in the elaboration of the critical matrix of the volume. The first one refers to "world literature" as a contemporary horizon (albeit a "contemporary" not to be confused with the present) with which one can rethink such comparatism outside the delimitations of the nation and the immediate notion of "influence." The debate is recuperated by means of a critical dialogue with the established opinions of Franco Moretti, from which emerges a problematic ontology of

world literature. The issue is also manifest in the reactions that Moretti's "Angloglobal" (7) postulation provokes in the critics' community. Here, the critical positioning of the volume is selective and situated: beyond the reconstruction of the debate around world literature, what matters is a concomittant appreciation of the dimensions of "displacement" and "decentering" that make the genre of the novel itself transnational, and therefore tilted towards a comparative analytical perspective. The case of Brazil's political upsurge – marked by many singularities, both colonial and post-colonial – can perhaps offer a privileged observation post to interpret the novel's strikingly transnational nature at different stages of its construction.

The second movement of that critical matrix posits that comparative literature is indeed a field, but one also characterized by a permanent instability and a crisis at its very foundations. These aspects make it permeable to a creative and innovative revision of its most basic assumptions.

The effectively transnational character implied by comparatism sometimes masks the classical roots which are concealed, above all, by the current dynamics of the "world economy." This suggests that the practice of crossing borders, as knowledge and art do, especially through writing, is ancient. This is what Ernst Curtius defined in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948) by making use of an old figure from classicism, the *translatio studii*, which connects with the no less powerful one of the *translatio imperii*. This concerns a fluctuation of signs and works found in the book form and particularly in its maximum potentiality for diffusion. In a certain way, the novel cannibalizes this transpositional characteristic which, when associated with the practice of translation, produces the constitutive dualism of the novelistic medium: its capacity for being at once national and international.

In the case of Brazil, there is a specific lesson that many authors mention in this book, and not by coincidence. Again, it is brought up from Candido's critical wisdom, when he, in a famous passage of the book *Recortes*, establishes the fundamental homology: "to study Brazilian literature is to study comparative literature" ("Literatura" 211), thus valuing the close link between internal forms and examples from abroad. Therefore, the convergence of these positions – themselves derived from different traditions and debates – allows us to better define how, when approaching the nineteenth-century Brazilian novel, our attention can be directed to its intertransactional configuration. Quite proper to the novel, this trait becomes even thicker and more interesting in the case of

Brazil, like an effective mark of a history of appropriations and translations, and not only in the linguistic sense.

The other peculiar aspect of this volume lies in its focus on the tension created in that literature by the dialectic between canon and anti-canon. The canonical configuration of literature in Brazil has always been, throughout various historical phases, a battleground and a field of constant clash involving the risks that always imply the idea of a “formation” of Brazil and its literature. After all, literature is an archive so strongly linked to historicity that the canon has always come to assert itself from its mainly immunizing and excluding forces: in short, it is a mode of ideology.

The methodological assumption of the contributors leads them to combine the two strands, the canonical and the non-canonical, including works not available in English. The whole set, therefore, juxtaposes classic texts canonized by literary historiography – Manuel Antônio, Alencar, Macedo, Bernardo Guimarães, Taunay, Raúl Pompéia and, of course, Machado de Assis – with others situated closer to the margins or even outside canonization. A temporal order is maintained in the analysis of these works, which gives the essays a chronological sequence.

The most notable contributions, for the novelty they bring to the table, are those examining novels whose importance was defined in more recent times. This is the case of Maria Firmina dos Reis's *Úrsula* (1859), which shows how the beginnings of the genre were already characterized by an active Afro-Brazilian voice during slavery. Another example is provided in the first essay devoted to *Mistérios del Plata* (1852), published in a newspaper and in Portuguese by Argentine writer Juana Manso, who was residing in Brazil at the time – a novel that refers to the Latin-American context, while also absorbing local elements from Brazil. In this way, it cuts off any indirect relations with European models, to which it explicitly alludes in its title, and displays a precocious questioning of the alternative role of women. Further similar examples comprise *Lésbia* by Maria Benedita Câmara Bormann (1884) or *A falência* by Júlia Lopes de Almeida (1901), where the female characters' strength expresses a social tension concerning the recognition of women. This feature also impacts works in the popular market of erotic literature, such as *O aborto* by Pedro Quaresma (1893). These fictional works transcend literary borders and reconfigure the novel outside the canon, thus enabling the formation of an entirely different idea of literary history.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that this volume lucidly pursues the idea of opening up the literary historiography to new perspectives of critical renovation. It thus serves as an alternative introduction to the study of the novel in Brazil in the nineteenth century for an international readership. This suggests new directions for future projects, such as a new history of the novel that would also include the transformations of that medium, in its surprising metamorphic force, as a practically unique and irreplaceable archive recording Brazil's transformations.

Among the dominant forms of the novel that find themselves inscribed in the body of Brazilian literature, one of course finds the historical novel and other types, such as the picturesque novel, the realistic novel, the philosophical novel and so on. The incisive approaches that develop along the lines of such a wide formal diversity differ from one another in terms of their modes of criticism or their range of interests and topics. They allow for various intersections among themselves, as those approaches can effectively be seen as iterations of "intensive reading."

In the volume's irreducible totality, however, a common thread stands out and morphs into a clear guideline that stems not so much from a critical element of the contemporary debate, but from the classical reading of a novel which, although absent from the volume's corpus, pulsates throughout the project's palimpsest: *O cortiço* by Aluísio de Azevedo (1890). Not for the novel itself, which displays a Brazilian adaptation of Zola's naturalistic novel *L'Assommoir*, but for Candido's reading of it in his famous essay, "De Cortiço a Cortiço." His examination shows well how, in the Brazilian emulation of the original French novel, Brazil is interposed as an intermediate, a mismatch (which prevented the decal and the copy) represented by the country's social and historical diversity – a failure within a conventional idea of imitation, but a success in the realm of a divergent and fair appropriation.

Through a critically perceptive review of novels characterized by a heterogeneous form amalgamating external and internal elements within local frames and ideas, this volume sanctions the impetuous role of a local and very distinct diversity. The obvious, yet sometimes cast aside, non-coincidence between the contexts of France and Brazil, as illustrated by *O cortiço* in the nineteenth century, highlights the disjunction between the copy and the original, where the difference – as the aesthetic reflections of the twentieth century will show – is a translation into something new, rather than the repetition of the same. It is a translation that is, at its deepest, the plural substance of Brazil.

That aspect, in conclusion, allows us to better appreciate the value and quality of this book's research project. As the scholars precisely join the contemporary debate on the shifting redefinitions of what comparatism and world literature should be, the significant critical core here is the brilliant mediation – proposed at the theoretical level and practiced at the interpretative level – between this debate and some ontological values of the best Brazilian literary criticism, which reemerge thanks to the force of the book's most original and innovative essays. Such dialogue gives new scope to this literary debate and promises its long-lasting survival. In this ability to synthesize past and present, a Brazilian criticism and an international one, lies the unquestionable quality of the idea of innovation conveyed by the book, which is carried out by doubling the reader's gaze on the immeasurable and unavoidable richness of the novelistic form – and of Brazil.

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Rachel Knighton. *Writing the Prison in African Literature*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019. Pp. 202 + x. ISBN: 9781788746472.

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Political imprisonment is a widespread phenomenon in post-colonial Africa. From King Hassan II (1929–1999) to Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) to Mobutu Sese Seko (1930–1997), and Jean-Bédél Bokassa (1921–1996), African rulers subjected intellectuals and opposition figures to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, imprisonment, banishment and exile. Both progressive regimes, like the one established by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) in Algeria, and reactionary ones, like Mobutu's regime in former Zaire, used harsh methods that combined both illegal and legal means to silence their opponents. Those who were sent to jail and were able to reemerge were the lucky ones. They are able to talk about their experiences years or decades after their release. Others, and they are the majority, never left the police stations and underground prison cells where secret police took them. As a result, much of what we could have known about political imprisonment is lost due to the death of prisoners and the silence of many survivors who decide to focus on their healing. Nevertheless, the corpus that is available in all African languages, including Arabic, English, French, Swahili, and Afrikaans, is still sizeable and speaks volumes about the ubiquity of political imprisonment in post-colonial Africa. The existence of these literary works has elicited much scholarly interest in specific locations. For instance, some scholars have used a comparative approach to investigate prison writings between Arabic, Amazigh, and French in Morocco, but transnational approaches are rare and far between. Rachel Knighton's recently published monograph *Writing the Prison in African Literature* (*Writing the Prison* henceforth) fills this geographical gap in African literature.

Writing the Prison combines a comparative approach with a transnational view of political imprisonment in Africa. The book draws on prison literature to refute the misconception that there is no autobiography in African literature. Engaging with the ideas of scholars such as James Olney and Moore-Gilbert, among others, Knighton draws on life writing, memoir, and testimony to demonstrate that African life writing exists and has been produced by authors from the four corners of the continent. As she underlines, “[e]ach of the writers encountered here is well known in the global literary sphere; their work is rich and complexly interwoven with contemporary politics. Their prison memoirs therefore stand out as exemplary due to this literary-political prestige, in addition to the essential consideration of textual accessibility” (20). As this passage indicates, the author is aware of the multilayered aspects of memoir writing between global interest and local politics, between the need to record lived experiences of imprisonment and incarceration and the creative act of writing. Situated between the chronicle-like recordings and experimental texts, African prison memoirs, Knighton argues, share two common traits: “disillusionment at post-independence governance” (18) and political imprisonment’s ordeals’ reflection of a “larger political and social sphere” (19) that is characterized by oppression and authoritarianism.

In addition to the “Introduction” and the “Conclusion,” the book contains five chapters, the first of which is entitled “‘I was never one for writing diaries’: The Individual and the Collective in Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Dairy*.” This chapter situates Ngugi’s memoir within Kenya’s postcolonial political repression and demonstrates how collective struggle for the liberation of the entire nation prevails over individual narrative in Ngugi’s prison memoir. In the second chapter, entitled “‘we were all saving time’: Prison Memoir and Perspectival Variation in Ruth First’s *117 Days* (1965),” the author argues that “117 Days reflects less Ruth First’s preoccupation with her individual self in prison than with her desire to write on behalf of others” (59). Although Ngugi and First were imprisoned for different reasons in different political and racial contexts, their writing, according to the author, shares concerns for the collective liberation rather than the imprisoned individual. The third chapter is entitled “‘language needs to be part of resistance therapy’: Narrating Psychological Breakdown and Political Opposition in Wole Soyinka’s *The Man Died* (1972).” This chapter provides an analysis of language and its ability to reflect the psychological impact of traumatic experiences lived in imprisonment. The chapter also discusses how

language functions as a space for therapy and resistance (120). Chapter Four, entitled “‘Moving the body means life’: Liberation and the Body in Nawal El Saadawi’s *Memoirs from the Women’s Prison* (1985),” examines how the imprisoned female body works as a site of liberation that undermines theories of docility and expands the very idea of autobiography in its western sense. In chapter Five, “‘[W]hat song shall I sing from this stench?’: Creating a Prison Poetic in Jack Mapanje’s *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* (2011),” the book adopts a different angle of analysis revealing how Mapanje, a very famous Malawian linguist, poet, and prison writer, draws on his knowledge of African oral traditions to experiment with prison literature. Whether the focus is how the individual can voice the collective need for liberation or the feminist body’s embodiment of rejection of authority or even the capacity or limits of language to (re)represent the harshness of political imprisonment, the book provides its readers with the tools to understand political imprisonment’s multilayered ramifications.

Writing the Prison’s geographical coverage, which extends from South Africa to Egypt, partakes in a scholarly trend that consciously puts different parts of Africa in conversation with each other. All in all, the five chapters take the reader from one part of Africa to the next through different thematic analyses of the books under study. This approach allows the readers to understand the widespread nature of political imprisonment in postcolonial Africa and helps them realize how much political imprisonment impacted intellectuals in different parts of the continent. A closer look at the backgrounds and educational levels of these writers reveals that educated Africans were highly likely to be jailed because of exercising their right to question authority or express opinions that diverge from those of the political authority. Even though each one of these former prisoners was arrested for a different political crime, the common denominator between them is writing about imprisonment and contesting the status quo in their countries. They are also the product of a postcolonial context in which those in a position of power were under the influence of the colonial mindset pervading colonial armies and police force. While their people understood the value of liberation, the colonial-minded ruler yearned for years of control and surveillance under the watchful eyes of empire. This connection between coloniality and political imprisonment is an important topic to tackle in order to understand the ubiquity of political imprisonment across Africa.

The book also provides a rich background for the reader to understand the broader contexts in which the memoirs under study were written. By contextualizing these works in the larger political histories of Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and Malawi, the book captures both the variety of prison experiences and the richness of the cultural output that they generate. As a result, the reader will emerge from reading *Writing the Prison* understanding the various roles of prison writings as a mechanism of actionable and aesthetic resistance to oppression. Although different in terms of their ideological propositions, the five geographical contexts under study are characterized by a deep mistrust of intellectuals and the criminalization of action against injustice. These comparisons matter because they show that Africans from across the political spectrum suffered from oppression under both progressive, like Nasser's Egypt, and openly segregationist, like apartheid South Africa, regimes. If there was one thing that unified these regimes, it was not any pan-Africanist ideal but rather the repression of their citizens who ended up in jails. Indeed, an important contribution of Knighton's book lies in its examination of how these individuals display the evils preventing Africa from reaching its potential. This is achieved looking at the obstacles debarring individuals from being fully participant citizens in the future of their countries. In focusing on life writing about specific individuals in five African countries, Knighton has, in fact, written a transnational analysis of the failure of the post-independence futurity in Africa through her insightful reflections on the political imprisonment system.

There is no doubt that Knighton's book is an important contribution and a most welcome addition to the body of academic works on African imprisonment experiences. However, her book's contribution to the study of the African prison would have been even more impactful if she had engaged with the question of autobiography from the perspective of *sīra* (biographies of important people) in the Arabic-speaking sphere and the ways in which the very existence of this porous genre undermines the western-centric conceptions of autobiography, which she rightly and compellingly debunks. Drawing on *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, for instance, would have grounded her reading of biography and autobiography in an African theory of life-narration, which connects both orality and later writing. The major issue with her theoretical apparatus is that it still remains grounded in postcolonial theory produced in the West. Although she focuses on orature in Chapter Five, her analysis would have been enriched even more by delving into the African epic or even by

concentrating on the work of Okot p'Bitek's *The Song of Lawino*. Another line of inquiry that would have deepened our understanding of prison literature through Knighton's perceptive analysis consists in the existence of both testimonial accounts, which record and register what the authors say happened, and fictionalized accounts, which are a form of testimony or life writing that does not necessarily abide by the rules of direct testimony or memoir. Of course, taking some time to distinguish between testimony, memoir, and autobiography in the introduction, especially given their relevance to notions of truth and history, would have added more depth to this rich book. Additionally, the dominant focus on famous writers overshadows the experiences of lesser-known prisoners whose works had a much bigger impact on their societies' thinking about and awareness of oppression.

Writing the Prison is an illuminating comparative study that will inspire scholars and students alike to engage in scholarly projects examining both the geographical and linguistic richness of African literature. Most importantly, the book shows that African writers are very much part of the world and that their literary production reflects a heightened sensibility to human rights issues and collective liberation through political and cultural action. The book should be read with an open mind and an exploratory horizon in order to grasp its significance and importance for African literary studies.

**James Hodapp, ed. *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2020.
Pp. 233. ISBN 9781501342585.**

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In the introduction to *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature*, editor James Hodapp outlines the aim of this collection of essays, which is to “interven[e] in the Afropolitan debate by expanding what Afropolitanism means” (7). As is widely known in literary circles, the concept of “Afropolitanism” – a portmanteau of “African” and “cosmopolitanism” – came to prominence after the near-simultaneous publication of two separate pieces on the topic in 2005. The first text, a journalistic essay by novelist Taiye Selasi entitled “Bye Bye Babar,” used the term “Afropolitan” to describe young diasporic Africans living in urban centres around the world – people who, according to Selasi, “belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many” (Selasi n.p.). The second essay, by theorist Achille Mbembe, was initially published in French as “Afropolitanisme,” and was then issued in English translation two years later. Mbembe’s short piece is markedly different from Selasi’s in both tone and focus, but it somewhat similarly emphasizes the fact that the cultural history of Africa “can hardly be understood outside the paradigm of itineracy, mobility, and displacement” (Mbembe 27). Unlike Selasi, Mbembe also discusses movement on the continent itself.

Over the years, Afropolitanism has been at the centre of intense academic debates. The clarity of these discussions has been muddled by the term’s double genealogy, but what most critical comments have in common is that they point to the concept’s potential limitations, arguing that Afropolitanism puts undue emphasis on certain categories of Africans – for example, those who belong to the affluent middle class

and live in urban areas. Other scholars have been more optimistic as to the usefulness of the term, underscoring its potential to combat stereotypes about Africa and Afro-pessimistic views. In many ways, *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature* continues these debates, but it also sets itself a clear agenda: that of “reclaiming [Afropolitanism] from its current trajectory of characterizing a niche elite literature for Western readers” (7). Somewhat ironically, the volume attempts to do this by approaching Afropolitan texts from the perspective of World Literature, a framework that, as Hodapp acknowledges, is “not without its elite tendencies” (6). However, it would be unfair to unduly dwell on this tension, all the more so as Mbembe’s description of Afropolitanism as “a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity” (Mbembe 28–29) signals a potential compatibility between Afropolitanism and World Literature that is worthy of careful investigation.

In addition to the introduction (included under the heading Chapter 1), the volume is made up of eleven chapters. Chapter 2, by Birgit Neumann, is one of the book’s strongest contributions. It adopts a Mbembian definition of Afropolitanism that emphasizes movement and cultural exchange within Africa, and shows how Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor’s novel *Dust* (2014), through its use of thematic and formal devices, provides the basis for a distinctly African cosmopolitanism that moves away from Western-centric understandings of World Literature. In Chapter 3, Anna von Rath examines German author SchwarzRund’s self-styled “Afropolitan” novel *Biskaya: Afropolitaner Berlin-Roman* (2016), which focuses on a black female musician who uses art to deal with the anxiety of non-belonging, caused by racism in Germany. Having established that SchwarzRund’s novel is outspokenly political, von Rath questions the author’s use of the descriptor “Afropolitan,” which is often considered to be (strategically) apolitical, and she concludes to the political potential of Afropolitanism.

While von Rath encourages a broad conceptual understanding of Afropolitanism, Shilpa Daithota Bhat in Chapter 4 makes a case for greater cultural and ethnic inclusiveness of the label, arguing for the increased visibility of Africans of Asian descent in Afropolitan studies. In this context, Bhat presents M.G. Vassanji’s memoir *And Home Was Kariakoo* (2013) as an exemplar of what she calls “Indian Ocean Afropolitanism,” in reference to the route followed by South Asians when migrating to East Africa. As was already the case with Neumann’s emphasis on the need to develop an Africa-based understanding of Afropolitanism in Chapter 2,

Bhat's contribution is a response to a tendency within scholarly criticism to neglect some of the avatars of Afropolitanism, rather than an expression of disapproval of Afropolitanism itself (which, in Mbembe's essay, explicitly includes Africans of Asian descent).

Chapter 5, by Julie Iromuanya, explores A. Ogoni Barrett's *Blackass* (2015), a novel in which a black Lagosian man one day wakes up in a white body (except for his buttocks, which remain black, hence the book's title). The chapter informs us that most reviewers have approached the novel through the lens of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), but Iromuanga instead felicitously proposes to put Barrett's text in dialogue with African American novels of passing, without however losing sight of *Blackass's* Nigerian setting. In this discussion, the mobility inherent in Afropolitanism is social – afforded by whiteness – rather than merely geographical, which testifies to the concept's versatility. Another illustration of how Afropolitanism can be integrated into a wider critical framework is provided in Chapter 6, in which Juan Meneses reads Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2000) as a text that outlines a form of "eco-Afropolitanism." Meneses shows how Afropolitanism, far from being individualistic and apolitical, can in this new environmental guise be conceptualized as the expression of communal affiliations.

Amatoritsero Ede's contribution, in Chapter 7, is the only essay in the book that takes a largely negative view of Afropolitanism, claiming that the category as it is understood today "fails to reshape our old ways of seeing the African world and engaging or interacting with it" (122). According to Ede, the original Afropolitans were the emancipated slaves of the eighteenth-century New World, such as Olaudah Equiano and Phillis Wheatley, who engaged in "worlding" – a positive reshaping of the world. By contrast, Ede regards contemporary Afropolitan authors as participants in the negative process of "unworlding," an apolitical positioning that occurs under the pressures of print capitalism and the transnational publishing industry. Interestingly, Ede's contribution is immediately followed by Chielozona Eze's, who adopts a starkly different stance in Chapter 8. Eze argues that contemporary Afropolitanism denotes a form of openness, an inclusivity that distances itself from nativism and which presents the world as unbounded. The scholar substantiates his position by examining poetry by Romeo Oriogun and Chris Abani, both of whom are said to explore the body as a site of infinite possibilities. At this stage in *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature*, the eclectic critical approaches gathered under the umbrella term "Afropolitanism" start

to accumulate, leading readers to wonder whether the concept is truly a clearly defined theoretical lens or whether it is, rather more loosely, the ideological basis for an inclusive type of twenty-first-century African literary criticism – a contemporary framework that seeks to expand the examination of African literatures beyond counter-discursive readings that have focused on how the continent defines itself in opposition to the West.

The potential of Afropolitanism as an “ethical-ontological, fundamentally open, reading stance” (153) is further explored in Chapter 9, in which Aretha Phiri revisits a major contemporary Afropolitan text, Taiye Selasi’s *Ghana Must Go* (2013). Arguing that Selasi’s novel re-imagines diaspora as an existential site, Phiri focuses on blues aesthetics in the book and shows how such an approach might be used to re-examine and ultimately resist cultural essentialisms. In Chapter 10, Rocío Cobo-Piñero highlights how Afropolitanism, with its emphasis on mobility, allows critics to reconsider the place of Africa in the world, a claim that is illustrated through an examination of Noo Saro-Wiwa’s travelogue *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* (2012). In Chapter 11, Julian Wacker analyses (literal and figurative) obscurity in the work of Teju Cole, arguing that Cole’s oeuvre is a textual assemblage that coalesces into forms of worlding that conceal and contest categories and identities traditionally associated with African and diasporic writers. Finally, the collection closes with Lara El Mekkawi’s examination of privileged mobility and of those that she calls “hesitant locals” (that is, immigrants who are unsure about their position in the world as Africans) in Teju Cole’s *Open City* (2011) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* (2013). Towards the end of a collection of essays that celebrates the many ways in which Africans may be citizens of the world, El Mekkawi offers a brief but sobering reminder that, for those “coming from the continent, possessing only African passports, to be of the world is [...] difficult, and it involves a painful amount of paperwork” (205).

The chapters in *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature* have obviously been brought together under a clear editorial rationale, outlined in the introduction to the book; this is one of the main strengths of the volume. The inevitable overlaps in the discussions may give an impression of repetitiveness, but they are helpful in delineating critical tendencies, while discrepancies between chapters and digressions within them are equally valuable in allowing readers to locate and explore sites of scholarly contestation and hesitation. Predictably in a collective volume, some

chapters present stronger lines of argument than others, and not all contributions offer the sustained critical engagement with World Literature promised on the cover of the book. However, these imperfections should not deter interested readers. More problematic for the volume's cohesion and overall quality are a series of editing flaws: the book uses at least four different stylesheets across chapters; several references are missing from the works cited sections; there are ungrammatical sentences, as well as an unusual number of misspelt names, often occurring in alternation with the correct versions (for example, Achilles/Achille Mbembe, Noor/Noo Saro-Wiwa, Henry Louis Gate/Gates Jr, Biyavanga/Binyavanga Wainaina). Fortunately, *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature* has many qualities to counterbalance these weaknesses. Readers' overall assessment of the book will depend on their disciplinary background and knowledge, but it is likely that, across audiences, the volume will encourage fruitful reflections on African literatures, global mobility, and World Literatures.

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Jasbir Jain. *Interpreting Cinema: Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2020. Pp. 298. ISBN: 9788131611425.

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Interpreting Cinema: Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements is Jasbir Jain's fourth book on Hindi cinema. This authored study follows in the wake of three edited collections: *Films and Feminism* (with Sudha Rai; 2002), *Films, Literature and Culture: Deepa Mehta's Elements Trilogy* (2007), and *Muslim Culture in Indian Cinema* (2011). This body of work makes her one of the most widely published scholars of Hindi cinema, in addition to her other extensive areas of research spanning diaspora, partition, post-colonialism, feminism, culture, and nation.

In *Interpreting Cinema*, sixteen essays explore the medium of cinema in the specific context of Hindi cinema from the 1930s to the first decade of the twenty-first century. The book covers a wide range of topics current in film studies from adaptations, to culture, nation, body, gender, art movements, and the presentation of the self. The first five chapters offer a detailed account of almost all the important film adaptations in Hindi cinema, starting in the 1930s. In fact, adaptation is a recurring theme throughout the book, as Jain examines its various dimensions: film adaptations from fiction or theatre to screen, the recycling and grafting of texts in cinema, and parallel narratives that emerge with the cinematic version of a literary text. Furthermore, the book upholds that tradition of engaging with film history by exploring cinema's close relationship with other art forms, such as literature, theatre, painting, music, and photography. The first essay, entitled "Interpreting Cinema," sets the tone for the methodological analysis adopted by its author. Arguing strongly in favour of cinema as an art form deeply embedded in its socio-political

context, Jain sees it as a medium documenting cultural and other historical changes through its codes of dress, songs, setting, imagery, and story. Films are seen not only as cultural representations, but also as cultural products that leave a permanent mark on the politics and history of a nation.

Lucidly titled “Travelling Memories,” the second chapter compares narrative forms in cinema and in literature. Their presence in the two disciplines, the author argues, has not only altered the nature of both media, but it has also created a kind of symbiosis, as can be seen in the case of scholars who specialize in literary and film texts. Film studies now occupy a prominent place in the departments of English and cultural studies. Perennial questions that come to the fore whenever a literary classic is adapted are outlined here: why do filmmakers turn to classics? What reworking does the change in medium demand of a literary text? Many versions of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee’s novel *Devdas* (1917) are examined in light of such intertextualities, as indeed are other important adaptations, such as *Utsav* (1984), *Rudali* (1992), *Maya Memsaab* (1992), and *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). These and other film adaptations are discussed for their character development, scenic elaboration, emotional charge, songs, and dialogues. Jain insists on the need to respect each medium for its integrity and to maintain its freedom. None is favoured.

Similarly, as she considers the adaptation of theatre into cinema, Jain deals with the processes of cultural transference that take place when a text changes medium. In this context, she interrogates in great detail popular adaptations of Shakespeare, especially with regard to some of the earliest representations of Shakespeare in Hindi cinema, such as the 1935 adaptation of *Hamlet* by Sohrab Modi under the rather dramatic title *Khoon ka Khoon* [Blood for Blood]. The film, she says, failed to make any distinction between the media of theatre and cinema and was shot as a Parsi theatrical production. Another instance is Kishore Sahu’s *Hamlet* released in 1954: although the film was acclaimed artistically, it met with commercial failure. This example, Jain claims, signals the need to engage with the reception of a film in a particular socio-cultural context. While Sahu’s film failed to elicit any response from its audience, Vishal Bhardwaj’s adaptations of three Shakespearean tragedies have been huge commercial and artistic successes. The reason for this difference in reception, according to the scholar, lies not in the transposition of the entirety of the play on screen, but rather in the successful grafting of its narrative onto a socially and culturally determined plotline.

Importantly, the book does not categorise cinema in periods to analyse their specificities: rather, it investigates thematic continuities over the last eight decades in what was previously known as Hindi cinema and is now called Bollywood. At the same time, it looks at how the presentation of these themes has evolved over time, together with their socio-political impact. The revival of the mythological genre in television exemplifies such continuity. The shift of well-known filmmakers Ramanand Sagar and BR Chopra to television in the late 1980s and early 1990s during the time of liberalisation is a case in point. The immensely popular television serials *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and the parallel political movement of the Bharatiya Janata Party, leading to the demolition of the Babri Mosque, are intertwined in a dystopian intertextuality. While the mythological genre was mobilised in the past as a tool to stir up a nationalist sentiment in the fight against a colonial ruler, the same strategy was used by conservative political forces to whip up religious passion against the country's minorities. The result of which has come to haunt Indian polity in its gradual shift to an illiberal democracy. Set against this background of a nation at war with itself is Jain's chapter "Histories of Violence," which discusses at great length the films *Machis* (1996), *Amu* (2006), and *Can You Hear the Night Bird Call* (1984), amongst others.

Another delightful essay, devoted to "Art and Power Dynamics," studies two very different films displaying similar overtones: *Mirza Ghalib* (1954) and *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* (1977). Jain also evokes *Junoon* (1979) and *Umrao Jaan* (1981) in this context and asks why certain texts become important at a particular point in the history of a nation. In the next few chapters, the concept of nation is analysed through different lenses, the first of which is the physically challenged body as depicted in the films *Mother India* (1957), *Upkar* (1967), *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989), *Fanna* (2006), and *Maine Gandhi ko Nahin Mara* (2005). The body is marked by its physical weaknesses and this leads to imagining the nation as a wounded body that needs healing. Taking this theme of the body politic forward, the scholar then goes on to look at the representation of women's bodies in *Panchvati* (1987), *Mirch Masala* (1987), *Aastha* (1997), *Mrityudand* (1997), *Fire* (1996), *Aastha* (2000), *Kya Kehna*, (2000), *Lajja* (2001), and *Zubeida* (2001). Questions of sexual transgression, ownership of the female body, the gaze of the camera, stereotypes that are continually upheld in the light of a perceived box office success,

all of these are explored. After these questions of how the female body's transgressions and rebellions are portrayed, Jain discusses how such a body may be reclaimed in a creative way.

Creativity itself is presented as following different courses according to one's gender. Jain provides a deeply absorbing and reflective account of how creativity and love are intertwined in films such as *Pyasa* (1957), *Kagaz ke Phool* (1959), *Guide* (1965), *Sardari Begum* (1996), and *Bhumika* (1977). Reflecting on the depiction of creativity in these works, she points out how the creative male ego is shown as vacillating between a romantic self-projection and the image of a patriarch. In contrast, the female creative ego is represented in these films as developing through defiance and resistance.

The theme of masculinity in Hindi cinema is further examined in view of the father-daughter relationship in *Daddy* (1989), *Main Aisa hi Hoon* (2005), *Tamanna* (1998), and *Maine Gandhi ko Nahin Mara* (2005). Jain's study highlights the less discussed aspects of the vulnerable and tender side of fatherhood. Finally, after delving into the depiction of urban spaces and into art movements – such as Surrealism – in Hindi cinema, the volume closes on an examination of “self” through autobiographies of film personalities and through films made on such autobiographies.

Covering a period of eight decades in popular Hindi cinema, Jain's book is almost encyclopedic in its expanse and comprehensive, in-depth analyses. It draws up a history of popular cinema through the intertextuality existing between literature and cinema as well as other overlapping concerns. Any reader interested in the history of film adaptations in Hindi cinema could find here a ready resource for further research. The book is also remarkable in its use of a jargon-free language; a rare feat for an academic publication. This has always been Jasbir Jain's signature style of writing, which is refreshingly straightforward and insightful. *Interpreting Cinema* will definitely prove useful in multiple ways to all readers and scholars of Hindi cinema, as it journeys through almost all the seasons of the genre.

**G. V. J. Prasad, ed. *India in Translation: Translation in India*. New Delhi: Bloomsbury Academic India.
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India is a nation that houses over a thousand languages in an area of just over a million square meters. After independence from British rule in 1947, the Indian states were formed based on linguistic identity; each of those states counts several prominent and marginal languages spoken in their territories. G. V. J. Prasad opens his edited volume, *India in Translation: Translation in India*, with a discussion of the dilemma that surrounds the nomenclature of the country. Its people use three terms – India, Bharat, and Hindustan – almost interchangeably to describe the same region on the Asian continent. Each of these names comes with its own etymology and story. While “Bharat” evokes a mythological history surrounding the Hindu King Bharat, “Hindustan” was the name the Persians used, and “India” is the anglicized version of “Sindh.” While the Constitution proclaims itself secular, each of these denominations has some form of religious connotations attached to it, and thereby the nomenclature dilemma endures.

Due to this linguistic plurality of India, it is only natural that many works by authors belonging to different linguistic backgrounds, ethnicity, and cultures are translated every year; and such works selected to be translated represent but a fraction of the total number of works produced each year in different parts of the country. Many of the essays in this volume address the question of the selection process of the source material for translation. While some authors argue that religion historically was the sole factor that contributed to this conscious process, others point out caste oriented guiding factors, or even other forms of abilities/disabilities.

There are a few exceptions, however, such as Fatima Rizvi's essay titled "Transcending Borders, Bridging Cultures: Reading Faiz Ahmed Faiz," which showcases the existence of thoughts, ideas, and practices that transcend the boundaries of religion, language, gender, and caste. Some contributors argue that many translations in the historical past served hidden agendas, especially ones related to religion and caste. This brings us to the question of the purpose of any literature, in addition to literature in translation. Literary works mostly imply a desire to nurture ethical responsibility, while remaining aware of the mediated relationships between text and reader. The kind of works within India (and from around the world) that were translated into Indian languages became the space in which the inter-expressivity of subjects operates and is understood. Language, especially in translated texts, thus became more of a medium of giving voice to the relations of man to himself, to others and the world at large, rather than a means of expressing thoughts.

The dual role of interpreter and negotiator which a translator assumes between different languages and cultures, and which may be connected to some wider agenda behind each translation (which may or may not be beneficial for any society as a whole) is wonderfully highlighted by two essays: "Dnyaneshwar's *Duji Shrushti*: Poetics and Cultural Politics of Pre-colonial Translation in the *Dnyaneshwari*" by Sachin C. Ketkar, and "Translation and the Formation of Gujarati Literary Public Sphere in the Early 1850s: A Critical Study of Dalpatram's *Lakshmi Natak*" by Hiren J. Patel. The volume also deals with the close correlation between translatability and politics. Agamben describes translation as a linguistic activity that favours experimentation; translated texts thereby becoming a space in which language is to an extent experienced in the context of politics. When language is used to wield potential, it can be a force capable of dismantling the state of exception. In the volume, Gargi Bhattacharya's essay "Formation of Hindu Laws through Translation in the Rule of British East India Company: Vidyasagar's Contribution in Society and Legislation," and Amrapali Saha's contribution "Money, Work and Family in *Ghachar Ghochar*: A Translational Economy of India" – examine how translations target a section of society only, if the political potentiality of language in translation is taken into account. Such exclusivity may be damaging to the democratic worldview of the population at large, an issue which the essays deal with very tactfully.

As regards historical narratives such as Sheldon Pollock's, which have lent a subaltern position to Indian literatures through a strategic colonial

hegemonic tendency, language and culture have become sites of struggles with respect to the supremacist colonial modernity on the one hand, and alternate narrative traditions on the other. It is a notorious fact that, under the guise of truth, rationality and knowledge, the colonial masters intervened in matters of culture, education, and law, as unveiled by Said in his discussion of orientalism in 1978. Textual appropriation occurred in India during colonial times via translations, grammar textbooks, and codified laws which helped in defining India as an epistemological field, as E. V. Ramakrishnan points out in *Locating Indian Literature: Texts, Traditions, Translations* (2017). The essence of the traditional and the cultural was reduced to mere superstitious and mythical elements: the latter were somehow deemed irrational by the liberal, democratic, and rational West that viewed Indian literatures and grammars in the light of Western codes and theories. The existing histories of Indian literature – for instance, Albrecht Weber’s *The History of Indian Literature* (1904), Maurice Winternitz’s *A History of Indian Literature* (1927), Herbert Gowen’s *A History of Indian Literature: From Vedic Times to the Present Day* (1968), among others – only reinforce an inclusive perspective that fails to recognize differences between various types of Indian literatures, such as *itihasa*, *sastra*, *purana*, *kavya*, and *natya*. This further resulted in a reductive and demeaning view of India as a country with a past but not with any present that may be worthwhile. And yet efforts arise from the grass-root level to negotiate pluralities by moving away from hegemonic prescriptions. For instance, the essays “Resisting Voices or the Allure of the Centre: French Fiction in Hindi Translation” by Nipun Nutan, “Making Trans Experiences Visible through Translations” by Regiane Corrêa de Oliveira Ramos, and “Enabling Translation: Carrying Disability across Cultures” by Someshwar Sati introduce the readers to alternate models of modernity which developed out of the argumentative traditions of India, rather than Enlightenment rationality only. In such a scenario, the translator stands as an immensely powerful figure, to whom a lot of responsibility is further attached. The misuse of such power is illustrated by the case of *Ezourvedam*, as pointed out by Tara Menon in her contribution, “Forging Bhakti: Translation, Conversion and Fraud in the Ezourvedam.”

Another important reason for the need of translation lies in the curiosity about the foreigner, as Ricoeur discussed in *On Translation* (2007). A similar curiosity motivates those of us looking over the ramparts of our disciplines into the arenas of others; we want to know how they live and

to be able to convene with them. Those of us who engage in literature and theology, whether we hail from one discipline or the other, examine the reading texts on both sides, wondering what kind of light they might shed on the two disciplines. But what happens when translation is used as a means to dominate? This is where politics of translation finds immense authority in the space created by language, because most translations start with the construction of comparables. Subhendu Mund's essay entitled "India in Translation, Translation in India: Translation, Adaptation, Appropriation and Migration of Indian Tales/Stories" provides good examples of how Western scholars (during the colonial rule) tried to depict India's literatures as being "discovered" by the world. This was indeed misleading, as Mund reminds us that literary traditions and trajectories like those of Jatakas and Panchatantra travelled West and influenced many narrative traditions of storytelling. Every tradition has its unique trajectory which needs to be recognized rather than forced into homogeneous boxes. Another case study of this phenomenon can be found in Priyada Shridhar Padhye's contribution, "Migrating Stories: The Panchatantra and The Grimm Tales."

How languages like Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali have shown creative reception tendencies in the past is explored in "Translating Beckett into Indian Language/s: Towards World-Building" by Samudranil Gupta and "The Kafkaesque in Urdu: Naiyer Masud and the Essence of Translation" by Huzaifa Omair Siddiqi. Translation into other languages and cultures reflects shifts in literary sensibility to various degrees. In this way, the alternative models of thinking and imagining the world are open to different ideas, a process which does not necessarily refute existing value systems of literature; it simply modifies or adds to them. If one builds on Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic capital" to highlight that the target language should be well established in its literary renditions so that translated texts can be received and analyzed successfully, the translator must also be familiar with both the source and the target language. It is pertinent for the translator as well as readers to be receptive to heterogeneous creative reflexes and ideas.

Moreover, the entire volume reinstates the fact that translation is one of the major means through which the "other" is negotiated into a culture. This can also be seen as an "alterity" that simply points towards a

difference in sensibilities. In “India through a Translation Anthology: An Evolving Perspective,” Runjhun Verma splendidly showcases these issues through an analysis of the French anthology *Littératures de l’Inde*. Such translation acts prove that there are ways to negotiate identity between dominant, peripheral and emergent forms in society. Hence, existing genres can undergo metamorphosis and inculcate new discourses along with newer worldviews which may conform to their unique identities. So, the concept of imagination with respect to communities is tested because the invisible reins of discourses again shape identities – in this case the literature or translation deemed more appealing in the light of multilingual and multicultural India. This brings in its wake a process of self-criticism into the domain of the literary, as explored in Lav Kanoi’s and Shinjini Basu’s essays: “Colonisation, College and Chai: Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Okakura’s *The Book of Tea*” and “Translating Gramsci in Bengali: Redefining the *Buddhijibi* in Post-Liberalisation Bengal” respectively.

To conclude, Prasad has successfully put together a volume that relocates the narratives of the pedagogic and the performative, the sublime and the subaltern, and the mainstream and the margins. This collection paves the way for future anthologies about translation in India as well as about more alternate theories and practices of translation across the subcontinent. An excellent anthology of practices of translation, Prasad’s volume focuses primarily on the idea of hospitality which binds and directs the efforts of creativity and curiosity towards border-crossing dialogues. Choosing to underline hospitality also reminds us that the work of translation between disciplines involves a large amount of trust that must be put in the other. This cannot be taken for granted. Translation is approached through a constant recognition of otherness in this volume, even as one tries to meet with and learn from the other – a form of practice that many modern translators follow. The imperativeness of translation with respect to hospitality in the purview of India, due to the existence of hundreds of language groups in the country today, could be the object of future research. This task may be envisaged through our understandings of the development of new sensibilities in Indian literary traditions in recent decades, especially in the light of politics, knowledge, modernity and identity. Prasad’s rich volume has certainly laid the foundation for such work.

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**Chiara Montini, dir. Traduire: Genèse du choix.
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L'ouvrage *Traduire: Genèse du choix*, publié aux Editions des Archives Contemporaines en 2016, est, après la belle introduction de Chiara Montini, divisé en trois parties : la première concerne la traduction politique et éthique (« La traduction et la politique des langues »), la deuxième s'intéresse plus à l'aspect esthétique et prosodique (« La traduction : poétique et politique du rythme »), et la troisième à la traduction dite 'subversive' (« L'autotraduction : le travail sans fin »). Qu'il s'agisse de traduction du roman *Le désert mauve* de Nicole Brossard en italien, de suivre Pedro II traduisant en portugais grâce à l'examen du manuscrit d'*Hitopadeça*, ou, pour citer un dernier exemple, de se pencher sur l'autotraduction après avoir rappelé brièvement ce que sont la Product Oriented Research, la Function Oriented Research et la Process Oriented Research pour les Translation Studies, il est question d'étudier la genèse d'une voix. La voix du traducteur se fait entendre ici grâce à des documents qui permettent de mettre en évidence le parcours choisi.

Une phrase tirée du roman précité de Nicole Brossard, « Il n'est pas toujours possible de rêver sans avoir à donner suite aux images » (15), peut conduire à *ré-écrire* et à proposer un hypertexte italien. Nous n'avons plus seulement affaire à un processus mettant en place une chaîne d'équivalences substitutives entre les signifiés de deux langues différentes, mais également à un jeu avec les potentialités polysémiques de l'écriture. Le travail trop « restreint » (18) de la traduction peut être considéré comme trop contraignant et au concept de reproduction se substitue celui de régénération. L'intérêt du livre dirigé par Chiara Montini se situe dans la

recherche de ces indications méthodologiques et éthiques à respecter aux niveaux diégétique et textuel. Traduire un auteur qui parle de traduction, comme c'est le cas dans *Le désert mauve*, et pour lequel cette activité relève des mêmes circuits affectifs et associatifs que la création, se révèle assurément passionnant.

En ce qui concerne le travail de traducteur de Pedro II, il ne s'agit plus de présenter le travail très fin sur la forme et la pratique, comme dans le cas de Victor Hugo, de la traduction poétique, mais d'analyser les documents de genèse, et de façon plus spécifique, les manuscrits de traduction de l'empereur brésilien à partir du sanscrit. Dom Pedro II connaissait de nombreuses langues, telles que le français, l'italien, l'espagnol, l'anglais ou l'allemand, et en étudiait beaucoup d'autres encore : outre le sanscrit, langue de l'*Hitopadésa*, le latin, le grec, mais aussi le néerlandais, le provençal et le perse, l'arabe ou encore l'hébreu... Le choix du sanscrit n'étonne guère, car cette langue est considérée comme la clef pour élucider les secrets de la philologie comparée. L'empereur semble d'accord avec Édouard Lancereau, selon lequel « Parmi les divers recueils de contes et d'apologues qui ont été composés dans l'Inde, l'*Hitopadésa*, ou l'*Instruction utile* est à la fois un des plus remarquables et des plus célèbres » (51). Recueil de fables au contenu philosophique et moral, le texte permet non seulement de traduire quarante-trois histoires, mais également, comme l'indiquent les cahiers manuscrits des Archives historiques du Musée Impérial de Petrópolis (Brésil), d'utiliser la connaissance des langues indo-européennes pour montrer, en comparatiste ingénieux, la parenté entre les langues.

Et pour ce qui est du troisième exemple, parmi tant d'autres non moins intéressants que l'on peut trouver dans cet ouvrage qui unit si admirablement la génétique et la traductologie, Rainier Grutman partage ici avec Chiara Montini, Dirk Weissmann et Dirk Van Hulle l'amour pour les manuscrits d'auteurs se traduisant eux-mêmes et offre une précieuse contribution avec sa tripartition entre autotraduction différée, consécutive et simultanée. Ces auteurs incluent Nabokov, Nancy Huston, Beckett, et bien d'autres encore pour lesquels il est question de répondre d'une façon concrète à Pierre-Marc de Biasi qui, dans sa synthèse de 2014, « *Genetica, multilinguismo e traduzione* », appelait de ses vœux une « génétique des traductions » (115). Certains manuscrits peuvent révéler que derrière la signature d'un traducteur se cache en réalité une cotraduction. D'autres documents font comprendre, comme dans le cas de Romain Gary, que derrière la signature autographe il n'est pas impossible de trouver une

première traduction littérale préparée par un collaborateur. C'est ce que nous indique le catalogue de l'exposition « *Des Racines du ciel à La vie devant soi* » qui a eu lieu au Musée des lettres et manuscrits de Paris trente ans après la mort de l'auteur.

Mais l'ouvrage publié sous la direction de Chiara Montini et avec la collaboration de Marie-Hélène Paret Passos contient de nombreuses autres informations précieuses. On entre, avec l'analyse de manuscrits du fonds d'archives conservés à l'IMEC, dans « l'atelier » (65) d'Henri Meschonnic ; on se penche sur les *Carnets* de Léonard de Vinci traduits par Charles Ravaissou-Mollien et par Paul Valéry ; un regard sur les archives de Barbara Godard, traductrice de Nicole Brossard vers l'anglais, permet d'envisager la traduction de l'auteur comme « acte de réécriture désorientant » (38) ; on peut comprendre comment un auteur algérien tel que Slimane Benaïssa, témoignant des différents enjeux de la traduction et de l'autotraduction, en vient à déclarer que la rivalité avec la France « a fait de nous de parfaits bilingues et parfaitement coupables de l'être » (40). Le choix de la langue est ici encore un acte politique et, pour ce qui est, d'une façon générale, de la traduction de réalités culturelles différentes, le recours à l'adaptation est considéré comme bien légitime ; on peut examiner également la question du surtitrage dans le domaine de la traduction théâtrale et le cas plus spécifique de spectacles vivants qui empêchent tout choix d'être définitif.

Comment traduire *Maître Puntila et son valet Matti* de Bertold Brecht en arabe dialectal ? Comment résister à la tentation de l'éclaircissement du sens quand il s'agit de poésie taïwanaise ? Pourquoi peut-on affirmer que Paul Valéry « s'est installé » (93) dans l'œuvre de Léonard de Vinci et que la traduction s'est transformée pour lui en véritable « chantier d'écriture » (93) ? Comment rendre en portugais un texte qui a pu inspirer La Fontaine ? Une version linéaire ne signifie pas pour autant moins de moments de doute et moins de ratures... Un tapuscrit peut-il révéler aussi bien qu'un essai le rôle de traductrice féministe en tant que coproductrice active de sens ? Pourquoi le retard pris par l'édition française de l'œuvre de certains illustres poètes ? Un cas exemplaire est celui de Paul Celan dont il est possible d'interpréter les interventions sur la base d'un examen attentif de l'appareil génétique de certaines de ses traductions dans la langue de Molière. Tant de littératures, tant de langues pour un examen en profondeur du travail et des réflexions d'auteurs et de traducteurs qui parfois n'hésitent pas à cumuler ces deux rôles. La traduction est faite de choix, et le livre de Chiara Montini nous offre quelques

précieuses clés de lecture sur les moments de prise de décision avec un recours systématique aux témoignages liant de façon harmonieuse génétique et *translation studies*.

**Matthew Reynolds, ed. *Prismatic Translation*.
Oxford: Legenda / Modern Humanities Research
Association, 2019. Pp. 396. ISBN: 9781781887257.**

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What does it mean to read a translation and feel – not necessarily all the way, perhaps only at certain moments – that it is inadequate? I dare say anyone who has worked much with translations has had this feeling, a bristling of the senses, at some time or another. Sometimes the tingling might be aesthetic at root, a series of moments that jar on the ear, pinpricks that build up to a sense of the translator's tone-deafness: inelegant phrasing or odd lexical choices that we find it hard to imagine in a work celebrated in its original language. Maybe we suspect the translator's timidity, or not daring to turn away from their source. Or perhaps our suspicion is an intellectual one, of concepts being misrepresented: ambiguities resolved, the complex being rendered simple, or vice versa? In these instances, a gap has opened up between the text we have in front of us and the one we expected to read, and we have adjudged the translator-responsible. (346)

Dennis Duncan thus begins his critical reading of “pseudotranslations,” or translations that do not have an original, in “Less than Paper-Thin: Pseudotranslations, Absent Fathers and Harry Mathew's Armenian Papers” (Chapter 18). Duncan's reading resonates with Stefan Willer, who hones in on the “subtle relationships that exist between an original, a copy, and a translation, as well as those between originality, authenticity, imitation, and deception – all relationships that are particularly relevant in terms of prismatic translation” in “Original-esque: Diderot and Goethe in Back-Translation” (Chapter 19, 359). “Prismatic Translation,” the title of the edited volume containing Duncan and Willer, is a term

Matthew Reynolds coins for his research in translation and translation studies and, more particularly, for his strand within the AHRC funded OWRI Creative Multilingualism Project (2016–2020).

The nineteen chapters that give shape and substance to the volume respond to the challenges posed by the clues inherent in “prism” and take translation studies beyond strategies of “domestication” and “foreignization” current in lingual discussions of the relationship between the “original” and “target” text, and away from notions of “translatability” or “untranslatability” that have stifled recent debates on world literature in which translation serves as a catalyst for circulation. Instead, translations are seen as refractions, not only of written texts but also of imagined ones, whose multiplicity in turn offers a kaleidoscopic vision of literary works conversing with one another across languages around the globe in and between the past and present. Prism, as a theoretical impulse, opens out translation studies to cultural, historical and literary analysis but without insisting on or giving up the kind of relationships connecting different parts of the globe that underpin comparative literature. Bringing together divergent translations of one text in one language under scrutiny may be equally rewarding as comparative analysis of works that have generated multiple translations in different languages. At the same time, it privileges the creative potentials of translation, audible and visible in the shadows of intelligibility between, let us say, two languages, literary traditions and cultures. *Prismatic Translation* is a journey in the creative processes theorists, historians, practitioners and critical readers of texts-in-translation devise and implement in exploring the various challenges in cross-cultural –lingual and –literary understanding and expression.

Part V, “Readings,” to which Duncan and Willer contribute the last two chapters (19 and 20), comprises critical analyses of translation practices that test “the metaphor of translation as prism” (312), including Patrick Hersant on “Coleridge Diffracted: on the Opening Lines of Kubla Khan” (Chapter 15), Péter Hajdu on “The Hungarian Spectrum of Petronius’s *Satyricon*” (Chapter 16), and Alexandra Lukes on “The Schizophrenic Prism: Louis Wolfson’s Translation Practice” (Chapter 17). Rich with contextual and textual analysis, “Readings” is the conceptual and methodological culmination of the volume. It combines the keen practice-based theorization in Part IV, “Practices,” the intriguing contemplations on cultural difference in translation practices in Part III, “Cultures,” and imaginative reflections on conceptualizations of language in Part II, “Languages.” Freeing conceptualizations of language from the

prison-houses of “word” and “nation-state,” as Reynolds urges in his “Introduction” and demonstrates in his lead chapter in Part I (“Frames”) entitled “Prismatic Agon, Prismatic Harmony: Translation, Literature, Language,” expands our theoretical horizon and brings under our critical purview the messy, untidy details of translation practices, so richly explored in the five chapters of Part IV. Jean Anderson’s “The Literary Translator as Dispersive Prism: Refracting and Recomposing Cultures” is an essay on the ways in which things and food are loci of intercultural investigation of identity (Chapter 10). Supplementing rather literal lingual translation with visual expression in Pari Azarm Motamedi’s “In Words and Colours: Lingo-Visual Translations of the Poetry of Shafi Kadkani” (Chapter 11) is a way of bridging cultural and aesthetic gaps between Persian poetry and attempts at making it meaningful to readers and, here, viewers steeped in other languages. Agency of the translator is further highlighted in Audrey Coussy’s “T is for Translation(s): Translating Nonsense Alphabets into French” (Chapter 12), Eran Hadas’s “Algorithmic Translation: New Challenges for Translation in the Age of Algorithms” (Chapter 13), and Philip Terry’s “Du Bellay in the Modern University” (Chapter 14).

“Incommensurability” is precisely the translator’s free space for puzzling out aesthetics across cultural and linguistic divides and perhaps even vicariously asserting political and ethical positions (see in particular Chapter 9 by Jernej Habjan, “Cultural Translation, or, the Political Logic of Prismatic Translation”). Translations are born in the creative choices made by translators who necessarily grapple with issues of cultural difference, whether this is located in the individual comprehending it in a set of particularized circumstances and expressing it for a targeted audience, or in politics, ethics or aesthetics, as we have seen above, or more generally in cultural practices and literary trends and in thinking of language as more than just word, as we read in Part III, “Cultures” and Part II, “Languages.” Language and culture overlap in these two parts that cover an expansive geography, from ancient Egypt, to Germany, Russia, and Taiwan to a global blogosphere, and a wide range of languages, from Indian languages, to European, East Asian, even Pharaonic Egyptian, and global Anglophone. Parts II and III together rewrite local histories of translation and reconceptualize both language and translation.

Francesca Orsini locates translation in multilingual practices in India and recovers a rich history of practices against a backdrop of assertions to the contrary in “Poetic Traffic in a Multilingual Literature

Culture: Equivalence, Parallel Aesthetics, and Language-Stretching” (Chapter 2). Yvonne Howell presents a history of Russian translation practices moving beyond considerations of “fidelity” despite theoretical condemnations of *ostebyatina*, of insertion of something “from oneself” into a translation (121), in “Through a Prism, Translated: Culture and Change in Russia” (Chapter 5). More importantly, “translation multiples,” as Kazia Szymanska and Adraina X. Jacobs respectively show in “Literary Metatranslations: when Translation Multiples Tell their Own Story” (Chapter 6) and “Extreme Translation” (Chapter 7), which rely on “bad practices” in translation, including inventions of “original” texts, concepts and even intentions, afford us the opportunity to reimagine the history of translation as creative solutions to the challenges of translation, translation being “an extreme, a space where pressure is applied to push a word and its meaning toward and beyond a breaking point” (156). Image, sound, even noise, and the senses come to the fore in these creative solutions, and by extension must be taken into consideration in how we conceptualize language and read translation.

The visual dimension of Pharoanic Egyptian is an essential component of hieroglyphic languages, Hany Rashwan argues in “‘Annihilation is atop the lake’; the Visual Untranslatability of an Ancient Egyptian Short Story” (Chapter 3), and noise is integral to poetics, as Cosima Bruno shows in “Translation Poetry: the Poetics of Noise in Hsia Yu’s *Pink Noise*” (Chapter 8). “Grammalepsis,” or “the process and the moment when a material and formal gesture of (potential, virtual) affect and significance shifts and moves” (99), as John Cayley demonstrates in “[Mirroring] Events at the Sense Horizon: Translation over Time,” can inform reading translation as the “movement from gestural to readable” (99) that relies on reading (words), hearing (sounds), and visualizing (images). Here, language is understood as multilingual in two principal ways. In the first instance, languages interact and shape each other even within the current imagined monolingualism of each language. Multilingualism describes both the co-existence of languages in a common environment and the ways in which they mingle, interact and shape each other outside the machinery of translation. In the second, language is more than just word; rather, it encompasses image, sound and even embodiment. Such imaginings of language, the mission of *Creative Multilingualism*, are the gifts of *Prismatic Translation*. They transform translation studies and make them immediately relevant to comparative literature by carving out a space for identifying untidy details, insertions, inventions, and anxieties

which are initially felt in “a bristling of sense” but are now instrumental in the articulation of the various reading processes involving intercultural dialogues and exchanges.

**Jacob Bittner. *The Emergence of Literature: An Archaeology of Modern Literary Theory.*
New York: Bloomsbury, 2020. Pp. 234 + xii.
ISBN: 9781501354243.**

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Jacob Bittner's debut monograph, *The Emergence of Literature: An Archaeology of Modern Literary Theory*, originated from a PhD thesis defended at King's College London under the supervision of Prof. Patrick Ffrench. Positioned between philosophy and literary theory, *The Emergence of Literature* is a fruit of interdisciplinarity. Diverting from current trends in literary research, Bittner seeks to revive the spirit of critical theory. To this end, his book is keen to demonstrate that the key questions of literature are not only intimately connected with philosophy, but are also, in essence, metaphysical. Envisaged as an intellectual history of the post-Kantian thought, the book draws on works by several prominent philosophers from the continental tradition – most notably Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, Giorgio Agamben, and Maurice Blanchot, as well as Walter Benjamin, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Jacques Lacan, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Roland Barthes.

On the whole, the book's organic organisation is mobilised in the service of the proposed argumentation, without any redundant digressions. The monograph consists of twelve relatively short chapters – only a portion of which exceeds ten pages. These are grouped around four central parts: Part I “The Emergence of Literature as Absolute”; Part II “The Paradigm of Writerly Necessity”; Part III “Literary Criticism”; and Part IV “Aesthetics.” Each of the four major parts finishes with what Bittner refers to as a “threshold,” which provides a concise summary of

the content presented thus far. In view of the text's high density, these recapitulations come as useful reminders ensuring that the reader does not lose track of the overall argument. In addition, the main text includes an introduction, an afterthought, and a conclusion.

The epigraph that Bittner chooses for his monograph's opening is a lengthy quote in German from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* (1903), in which Rilke declares that the poet is – by definition – someone who writes because he/she *must* write. The initial discussion of the excerpt from Rilke's letter introduces one of the book's main topics – that of “writerly necessity.” The book primarily focuses on the way the necessity to write literature emerges as a paradigm. Building on Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's study (*The Literary Absolute*, 1978), Bittner argues that the literary absolute emerges not only as a concept, but also as a paradigm of writerly necessity that casts subjects as writers who cannot not-write literature (2–3). The concept of the literary absolute therefore becomes central to Bittner's investigation.

Drawing from Michel Foucault's archaeology of literature, Bittner conducts an archaeology of literary theory, whereby literary theory is understood both in a “metaphysical” and “pragmatic” sense (3). This means that his investigation is not only philosophical, in its treatment of literature as theory, but also historical, as it recognises different schools of thought. Most prominently (albeit not exclusively) featured are the following schools of literary theory: Biographism, New Criticism, structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstruction, and phenomenology (3). It is worth noting that Bittner's archaeology does not articulate any critique in itself; rather, it is a study of the *emergence* of critique, i.e. of the historical conditions that governed this process, and by extension of literature as an absolute. Timewise, Bittner's archaeology performs a twofold task: on the one hand, it deals with the very emergence of the paradigm, and on the other, it is also concerned with the moment when – in retrospect – the paradigm became visible.

The Emergence of Literature is not only concerned with the ways in which the literary absolute emerges and how it pertains to writing. Another major research avenue interrogates how the literary absolute relates to “metaphysics of will” – particularly in light of Martin Heidegger's and Giorgio Agamben's scholarship. In this way, Bittner extends the monograph's prospective reach to other related fields devoted to this faculty of the mind – such as psychology, law, theology, economics, politics – and generates a new space for multidisciplinary deliberation.

Bittner frames his investigation of writerly necessity through Foucault's understanding of the concept of "subject" as the position that can become occupied by an individual. The subject under scrutiny is one "who cannot not-write literature" (3). The problem arising there is that of distinguishing between the Subject and language. To delimit the space between the two, Bittner draws on Maurice Blanchot's exploration of the space of literature. What is more, in defining the phenomenon of writerly necessity, Bittner's analysis dwells on a grammatical dilemma – i.e. the question whether the verb "to write" can be used intransitively. Having concluded that such use is philosophically justified, Bittner supplements his main argument with the adverb "writerly," thereby focusing on "the subject who cannot not-write *intransitively*."

The book, especially its latter half, addresses the relationship between literature and criticism in the post-Kantian era, asserting that literature itself becomes a form of criticism. Through the paradigm of writerly necessity, Bittner manages to detect the complex ways in which literary criteria shifted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Published by Bloomsbury Academic, this research monograph is intended for a highly specialised audience. It requires considerable knowledge of different fields, principally of philosophy (metaphysics in particular) and literary theory. As the book discusses a series of concepts that stem from various disciplines, Bittner is careful to introduce and define each one of them before proceeding any further. Despite such meticulousness, in some cases a prior engagement with the cited sources is highly desirable. This is especially true for scholars whose background lies in literature, for although the object of study is mostly literary, the methodological apparatus and theoretical framework are fundamentally philosophical.

An important concern is the book's profound mistrust towards translation. The English translations are almost invariably accompanied with the original terms and phrases in parentheses. Consider the following excerpt from a purely stylistic point of view:

In Fichte's *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794/95), such an absolute Subject will be the form of the originary *Tathandlung* ("fact/act") by which the ego (*Ich*), as "pure activity [*reine Tätigkeit*]," posits itself as "at once the agent [*das Handelnde*] and the product of the action [*das Produkt der Handlung*]."

(25, emphasis in original)

Although it may minimise the possibility of terminological confusion induced by translation, this fastidious stylistic method actually hinders readability. One may argue that the retention of original terms is a frequent practice in philosophy. This is indeed confirmed by Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (2004; *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, 2014), an encyclopaedic catalogue of the words and phrases that commonly remain untranslated. Multilingual intrusions of the kind do make sense, albeit *occasionally*, when a certain term is examined, for example. An indiscriminate use of original phrases in close proximity to translation creates a hardly readable text. Simply put, the strategy becomes futile when overused. If the author feels so distinctly uneasy about the English translations – mostly of German and French philosophical concepts – on which the book relies so heavily, then the better option would have been not to write the book in English at all.

Problematic as well is the authorship of these translations. In many cases, it remains unclear whether the parenthetical intrusions are copied from the existing translations or inserted by the author. Paratextual elements do not seem to help in this matter. This issue could be easily solved, should the monograph go through a subsequent edition.

In conclusion, Bittner's book *The Emergence of Literature* is a remarkable intellectual feat, based on an in-depth knowledge of continental philosophy and modern literary theory. In a narrow sense, this publication should be deemed valuable for several reasons. It is a rare historiography of literary theory that thoroughly re-examines literary criteria, detects the complex ways in which they originally appeared, and maps their trajectory and eventual change. In purely conceptual terms, Bittner's monograph is a detailed study of the concept of the "literary absolute." Published more than forty years after Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's authoritative eponymous study, it is also a long-awaited return to the topic of the emergence of literature as a modern concept. In a wider sense, the significance of this monograph lies in its endeavour to steer literary study towards theoretical examinations and to lay the groundwork for more interdisciplinary research bridging the gap between literature and philosophy. Let us hope that scholars of literature, philosophy, history and other germane disciplines will not be discouraged by the book's embeddedness in continental theory and its complex multidisciplinary terminology, but that they will, instead, strive to work their way through Bittner's

dense text. Those who do so will undoubtedly recognise the pertinence of this study. In any case, the prospective audience can have my promise that reading *The Emergence of Literature* is ultimately a worthwhile and gratifying experience.

**Claire Colin. *L'Événement dans la nouvelle contemporaine*. Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2018.
Pp. 437. ISBN : 9782406066972.**

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L'ouvrage de Claire Colin « *L'événement dans la nouvelle contemporaine* » s'inscrit dans une perspective plus large d'analyse du récit, plus précisément des métamorphoses du récit au tournant des années 1980 pour aller vers une nouvelle forme de narrativité. Soulignons d'emblée l'étendue du corps puisque l'étude se situe dans une perspective comparatiste qui aborde la nouvelle dans différents pays et différentes sphères culturelles : la France avec Le Clézio, mais aussi Régis Jauffret, Richard Millet, les Etats unis et pays anglophones avec Raymond Carver et Alice Munro, l'Italie avec Gianni Celati, Aldo Nove, Claudio Piersanti, Antonio Tabucchi. L'auteure s'appuie également sur un grand nombre d'études théoriques qu'il s'agisse du récit, de la littérature ou des arts en général.

Cette vue très large permet à l'auteure de distinguer deux grandes catégories de rapport à l'événement et au récit : la réserve et l'excès. Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, la nouvelle se caractérise par un évidement de l'événement qui reste l'élément de base du récit mais subit un traitement particulier qui fait que, loin de marquer l'irruption du nouveau il n'entraîne aucune modification essentielle et ne vient qu'à peine ou pas du tout troubler le quotidien des personnages. Certes l'esthétique du vide est familière à un genre tout entier construit autour de l'ellipse, du non-dit, du silence. Néanmoins, et la subtilité de l'analyse de Claire Colin est sur ce point à relever, elle montre comment ce vide créé par l'absence d'événements signifiants parce qu'il n'est jamais dramatisé ne suscite pas de réactions spécifiques chez les protagonistes et demeure parfaitement

intégré au quotidien. L'évidement ne serait ainsi que la conséquence ou la face visible d'un nouveau rapport à la dramatisation, à la fois présente et niée. L'ouvrage met ainsi en évidence deux modalités spécifiques de l'évidement : la réserve qui atténue l'événement, l'excès qui au contraire le propulse à l'avant-scène mais pour lui ôter toute puissance signifiante.

Cette réflexion amène très logiquement, dans une deuxième partie, à s'intéresser à la question du lecteur et à sa place face au désengagement des instances narratives. La nouvelle contemporaine, du fait de ce traitement particulier de l'événement, met le lecteur dans l'impossibilité de dégager une hypothèse de signification stable. Celui-ci se voit donc désorienté, frustré, par un texte qui revendique son incomplétude et par un narrateur défaillant, en ce sens qu'il renonce à sa traditionnelle fonction de guidage. Réticent à dégager une signification, le narrateur se caractérise aussi dans ces récits brefs contemporains par un désengagement moral. Claire Colin voit dans ce refus, ce retrait du narrateur une invitation à inventer un nouveau rôle pour et par le lecteur, non plus élève passif mais élément actif d'une perpétuelle reconfiguration du récit à la recherche d'un sens que le narrateur s'ingénie à dérober, l'objectif n'étant pas de retrouver une vérité cachée, ce qui serait un contresens par rapport à l'esthétique mise en œuvre dans ces textes, mais au contraire d'accepter cette incomplétude, cette impossibilité de dégager une signification univoque. La nouvelle contemporaine contribuerait ainsi à l'émergence d'un « lecteur émancipé » pour reprendre les termes de Claire Colin.

Finalement, la nouvelle contemporaine permet de mettre en évidence un phénomène beaucoup plus large, que l'auteure, en s'appuyant à juste titre sur les travaux de Paul Ricoeur qualifie de retour de la confiance dans le récit. La dernière partie s'attache ainsi à montrer en quoi la nouvelle contemporaine manifeste un rapport particulier à la maîtrise du récit dans la mesure où elle est un genre codé depuis son origine ; d'où, là encore, deux stratégies antithétiques : la maîtrise défaillante, la maîtrise excessive. Dans le premier cas, la défaillance peut se traduire sur le plan thématique comme l'expression d'un dysfonctionnement (les pannes de tous ordres) ou sur le plan narratif par une défaillance généralisée de l'intrigue, signe chez l'auteur de l'impossibilité de proposer une configuration cohérente du récit et peut-être du monde. Dans le cas inverse, l'événement est parfaitement maîtrisé, anticipé, constamment annoncé, comme s'il n'y avait aucun hasard, ce qui aboutit là encore à le rendre éminemment suspect.

Dans son analyse Claire Colin se heurte à un problème bien connu des chercheurs spécialistes de la nouvelle, à savoir la mise en relation des phénomènes constatés dans la nouvelle avec le paradigme romanesque. Or, l'analyse n'étudie jamais cet aspect et le met même en avant. Ainsi, à propos du désinvestissement de l'instance narrative, Claire Colin fait un parallèle très éclairant avec le roman en prenant comme exemple *Les Bienveillantes* de Jonathan Littell, mais aussi le cinéma, pour montrer précisément en quoi la brièveté engendre une intensification de la poétique. Constamment, l'auteure tient les deux bouts du fil, si l'on peut dire : en quoi le texte court produit-il un effet de lecture qui lui est spécifique, en quoi manifeste-t-il une évolution qui vaut pour le texte en prose et pour l'art en général ? L'auteur évite ainsi un enfermement dans un corpus spécifique, fait preuve d'honnêteté et d'une très grande finesse d'analyse. L'étude de Claire Colin est donc en tout point remarquable et apporte une contribution majeure à l'étude et l'histoire de la nouvelle.

Quelques points cependant mériteraient d'être soulignés, davantage comme des invitations à approfondir l'analyse. Il va de soi que, vu l'étendue du corpus, vu l'importance des lectures critiques convoquées, Claire Colin ne pouvait suivre toutes les directions de recherche, toutes les pistes qu'elle propose avec beaucoup d'intelligence. Cependant, le lecteur ne peut s'empêcher de s'interroger sur la contextualisation historique de ces analyses.

À de multiples reprises, l'auteure revient en effet sur l'idée d'une césure, d'une rupture dans la littérature contemporaine qui entraînerait une sorte d'incomplétude du récit liée elle-même à une impuissance du narrateur, une incapacité à proposer une morale, une vision du monde, voire un sens, une signification. C'est précisément dans le chapitre consacré à la morale que cette réflexion a peut-être le plus de portée, l'auteur, montrant, en reprenant une analyse de Bruno Thibault, à quel point chez des auteurs comme Le Clézio, dans le recueil *La Ronde et autres faits divers*, ne s'exprime aucune morale, aucun affect, aucun engagement, l'auteur restant au plus près du fait divers. Pour qualifier cette césure, l'auteure reprend souvent à son compte une formule de Daniel Payot « le monde d'après l'harmonie » (24) tirée du titre de l'essai consacré à Adorno : *Après l'harmonie : Benjamin, Adorno et quelques autres*. Elle reprend la définition de Daniel Payot : « la beauté comme complétude... la forme achevée... l'unité à laquelle on ne saurait rien retrancher la figuration en petit d'un monde enfin réconcilié » (24-25). On voit bien se profiler l'image d'une harmonie artistique qui serait la figuration d'une

harmonie historique, voire universelle, mais là encore la question est de savoir à quoi il est fait référence. Claire Colin se contente sur ce point de renvoyer cette harmonie au passé. Souhaitons qu'il ne s'agisse pas d'un passé trop lointain ou d'une chimère. Se pose également la question de savoir quand et pourquoi nous serions sortis de cet état d'harmonie et là encore la réponse ne vient jamais, même s'il est souvent question de rupture, de césure par rapport au récit. L'angle choisi plutôt narratologique et stylistique ne permet bien sûr pas d'apporter la réponse à ces questions, telle n'était pas non plus l'intention de l'auteure, mais elle ouvre une piste très intéressante pour une histoire de la nouvelle contemporaine qui pourrait analyser ces moments de rupture en se replaçant dans le cadre d'une histoire littéraire et d'une histoire tout court. Se pose également la question de savoir si ces moments de césure sont les mêmes d'un pays à l'autre (on peut penser notamment aux États-Unis). Le corpus va des années 1980 aux années 2000, lequel couvre donc un pan de notre histoire contemporaine qui correspond effectivement à une période de crise économique, civilisationnelle, sociale qu'il aurait fallu peut-être établir plus précisément.

D'autre part, même s'il est toujours facile de recenser les oublis dans ce genre d'approche, il faut quand même insister sur le décalage entre le titre « L'événement dans la nouvelle contemporaine » et le corpus. En effet, pour nous en tenir au seul domaine de la nouvelle de langue française, l'ouvrage de René Godenne paru en 2017, *La nouvelle de langue française de 1940 à 2000*, qui constitue l'outil bibliographique de référence sur le genre, recense dans sa bibliographie plus de 3500 recueils de nouvelles de langue française publiés entre 1980 et 2000. Certes, personne ne viendra reprocher à Claire Colin de n'avoir pas lu la totalité des recueils parus, d'autant plus que la perspective comparatiste qui était la sienne l'a amenée également à une approche internationale. Cependant, se pose la question de la représentativité du corpus choisi, qui comprend deux auteurs essentiellement : Le Clézio et Jauffret, même s'il est question également de Richard Millet et Annie Saumont. Ces auteurs sont-ils représentatifs de la nouvelle contemporaine de langue française dans le traitement de l'événement et du récit ? Là encore, plus qu'une critique, il faut y voir une invitation à suivre une piste d'étude passionnante qui consisterait à enquêter sur un corps plus large pour voir si les modalités définies par Claire Colin : la réserve/l'excès, la question de la maîtrise, le désengagement, valent pour un pan significatif de la nouvelle

contemporaine. L'ouvrage pourrait en ce sens constituer un outil extrêmement précieux pour de futurs chercheurs.

L'auteure s'appuie sur une très riche et très variée littérature critique. En ce qui concerne la nouvelle, elle cite des travaux importants dont ceux de Michel Viegnes : *L'Esthétique de la nouvelle française au vingtième siècle* et *L'Œuvre au bref*. Elle fait référence à plusieurs reprises à des notions importantes dans l'analyse de Viegnes : le non-dit, la plénitude signifiante, la nouvelle anodale. Cependant, on peut précisément regretter la brièveté de ces allusions. Que ce soit dans le domaine de la structure événementielle des récits, ou de l'arrière-plan philosophique auquel renvoie le traitement de l'événement, ces travaux auraient pu constituer un apport intéressant. De la même manière, il n'est pas fait référence à *l'Histoire de la nouvelle au vingtième siècle* parue aux Editions Universitaires de Dijon et dont le second tome, dirigé par Michel Viegnes, parce qu'il porte sur la période qui va de la seconde guerre mondiale au nouveau roman, aurait apporté d'utiles éclairages en matière d'histoire littéraire. Sans doute aussi, la question du recueil serait-elle une piste intéressante qui nécessiterait un traitement plus important. Certes, l'auteure aborde la question de la composition du recueil, simple juxtaposition de textes ou ensemble organisé, mais globalement les nouvelles sont plutôt analysées isolément.

Ces quelques réserves n'enlèvent rien à la qualité en tout point remarquable de cet essai qui restera, à n'en pas douter, une référence obligée dans l'analyse de la nouvelle contemporaine et plus généralement de l'esthétique du texte court.

**Yana Meerzon. *Performance, Subjectivity, Cosmopolitanism*. Basingstoke:
Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
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Writing from the heart of Canada's capital city, where the country's late Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau inaugurated the Multicultural Policy of Canada (1971), University of Ottawa Professor Yana Meerzon tackles in a nuanced manner interrelated topics such as global migration, identity formation, subjectivity, linguistics, and intercultural theatre performance in the time of COVID-19, the post-Trump era, Brexit, alongside pertinent social justice campaigns such as the *#MeToo* and *Black Lives Matter* movements. With these increasingly complex topics conflating and unfolding sequentially, Meerzon's latest book, *Performance, Subjectivity, Cosmopolitanism*, is not only timely but welcome in its attempt to analyse such phenomena in performing arts aesthetics. One of the first impressions this book makes (at least, on this particular reader) is the inclusion of an impressive range of voices from the academic community: well-known North American theatre scholars Jill Dolan, Richard Knowles, Christopher Balme, and Marvin Carlson are evoked alongside Edward Said and an erudite lineage of European scholars from contemporaries Sara Ahmed and Erika Fischer-Lichte, to the posthumous echoes of Mikhail Bakhtin and Jacques Lacan. In the introduction, Meerzon reflects on how her project, "which began as an exercise in contemplation of the divided subjectivity of the cosmopolitan self [,] has turned into a political endeavour, a gesture of warning and an act of resistance, aspiring to raise awareness of the dangers created by the practices of exclusion" (27). From this point onwards, Meerzon carves out a space for the so-called

cosmopolitan theatre artist, who challenges the English language as the world's default and dominant *lingua franca* and homogenizing force for much of professional theatre and performance in the western world, particularly after World War II.

Chapter Two, "Dramaturgies of the Self: Staging the Décalage of Vernacular Cosmopolitanism," focuses primarily on autobiographical productions, analyzing the work of household theatrical names and shows: Robert Lepage's *Vinci* (1986), Lorena Gale's *Je me souviens* (1998–2001), and Guillermo Verdecchia's *Fronteras Americanas* (1993), the self-titled *Trois: Un spectacle de Mani Soleymanlou* (2011–2014), and Wajdi Mouawad's *Sœurs* (2014). These are useful and well-trodden examples, characteristic of "several decades in Canadian history underscored by the policies and politics of multiculturalism" (37). It becomes clear not only that multilingual artists belong to one and sometimes two (or more) nations, but that such relationships enacted onstage also come to represent both individual and collective divisions, or fractured selves. In reckoning with language and subjectivity, Meerzon inserts these examples within the context of Canada's Official Languages Act, Multicultural Act, and evolving Immigration Policies. When considered together, these case studies embed themselves into the discourses of language, linguistics, and multiculturalism, the latter having been criticized as a top-down instrument to manage diverse populations. Building upon Jill Dolan's notion of "Utopian Performance," and related beliefs that theatre can create alternative places for gathering, Meerzon further suggests that "the utopian programme of immigrant theatre is to generate an imagined cosmopolitan community and thereby reinvent the nation" (39). The promises of Canada's multiculturalism are seen in a positive light, countering far-right nationalistic movements and their exclusionary ways of pitting "us versus them" through fear of immigration and the alien-other. In such a climate, Meerzon articulates her interest in how multilingualism constructs a cosmopolitan encounter, which in turn generates "*pockets of (not-)knowing*," alongside self-reflection and estrangement (36; emphasis in original). These moments of (not-)knowing echo a neo-Brechtian alienation (*Verfremdungseffekt*) often believed to provoke critical acumen in audiences and to keep them "thinking" rather than simply relating empathetically with characters onstage.

In the context of multilingual theatre and the "Politics of Recognition" (espoused by Charles Taylor), Chapter 3 brings back into sharper focus the often contentious issue of language. Entitled "Speaking in Tongues,"

the chapter also echoes some of Marvin Carlson's research into heteroglossia and plurilingual performance. It is refreshing to see attention paid to a Canadian contemporary classic, David Fennario's *Balconville* (1979), arguably Canada's first bilingual play. "In its focus on a bilingual vernacular," Meerzon states, "*Balconville* features a representational theatretalk intended to mimetically evoke bilingual Montreal" (85, emphasis in original). Meerzon has astutely inserted this discussion into her volume. Indeed, the play reminds the reader that, while multiculturalism is often viewed as a cornerstone of Canadian culture, much of the cultural investments occurs within a more hegemonic bilingualism that favors English and French. Many other languages and cultures are represented in lip service only and sit less frequently at the political and economic decision-making table. This reminds me of an earlier essay in which Meerzon compares *Vinci*, the work of well-known Québécois director Robert Lepage, with *Je me souviens*, by the late Lorena Gale, a French-speaking Canadian of African descent. In some aspects, this comparison is timely and necessary, but the two individuals and the cultures they have come to represent in the broader social schema are indeed worlds apart – in terms of access to funding, whether due to gender or cultural heritage. Meerzon is undoubtedly sensitive to such inequities, as is apparent when she says of another Lepagean production, *La Trilogie des dragons* (1987), that "when the passages spoken in English, Japanese, Mandarin, and Cantonese are not translated into French or English, they are nevertheless made accessible to the play's target Francophone audiences" (91). It is well-known in Canadian cultural circles that *Le Conseil des Arts et Lettres du Québec* offers its artists more substantial subsidization than the other provincial funders in the Anglosphere. They justify this on the grounds of the Québécois' relative minority status in the midst of what has often been referred to as a "sea of English."

Lepage's example is flanked with two other notable cases, the first of which is Betty Quan's *Mother Tongue* (1996), where a family of three must communicate with each other despite the fact that each is proficient in one (sometimes two) but not all languages – ASL, Cantonese, and English – needed to bridge the linguistic gap. Meerzon identifies the playwright's intentions, which use "the devices of theatrical multilingualism in order to turn its monolingual Anglophone spectators into strangers both in the world of the play and by extension to see the strangeness in themselves" (96). In the other example, *In Sundry Languages* (2019) a play devised by a number of participants and collated by its director,

Art Babayants, audience members are compared to travellers “(whether migrants or cosmopolitan tourists) who, in the process of travelling, find themselves excluded from the normative language(s) of the state, to which they travel” (101). *In Sundry Languages* does not fully translate its multiplicity of voices for the Anglo-speaking majority, and by keeping the audience in the dark, the play somehow conjures up the same confusion or “(un)knowing” previously discussed. Interestingly enough, the concepts of subjectivity and of the relation between self and other become most evident when Meerzon cites Lacan’s mirror, as echoed in Sara Ahmed’s research: “the gaze of the spectator reveals the darkest mechanisms of our psyche; it turns the performer’s body into the site of projection, (de)construction, (re)presentation, (re)enactment, (re)articulation, and archive of this spectator’s own self” (124).

After reading *Performance, Subjectivity, Cosmopolitanism*, I have little disappointment and even less regret. Fulfilling its title’s promise, Meerzon’s book covers a wide range of Canadian texts and performances made by so-called cosmopolitan artists and explores how inadvertent exchanges between artists and audiences impact the subjectivities, identities, and hopefully the value-systems of both. Upon closing the volume, however, I am haunted with many deeper thoughts and questions. Admittedly, as I share some of Meerzon’s research interests, I wonder how the concepts and discourses mulled in the academic sphere will impact those working “down below,” at the ground level of the not-for-profit theatre world, especially in Canada. I wonder what it would look like to trace the development of multiculturalism together with cosmopolitanism, as the latter is examined in greater detail than the former by Meerzon and remains ensconced in academe alongside concepts of subjectivity and performativity. In other words, the laypersons unaccustomed to reading this style of writing may be kept at bay. Although this book is intended for an academic audience, I cannot help but reflect on how cosmopolitanism is understood by immigrant (or refugee) theatre artists and how such a book could benefit from their full engagement and attention. After all, it would be a shame if the deep empathy and knowledge apparent in Meerzon’s writing did not reach a wider demographic, or if those artists who might well benefit from such worthy scholarship could not find themselves in these pages.

As multicultural fatigue continues, many scholars, myself included, who remain interested in post-colonial, intercultural, and plurilingual theatre performance, will find renewed inspiration in to Meerzon’s

insights and positionality. Her pressing prompts will certainly remain with me. As a work of merit, nuance, and comparative dramatic analysis based on Canadian case studies, Meerzon's latest academic contribution enriches Canada's multicultural theatre history by discussing the issues of language, migration, and performances of "cosmopolitan artists" in a single volume. Interdisciplinary scholars working across humanities, post-colonial studies, and interculturalism will certainly gain deeper insights into the concepts of border-crossing and migrating bodies and ideologies that characterize the interesting times we find ourselves in.

Meerzon remains highly aware of her own privilege, while the artists under scrutiny may not have the same opportunities. She clearly envisions movement and migration as inherent rights, not simply as privileges. The book left an indelible imprint on me, as many similar ideas and preoccupations about the status of today's travelling artist and the resurgence of insular nationalistic politics once again make the headlines. This book interested me not only in view of my own proximity to America's post-Trump era, but also because of its attempt to help us make sense of our complex world and ourselves as educated members of the *citoyenneté mondiale*. As power shifts, demographic changes, and in-fighting between cultural groups and countries continue at an almost indescribable pace, this book invites readers to question the rationale behind hyper-capitalism's steadfast reliance on economies of scale, together with humanity's belief in financial wealth and material ownership as the primary indicator of progress and success. What are the alternatives? Meerzon gestures towards a few options, by foregrounding the transformative potential of solo performance, unglossed multilingual theatre, community-driven theatre, nomadic and avant-garde spirit as some of the many possible avenues for consideration.

**Dagmar Vandebosch and Theo D'haen,
eds. *Literary Transnationalism(s)*. Leiden
and Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2019. Pp. 263.
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Against the background of the raging COVID-19 pandemic that has spread across continents regardless of the political, economic, and cultural realities of the nation-states, as well as the consequent consolidation of power by nation-states, the concept of transnationalism appears to have faced some setbacks. At the same time, however, we are still living in a transnational era and the world is much more interconnected than ever. Dagmar Vandebosch and Theo D'haen's edited volume examines the evolution of the concept of transnationalism over the years, its relations to globalization in the contexts of the nation and nation-state, and its impact over categories such as space, identity, and social groups.

The introduction, after offering a working definition of "transnationalism" according to Steven Vertovec, shows how "the transnational" entails accelerated momentum of global interconnectedness. While international relations concern nation-states and official agencies, the transnational is implicated in "sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among nonstate actors based across national borders" (3). Recent critical approaches caution us to be wary of the liberating potential of transnationalism, as it can reinforce and sustain differences, both economic and social. Paul Jay points out academia's "complicity with the forces of global capital," in a context where uncritical euphoria about diversity and hybridity may conceal from view deeper underlying fissures (2). Yet, there is greater realization that transnationalism does not transcend the idea of the nation, as "national" and "transnational" are mutually

constitutive: “As a relational concept, transnationalism encompasses entities that operate on a local level, as well as within a national, regional or supranational context” (4).

The volume is divided into three parts. The first one, entitled “Transnationalism,” deals with issues of a general nature through the lenses of specific case studies. The second part examines Europe’s experience of transnationalism, while the third part focuses on transnationalism in the Americas. The larger non-Western world of Asia and Africa has been excluded from the purview of debates, although they figure tangentially in a few articles.

The literature available on transnationalism suggests that it is essentially a modernist construction located between nationalism and post-nationalism. In this framework, César Domínguez attempts to make a case for medieval transnationalism by using a manuscript housed in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana Codex Latinus 549. However, the evidence provided by Domínguez appears sketchy compared to the detailed investigations undertaken by thinkers such as Jonardon Ganeri on the transnational traffic of ideas between India and Europe in early modern South Asia. In “Liquid Spaces: (Re)thinking Transnationalism in an Era of Globalization,” Amaury Dehoux views transnational linguistic areas as constituted by the inherent fluidity of language which enables it to cross boundaries. He identifies “nomadism” as a feature of contemporary literatures of the world and explicates it with reference to the works of Argentinian writer Andres Neuman and Congolese writer Alain Mabanckou. Languages, even as they remain fluid, partake of a dialectic between the “local” and the “global,” subsuming multiple horizons of experience. An author like Kazuo Ishiguro, for instance, cannot be understood in terms of a single nation. This is why we need a literary theory that takes into account the liquidity of language as a condition of the present-day world.

Jean Bessière complicates the idea of transnationalism by relating its paradoxes to “their less explicit expressions, to their counter-expressions and to their most explicit exemplifications” (38). To illustrate his approach to literary transnationalism, he discusses Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, Kourouma’s *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* and Fuentes’s *Terra Nostra*. While outlining a new model to interpret the dominant transnational paradigms, the author opens up the possibility of a new aesthetic approach to the transnational novel based on the play upon difference and compatibility. Tomás Espino explores the history of literary

multilingualism and finds that, contrary to common belief, writing in a second language has a long tradition in Western literature. It was the emergence of the mono-lingual paradigm in eighteenth-century Europe that stigmatized the tradition of multilingual writing. The twentieth century saw a shift in perspective. Espino discusses the examples of Nabokov, Eva Hoffman, Beckett, Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiongo to conclude that the choice of literary language is determined by the compulsions of exile, the politics of decolonization and personal quest for an emancipatory medium. He rightly argues that writing in a second language is “one of the major driving forces of literary transnationalism” (58).

Some of these issues find echoes in Ottmar Ette’s essay, “Writing-between-Worlds.” In the case of a writer like José F.A. Oliver who grew up speaking German and Spanish, with roots in the Alemannic dialect from his Black Forest homeland, “the world cannot be grasped from the perspective of a single language” (63). Yet, such writers face discrimination in the name of the German heritage and the purity of Germanness. Amin Maalouf, a novelist of Arabic background writing in French, further illustrates the travails of nomadism in the age of high nationalism. Ette pleads for a “[p]oetics of movement that grasps literature in movement and as movement, and places its primary focus upon a Writing-between-Worlds” (79) in a world where “literatures without a fixed abode” capture the dynamics of migratory spaces.

In Part 2, European encounters with transnationalism are closely probed through specific cultural phenomena. Beatrijs Vanacker examines pseudo-translation as a subset of transnational/transcultural fiction in French during the eighteenth century. Inadequate command of the original language becomes a pretext for taking creative liberties with the “original” text. In the context of a Franco-centrism that generally prevailed in the culture of translations, pseudo-translations pushed the boundaries of the general perception of how translation functions in society. Vanacker concludes: “Pseudo-translations enable us to shed new light on the very ethno-centric principles that informed the various forms of transcultural prose writing that shaped the ‘translative’ literary field throughout the eighteenth century” (102).

Michel De Dobbeleer’s essay alludes to the four-volume *History of Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* covering the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, commissioned by ICLA and edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and the late John Neubauer. According to him, this four-volume book breaks new ground in adopting a transnational approach. De

Dobbeleer revisits the literary history produced by Johannes Scherr more than some 150 years ago in order to bring out traces of a transnational approach which partly emerged out of Goethe's views on *Weltliteratur*. Despite his focus on German material, Scherr frequently alludes to non-German authors and compares East European figures with better known Western counterparts. For Scherr, a developing literature has to acquire a national character in order to move on to a transnational status. In that sense, he anticipates some of the theories on transnationalism expounded in the twentieth century.

Canons of literature are often established on the basis of literary histories and anthologies. In his contribution, Dragos Jipa shows how illustrated monographic series, such as *English Men of Letters* (1878), *American Men of Letters* (1881), and *Les Grands Ecrivains Français* (1887), created a pantheon of national authors. National literary canons, the scholar highlights, are often defined in the context of international perspectives. The history of the reception of these monographs, as outlined here, certainly makes for interesting reading. In a joint essay, Reine Meylaerts and Diana Roig-Sanz focus on the "intranational and international networks and cultural mediation" as illustrated by the life and works of Belgian writer Paul Vanderborght. The latter's multiple relocations in the interwar period forged transnational cultural contacts across multilingual networks, thereby linking a vast array of cultural centres: Brussels and Antwerp in Belgium, Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt, Madrid and Barcelona in Spain, and Buenos Aires and Mexico City in Latin America. The way Vanderborght mediated between diverse cultural formations in an unsettled world merits serious study.

Part 2 closes on a study of spy novels, which seem to enact the subliminal political conflicts between nations through their globalized "plots" (pun intended!). Janine Hauthal explores the works of John Le Carré, Ian McEwan, Jonathan Coe, and Dave Hutchinson to unpack the national imaginary that runs through their transnational border-crossings. Hauthal concludes that these novels epitomize "notions of transnationalism and transculturality that cannot be put on a level with all-encompassing cosmopolitanism" (155).

The third section of the volume deals with the experience of transnationalism in the Americas, namely the United States, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Chile. Djelal Kadir investigates the dialectic between the mainstream and the margins in American poetry and argues that its poets, such as William Carlos Williams, display a pattern of non-conformism, so that "writing against the

grain” is very much “in the American grain” (161). As Kadir explains, “[t]his is a strain of poetic production that retains the dissensual, contestatory, and antithetical impetus of self-emancipation and self-authentication we witness since the earliest poetics of resistance” (171). He quotes a signature poem by Sherman Alexie, a member of the Spokane/Coeur d’Alene tribe, “How to Write the Great American Indian Novel,” in full to illustrate the resistance it conveys to stereotypes present in American culture. The following essay examines the transnational production of *Troilus and Cressida* by The Wooster Group (New York) in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company for the World Shakespeare Festival (as part of the London 2012 Olympics Festival). Just as the play dramatizes the collision between two cultures, this collaborative production also implied the meeting of two aesthetic approaches. Johan Callens demonstrates how the consciousness-raising productions of the experimental theatre groups both inform and undermine certitudes.

To study the history of migration of the different Los Angeles communities, Inge Lanslots and An Van Hecke turn to the fiction of Chicano author Alejandro Morales. They show how, in Morales’ fictional works, real and imagined spaces meet, as different ethnic groups share community spaces regardless of their cultural differences. Moving south of the border, Reindert Dhondt calls into question the term “post-national” in relation to Latin American literature in general, and to Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes’s works in particular. The idea of the “transnational” is productive in this specific case. According to Dhondt, Fuentes’s Latin Americanist discourse identifies the United States as the political other and helps articulate a transnational Mexican perspective which is both local and global.

Liesbeth François reads two emblematic anthologies of young Latin American writers, *McOndo* (edited by Alberto Fuguet and Sergio Gómez; 1996) and *El futuro no es nuestro* (edited by Diego Trelles Paz; 2008), which enable us to trace the changing images of Latin America. The former contested the “Maconda”-centric view of Latin America as a rural, magical land of fabulist narratives, while the latter distances itself from both the burden of this tradition and the limitations of the literary market. While these anthologies both move away from the nation as an analytical category, François’s close readings of the stories leads her to distinguish between two different kinds of transnationalism represented in them. They juxtapose the conflicting demands of a global worldview with an essentialist view of Latin Americanness.

In a final contribution, Kathleen Gyssels discusses a chapter excerpted from a travelogue by Edouard Glissant, *Tout-monde* (1993), so as to map his shift from an exclusively French-Caribbean perspective to a transnational viewpoint. She argues that Glissant's retelling of an Antillean soldier's testimony of the Second World War is loaded with tall claims regarding the Black and Jewish diasporas, a subject which deserves close scrutiny. She is critical of the larger implications of Glissant's transnational approach, as it is slanted against the entangled fates of the Jewish and Black victims: "Shared aspects of Black and Jewish diasporas and synergy between Jewish and Black authors and artists [...] are ignored by the utopian 'Tout-monde', which dangerously divides a multiethnic and multicultural post World War II landscape" (259).

The essays gathered in *Literary Transnationalism(s)* are well-researched and deeply analytical, and open up further possibilities of research into the complex problematic of transnationalism. Although Europe looms large in most of the discussions, there is a clear recognition of the fact that "Europe" as a political-cultural construct needs to be deconstructed against the transnational currents sweeping the world in the twenty-first century. By returning to the medieval strands of transnationalism, emphasizing the latter's "liquid" features, complicating a simplistic view of multilingualism bred by the narratives of monolingual nation-states, and highlighting the "nomadic" aspects of important contemporary works, the volume explores new territory in contemporary comparative study of cultures, languages and literatures.

Sylvie André. *Pour une lecture postcoloniale de la fiction réaliste (XIX^e–XX^e siècles)*. Paris : Honoré Champion, 2018. Pp. 188. ISBN : 9782745347763.

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Spécialiste des littératures exotiques, coloniales et francophones, notamment des littératures du Pacifique, auxquelles elle a consacré un ouvrage paru chez L'Harmattan en 2008, Sylvie André publie, sous le titre *Pour une lecture postcoloniale de la fiction réaliste (XIX^e–XX^e siècles)*, une synthèse des recherches qu'elle a menées sur ces corpus et à partir desquelles elle se propose de sonder l'apport heuristique de l'épistémé postcoloniale. S'inspirant de la démarche comparatiste d'Edward Said, la relecture, à laquelle elle se livre, de certains discours de la critique littéraire ne résonne pas moins de tous les appels à repenser l'histoire littéraire, qui se sont multipliés ces quinze dernières années.

En effet, la fiction réaliste qu'envisage l'auteure concerne tant *Paul et Virginie* de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre qu'*Un cœur simple* de Gustave Flaubert, tant « le roman colonial au début du XX^e siècle et sa mise en cause » (73) que l'importance de l'expérience de la colonisation pour le Nouveau Roman. À bien des égards, les dialogues ainsi tissés font écho à ceux qu'avaient initiés, en 2010, Christie McDonald et Susan Rubin Suleiman pour relire la littérature française et en français dans la perspective « globale » des différences culturelles à l'intérieur et au-delà de la nation (*French Global. A New Approach to Literary History*, 2010). Aux œuvres largement balisées par les travaux sur la littérature exotique (*Atala*, *Georges*, Maupassant ou Loti) et sur le roman colonial et ethnographique (les Leblond de La Réunion, Pierre Benoît ou les frères Tharaud), aux emblématiques « aventures ambiguës » (Camus, Malraux, J.M.G. Le Clézio), Sylvie André adjoint une « lecture postcoloniale » du

roman français, et de sa relation avec le réalisme (de Zola à Simenon, de Marguerite Duras, Alain Robbe-Grillet et Claude Ollier à Jean-Luc Coatelem) : « Au-delà du texte exotique, la lente mise en place d'une situation coloniale dans les pays conquis au XIX^e siècle a aussi mis son empreinte sur la production française, d'une façon bien plus remarquable que n'ont bien voulu le dire les commentateurs et les rédacteurs d'histoire littéraire » (58), écrit-elle après avoir retracé la généalogie du global remontant à la première vague de colonisation. À l'instar d'Edward Saïd et de Fredric Jameson – mais l'on pense aussi à Gayatri Spivak relisant *Jane Eyre* à partir de *Wide Sargasso Sea* de Jean Rhys –, Sylvie André s'affronte directement à ce que *French Global* tendait paradoxalement à émuquer : l'inscription du fait colonial dans une histoire littéraire qui, de nationale, passe *de facto* en régime de globalisation, au sens aussi où la relation à la sphère économique ne peut plus être éludée.

C'est précisément en ces termes que l'introduction pose les repères chronologiques : « À partir du moment où s'installe un véritable système colonial (1885), il semble légitime de ne plus analyser les productions de la fiction narrative dans le cadre explicatif d'une littérature nationale mais bien davantage dans celui de la littérature d'un État impérial auquel on pourrait symboliquement assigner un terme avec la signature des accords d'Évian en 1962 » (9). La *lecture postcoloniale de la fiction réaliste (XIX^e–XX^e siècles)* entend ainsi suivre l'évolution des poétiques, d'abord dans leur tentative de « concili[er] [...] l'épistémè pour y intégrer la figure de l'Autre » (9), puis dans leur relation à une hiérarchie raciale des cultures prenant les apparences d'une histoire « naturelle » de l'homme, enfin dans la « désorientation » que ne peut que provoquer la convergence temporelle entre la barbarie nazie au cœur de l'Europe et l'expérience « vécue » de l'exploitation coloniale.

Consacré aux « traces de la première vague coloniale », le premier chapitre répond pleinement aux visées méthodologiques et épistémiques de l'ouvrage, en proposant une lecture inédite d'*Un cœur simple* de Gustave Flaubert, qui s'éclaire de la comparaison avec « l'utopie d'un nouveau monde » ou l'analyse complexe des relations sociales et économiques en système plantationnaire, chez Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand et Alexandre Dumas. C'est cependant à partir du deuxième chapitre, « Expansionnisme et impérialisme au tournant du XIX^e siècle », que s'affirme la contribution notable des corpus envisagés aux théories de la fiction littéraire. S'intéresser à l'influence de l'exploration des îles du Pacifique sur la philosophie des Lumières, puis au dévoiement du

rationalisme en idéologie scientifique que reflète alors l'exploration du continent africain, conduit nécessairement à situer le discours critique sur la frontière qui sépare le genre du récit de voyage de la mise en fiction. De fait, dans ce qu'elle définit comme « fiction exotique », Sylvie André voit « la mise en scène de l'hésitation épistémique » liée à la soudaine nécessité d'exprimer des civilisations qui avaient pensé l'homme et le monde de façon radicalement autre » (44). Dès lors que l'instauration d'un véritable système d'administration coloniale met à mal cette « tentative de rapprochement des cultures et des peuples par fictions interposées » (53), c'est la représentation du capitalisme de la finance et de la spéculation que génère l'Empire, qu'il s'agit d'analyser dans les grands romans naturalistes que sont *Bel-Ami* et *L'Argent* (chapitre 3).

Reprenant son hypothèse d'analyse d'une fiction travaillant sur « les possibles changements axiologiques qui pourraient se produire au contact d'autres cultures » (81), Sylvie André montre, dans le quatrième chapitre, comment, alors qu'elle prend le relais du roman des colons et du romanesque colonial métropolitain, la critique anticoloniale de Segalen, et sa « fiction d'un narrateur indéterminé mais nettement intraculturel » (97), de Malraux, attaché à faire connaître les expressions artistiques extra-occidentales, ou des frères Tharaud n'évite pas l'écueil de la vision ethnocentriste. Dans la même perspective, l'auteure sonde, dans les « fictions narratives de la décolonisation de l'Empire français » qui font l'objet du chapitre suivant, « l'impossibilité [...] de poser la question de la colonisation en termes de stratégies fictionnelles réalistes » (111). C'est à cette aporie esthétique-éthique qu'elle attribue le choix du roman philosophique que font tant Albert Camus que Cheikh Hamidou Kane, l'auteur de *L'Aventure ambiguë*. Se réclamant aussi de la « politique de la littérature » de Jacques Rancière (44), le potentiel heuristique de l'hypothèse retenue se mesure encore à la pertinence du retour sur le fameux « désengagement » du Nouveau Roman.

Le dernier chapitre boucle le voyage entrepris depuis la fiction exotique à laquelle la « littérature-monde » ramène inexorablement, via Nicolas Bouvier et J.M.G. Le Clézio. La section intitulée « esquisse d'analyse de la constitution du champ littéraire-monde en français » est représentative d'un autre grand intérêt du livre de Sylvie André : son ouverture constante aux littératures du Pacifique et ce, dès l'insertion dans le corpus du roman colonial des auteurs colons de la Nouvelle-Calédonie : Jean Mariotti, Alin Laubreaux et Paul Bloc. Pour la période contemporaine, l'analyse des sous-champs littéraires, au prisme du capital symbolique,

met en exergue les fictions kanak de Dora Wadrawane, de Déwé Görödé et du dramaturge Pierre Gope, l'écriture « en relation » de Nicolas Kurtovitch, pour la Nouvelle-Calédonie également, l'œuvre de Chantal Spitz, pour la Polynésie française. Dans cette polarisation de l'espace littéraire pacifique, Sylvie André note enfin le repli récent de la fiction réaliste dans le genre du roman policier. Si elle conclut que ces écrivains, comme « les écrivains antillais du Tout-Monde ou de la poétique de la relation, les écrivains des ex-colonies », « dessinent le nouveau visage de la fiction narrative de ce siècle » (168), force est de regretter cependant la portion congrue qu'elle leur réserve. Parce que les discours critiques que l'ouvrage entend revisiter sont précisément responsables d'une réticence à sonder les poétiques de la fiction dans les littératures dites postcoloniales (lire notamment Derive et Garnier) et longtemps assignées à résidence et à référentialité, il serait intéressant de confronter davantage la « lecture postcoloniale de la fiction réaliste » à ces corpus, au-delà des mentions rapides du *Doguiçimi* de Paul Hazoumé, de René Maran, des grands noms de l'anticolonialisme (Césaire, Senghor et Fanon) ou d'Ahmadou Kourouma (brièvement évoqué dans ce dernier chapitre).

Les stratégies subversives que les écrivains des anciennes colonies mettent en œuvre génèrent comme autant d'autres fictions réalistes ou d'autres de la fiction réaliste et ce, pour la littérature haïtienne notamment, dès la première vague de colonisation. La « lecture postcoloniale de la fiction réaliste » invite à ce dialogue transnational, en vertu même de la « nouvelle conception des études littéraires » que Sylvie André appelle de ses vœux à la fin du livre. Une telle démarche permet en effet de sortir du « binarisme schématique » (164) de la fiction postcoloniale pour retracer la généalogie de la fiction contemporaine, « roman de la multiplicité des visions du monde, des cultures, littérature-monde qu'illustrent aussi bien Édouard Glissant, que Maryse Condé, Alain Mabanckou, Wajdi Mouawad ou J. M. G. Le Clézio » (172). On le voit, l'hypothèse d'analyse, qui confronte les discours de la critique littéraire aux « métafictions historiographiques » du fait colonial, pour reprendre l'expression de Lynda Hutcheon, s'avère particulièrement féconde.

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**Alexandra Bourse. *Le Métis, une identité hybride ?* Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2017. Pp. 638.
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Procédant du remaniement d'une thèse de doctorat en littérature comparée, dirigée par Anne Tomiche, et soutenue à l'Université Paris IV-Sorbonne en 2013, l'ouvrage d'Alexandra Bourse traite de l'inscription du personnage métis dans la littérature des Amériques. Cette dernière, englobant des œuvres marquées par des disparités tant géographique, historique, politique que linguistique, est unifiée, selon Édouard Glissant, par une même obsession fondamentale : « la crispation du temps » et son corollaire, la « hantise du passé » (*Le Discours antillais*). Or ce passé a été marqué, dans les Amériques tant insulaires que continentales, par un même processus historique traumatique, la conquête coloniale et ses exactions : la traite esclavagiste et les violences perpétrées à l'encontre des populations autochtones. La mise en contact brutale de populations, affectées à des degrés divers par les phénomènes de déterritorialisation, transplantation, massacre, annexion et instauration de politiques socio-économiques discriminatoires, s'est accompagnée de brassages ethniques, favorisant l'apparition de groupes humains singuliers : les métis. Ce terme englobe aussi bien les Mulâtres, fruits de l'union entre Noirs et Blancs, que les Chicanos, d'ascendance indienne et espagnole, également présents dans l'espace américain.

Ainsi est légitimé le vaste corpus qu'embrasse l'étude, qui s'appuie sur dix-sept œuvres issues de l'archipel caribéen et de l'Amérique latine, centrale et du nord, publiées entre 1928 et 2008. Toutes érigent au rang de protagoniste le métis, dont l'hybridité incarne tout à la fois l'élaboration et la réévaluation du concept binaire de l'identité. L'introduction

présente avec minutie les auteurs et leurs œuvres, replacés dans leur environnement géographique et leur contexte socio-historique. Le corpus anglophone est composé des œuvres de deux romancières de la Harlem Renaissance : Jessie Fauset (*Plum Bun, A Novel Without A Moral*, 1929) et Nella Larsen, (*Quicksana*, 1928 ; *Passing*, 1929) ainsi que de celles de la Jamaïcaine Michelle Cliff (*Abeng*, 1984 ; *No Telephone to Heaven*, 1984). Les premières publient dans une Amérique ségrégationniste minée par les conflits inter-raciaux, où la règle de la « *one-drop rule* » dénie l'existence du métissage et pousse certains à la stratégie du *passing* ; la seconde s'inscrit dans un pays sous domination étatsunienne où les luttes domestiques se doublent de combats politiques.

Le corpus francophone réunit, quant à lui, cinq romans de Maryse Condé (*Célanire Cou-Coupé*, 2000 ; *Desirada*, 1997 ; *Les Belles Ténébreuses*, 2008 ; *Traversée de la Mangrove*, 1989 ; *Moi, Tituba sorcière*, 1986) auxquels s'ajoutent ceux de Suzanne Dracius (*L'Autre qui danse*, 1989) et d'André Schwarz-Bart (*La Mulâtresse Solitude*, 1972). Enfin le corpus hispanophone comprend une pièce de théâtre méconnue du Mexicain Juan Trigos (*Mulata del diablo*, 2006), ainsi que les romans de deux autrices chicanas : Gloria Anzaldúa (*Borderlands, la Frontera. The New Mestiza*, 1987) et Cherríe Moraga (*Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pamésó por su labios*, 1985). La violence des rapports humains dans une société travaillée par ses composantes européennes (espagnoles), indigènes (mayas et aztèques) et africaines (notamment yorubas) y est mise en exergue, qu'elle relève de l'esthétique de l'*hémofición* ou du militantisme féministe lesbien. Complètent enfin ce corpus les œuvres du Guatémaltèque Miguel Angel Asturias (*Mulata de tal*, 1963) et de la Cubaine Zoé Valdés (*Querido Primer Novio*, 1999), qui interrogent également le métissage entre Indiens et Espagnols, symbolisé par les relations mythiques entre Cortès et la Malinche, « conçu tantôt comme une trahison, tantôt comme une entente possible entre les peuples » (24).

L'introduction présente de façon claire, précise et rigoureuse les choix terminologiques (métis/mulâtre, race, post-colonial/postcolonial, féminisme – du *Black feminism* au féminisme lesbien chicana) ainsi que le cadre conceptuel de l'étude. Celle-ci reprend, pour les dépasser, les approches de l'histoire littéraire de ce qu'on a pu appeler la Grande Caraïbe qui, analysant les textes scientifiques évolutionnistes, romantiques racistes ou humanistes ainsi que coloniaux, dépeint des personnages de métis dégénérés, tragiquement clivés ou exotisés. La présente étude se propose de saisir plus finement le métis, en recourant aux

théories intersectionnelles qui appréhendent conjointement les catégories de sexe/sexualité, genre, et race. Une telle approche intégrée semble singulièrement pertinente pour circonscrire des personnages que leurs ambiguïtés raciales et sexuelles exposent à des oppressions imbriquées mais également à des stratégies émancipatrices.

L'ouvrage est organisé en trois parties équilibrées retraçant le parcours des personnages métis qui, piégés dans le réseau aliénant des stéréotypes, cherchent à s'en dégager pour affirmer une identité hors-normes car en dehors des cadres. La première partie étudie la perception du métis par son entourage qui projette sur lui des stéréotypes raciaux et sexuels, hérités des temps de la conquête ou de l'esclavage et perpétués dans le système postcolonial. Exposé au regard des autres qui le scrutent et le sculptent à l'aune de catégorisations préconçues, le corps métis – qui bien souvent est un corps féminin – est observé à travers une grille de lecture fixe qui donne lieu à des descriptions essentialisantes. Selon son degré de proximité physique avec l'un ou l'autre pôle racial de sa filiation, il est stigmatisé ou idéalisé et suscite tantôt le désir, tantôt le dégoût. Hybride, le personnage métis est tenu pour un être monstrueux, à la jonction de l'humain et de l'animal. Le jugement glissant du physique à l'éthique, on lui prête des mœurs dépravées qui tendent à le diaboliser. Sont fustigées sa paresse, sa duplicité, sa propension à la trahison qui lui ôtent toute fiabilité mais aussi sa sexualité jugée débridée et déviante. Décrit comme un séducteur sensuel, lascif et lubrique, il suscite le malaise et la peur car l'insatiabilité qu'on lui prête instille l'instabilité dans une société postcoloniale paniquée par le risque d'inceste et de corruption de la pureté ethnique. Englué dans les catégorisations forgées par la pensée coloniale, le métis est ainsi voué à la marginalité et à l'invisibilité, les clichés faisant écran à son être véritable. À l'intersection de deux communautés, il est toujours captif de l'entre-deux. Il est avant tout défini par la dualité de sa filiation, soit « en négatif, selon la logique du 'ni l'un ni l'autre,' ou comme des entités excessives, à savoir cumulant 'l'un et l'autre,' négativité et excès se combinant pour mieux prouver une étrangeté fondamentale » (75). Son hybridité, qu'elle soit inclusive ou exclusive, le confronte à l'injonction identitaire. Est exigé de lui, à qui le choix du multiple est refusé, le ralliement à un pôle ethnique (noir, blanc, indien) contre l'autre et, qui plus est, une parfaite conformité aux stéréotypes qui y sont accolés. Mais adhérer à une image falsifiée de soi, qui entre en conflit avec la réalité de son

être intime, plonge irrémédiablement tout individu dans un profond malaise identitaire. Face à une telle impasse ontologique, le personnage métis se fait douloureusement tragique.

La seconde partie analyse les rapports que le personnage métis entretient avec ses h/Histoires, l'une intime de son ascendance et l'autre, collective de ses communautés d'origine. Aussi la question de la filiation est-elle au cœur des œuvres, qui mêlent rapports familiaux problématiques et rapports historiques traumatiques. La colonisation, l'esclavage, les politiques d'annexion, de ségrégation et de discrimination ont eu pour conséquence le délitement des liens familiaux dont le personnage métis éprouve pleinement la dureté. Toute relation interracial étant « considérée comme une violence fondatrice pour laquelle le métis devrait rendre des comptes » (236), il se trouve confronté à des figures parentales défaillantes. Son père, marqué par une masculinité négative, est un prédateur violent ou un séducteur volage, un géniteur indifférent ou un père fragilisé, mais rarement un protecteur rassurant. L'absence est sa caractéristique fondamentale, ouvrant l'enfant métis à une quête éperdue. La crise du système patriarcal donne toute sa place à sa mère sans pour autant faire d'elle un refuge. Victime de viols et contrainte aux avortements ou aux grossesses non désirées, elle a été perçue dans l'histoire davantage comme une bête reproductrice que comme un être humain. Aussi son rapport à la maternité en est-il lourdement affecté. L'enfant métis, incarnation des humiliations passées ou des menaces à venir, se heurte à son désamour et à son rejet, qui peut parfois aboutir à sa mise à mort réelle ou symbolique. Malgré tout, il éprouve pour sa mère une tendresse incommensurable, cherchant dans la fusion un moyen d'endiguer sa culpabilité. Pour contrecarrer les déficiences de l'ascendance, les œuvres ont fréquemment recours au topos de l'adoption qui procure une filiation de substitution, susceptible d'établir de nouveaux liens familiaux. En cela, elle permet la reconstitution de l'histoire personnelle et collective que le personnage métis peut se réapproprier, en la réinventant. Lui est ainsi offerte la possibilité de faire de son défaut de filiation une opportunité de libération des carcans. Il se fait alors délibérément transgressif, minant les cadres normatifs qui régissent race, sexe et genre. Quand il se glisse dans la peau d'un écrivain, c'est pour s'arroger le pouvoir de créer sa propre histoire, et de faire entendre un contre-discours, empruntant « différentes modalités langagières de façon à exprimer un univers en mutation » (297). À son instar, les auteurs font le choix d'une esthétique « de type baroque » (76), dont les procédés – dialogisme, mélanges générique et linguistique,

transtextualité mais aussi parodie, humour et ironie – font de la confusion et du renversement carnavalesque de maîtres-mots. L'invention de cette écriture labile poursuit le double objectif de contester les catégorisations aliénantes de la société postcoloniale et de renouveler la littérature qu'elle engendre.

La dernière partie montre comment le personnage métis adopte une stature de rebelle se dressant contre les cloisonnements sociaux. En est un avatar récurrent dans les œuvres la figure du sorcier qui, placé à l'intersection de deux mondes, sait développer un « art de résistance » (448). Plus globalement, le métis se révèle être un fauteur de trouble et un facteur de désordre, participant à l'édification d'un monde nouveau, sur les décombres de l'ordre ancien. Sa lutte prend avant tout la forme d'une opposition aux catégories de race, de sexe et de genre qu'il remet également en cause, afin de s'extirper des structures familiales et communautaires patriarcales, raciales et hétéronormées. Revendiquant un affranchissement total des normes sociales, il se tourne vers l'homosexualité ou la bisexualité. Et qu'importe si ses choix passent pour une trahison, puisque « [t]rahir sa communauté, c'est trahir ce qui, en elle, pousse à l'aliénation » (435). Le *queer* devient alors une valeur fondamentale, en cela que la déviance subsume les catégories binaires homme/femme, blanc/noir, hétéro/homosexuel. Le trouble qu'elle instaure rend paradoxalement toute sa densité à l'être qui choisit le franchissement des lignes, le dépassement des limites, la transgression des codes. Un être qui investit pleinement une identité ambiguë et mouvante, une identité-passage qui a partie liée avec la relation glissantienne.

Avec cette étude riche et passionnante, qui allie à la finesse des analyses de détail, la densité des développements théoriques, Alexandra Bourse signe un ouvrage majeur sur la figure du personnage métis dans la littérature. Saisissant avec pertinence sa portée philosophique, elle érige en concept un individu historiquement construit par l'idéologie raciste de hiérarchisation des races et devenu l'incarnation esthétique des crispations de la pensée (post)coloniale. Semblable à Métis, l'Océanide rusée, symbole de labilité, le protagoniste renouvelle l'approche de la notion d'identité, substituant à la pensée binaire, celle du multiple.

Chloé Chaudet, Stefania Cubeddu-Proux et Jean-Marc Moura, dir. *L'Atlantique littéraire au féminin. Approches comparatistes (XX^e-XXI^e siècles).* Clermont-Ferrand : Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2020. Pp. 276. ISBN : 9782845169432.

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Cet ouvrage collectif issu d'un colloque organisé à Paris en juin 2018 réunit quatorze études sur des autrices (et quelques auteurs) de l'« Atlantique littéraire », expression par laquelle les éditeurs désignent « un cadre théorique comparatiste ouvrant sur l'analyse des circulations, échanges et migrations littéraires entre Europe, Amériques et Afrique, non plus en termes régionaux ou linguistiques, mais dans les relations complexes traversant les cultures, régions et langues établies à travers l'Atlantique » (7). Ces études sont encadrées d'une part par une introduction générale signée des éditeurs du volume, et de l'autre par une table ronde où celles et celui-ci échangent avec les écrivaines Véronique Tadjo et Lise Gauvin autour du féminisme et de la place des femmes dans la littérature et son enseignement.

Ce travail s'insère dans un vaste ensemble de publications consacrées depuis plusieurs années à ce cadre théorique transatlantique par Jean-Marc Moura en collaboration avec un certain nombre de collègues francophonistes et/ou comparatistes : on citera en particulier *L'Atlantique littéraire : Perspectives théoriques sur la constitution d'un espace translinguistique* (Olms, 2015, avec Véronique Porra), *L'histoire des lettres transatlantiques : les relations littéraires entre Afrique et Amériques* (Les Perséides, 2017, avec Yves Clavaron), *Vers une histoire littéraire transatlantique* (Classiques Garnier, 2018, avec Jean-Claude Laborie et Sylvie Parizet) ou encore le numéro de la *Revue de Littérature Comparée* intitulé

« Circulations transatlantiques des avant-gardes littéraires » (avril–juin 2018, avec Anne Tomiche). La spécificité du présent volume au sein de cette profusion de publications est d'envisager « une approche genrée des études littéraires » (10), en donnant non seulement aux femmes écrivaines la place qui leur revient, mais aussi en faisant le point sur la boîte à outils théorique disponible pour penser la spécificité de cet Atlantique littéraire « genré ».

L'introduction du volume s'ouvre sur un rappel général à propos de l'« Atlantique littéraire » comme catégorie historiographique, renvoyant à la fois à des travaux connexes parmi ceux cités ci-dessus et à d'autres plus anciens (Jacques Godechot, Paul Brunel, Bernard Baylin, Paul Gilroy). Puis elle présente les enjeux propres de notre ouvrage, à savoir l'esquisse d'une « histoire des rencontres littéraires intellectuelles entre les trois continents » (9) qui envisagerait le rôle spécifique de la question féminine/féministe dans ces échanges. Citant Mariama Bâ, Véronique Tadjo, Assia Djebar, ou encore Léonora Miano et Fabienne Kanor, l'introduction affirme que les autrices étudiées « questionn[er]ent les catégories littéraires » afin de se faire une place dans une histoire qui tend à les « occult[er] » (11–12). Le féminisme ainsi est reconnu comme un mouvement fondateur des réflexions sur le genre en littérature, sans pour autant se voir attribuer le monopole des perspectives présentées. En outre, le parti-pris du volume est d'élargir autant que possible l'empan des œuvres envisagées en intégrant des espaces rarement pris en compte dans l'analyse, mais aussi en brisant la barrière qui selon les éditeurs sépare trop souvent dans les études littéraires féminines « l'hémisphère nord et les régions des Suds » (13).

Les trois premières parties de l'ouvrage sont dédiées chacune à une configuration particulière d'échanges littéraires : les dialogues entre Europe de l'ouest et Amérique du nord (France/États-Unis concernant Thérèse Bentzon et Simone de Beauvoir, Royaume-Unis/États-Unis pour Virginia Woolf et Susan Gubar) ; les dialogues intra-Américains (Gloria Anzaldúa, Julieta Gamboa, Nathanaël, Carolyn Forché, Leïla Danziger) ; et enfin les dialogues entre la Caraïbe et l'Europe (Marie Vieux-Chauvet et Violette Leduc, Matías Montes Huidobro et Jean Genet) ou entre des espaces linguistiques différents au sein de la Caraïbe elle-même (Suzanne Césaire, Kamau Brathwaite et Lorna Goodison). Comme cette liste permet de le constater, les autrices et auteurs ne s'interdisent pas ici l'évocation d'écrivains masculins (Brathwaite, Huidobro), même si la majorité des œuvres envisagées sont l'œuvre de femmes. On appréciera

tout particulièrement, au sein de ces trois ensembles d'études, la diversité des genres littéraires envisagés (essai, roman, théâtre, poésie) comme celle des approches et corpus rapprochés : le fait que des autrices européennes canoniques comme Beauvoir et Woolf côtoient Nathanaël et Goodison est réjouissant, même si l'on aurait pu réunir les approches Europe/Amérique « nord » et « sud » (Woolf/Gubar, Vieux-Chauvet/Leduc) au sein d'un même chapitre pour matérialiser plus nettement encore ce désir de décloisonnement, qui est aussi en tant que tel un commentaire sur la structuration actuelle du champ des études littéraires.

Les deux parties suivantes de l'ouvrage délaissent la classification par territoires pour faire signe vers des approches plus théoriques, même si le contenu des articles ne reflète pas cette apparente bipartition entre études de cas et questionnement théorique. La quatrième partie, « Comment penser un 'Atlantique noir' au féminin ? », réunit des études où il est question de Marie NDiaye et Toni Morrison (par deux fois), d'Alice Walker, Maryse Condé, Nella Larsen et Zoë Wicomb, mais aussi des poétesses juives germanophones Mascha Kaléko et Ruth Klüger en tant que leur travail est susceptible d'entrer en écho avec l'œuvre de Morrison (article de Marie-Pierre Harder). Le texte de Flavia Bujor (« Fictions de *passing* transatlantiques ») est ici un exemple parfait de la façon dont un questionnement théorique peut se développer en symbiose avec une lecture proche des textes. La cinquième partie a pour titre « Communautés de l'espace atlantique : entre affirmation et ouverture identitaire », et elle contient trois articles dont deux auraient eu toute leur place dans la partie précédente sur l'« Atlantique noir » : l'un de Khady-Fall Diagne sur l'ouverture transatlantique des écrivaines africaines actuelles, et l'autre de Sylvie Brodziak sur les relations entre Léonora Miano et Nathalie Etoké, deux femmes de lettres camerounaises installées de part et d'autre de l'océan. Le troisième article de cette section, signé par Benoît Doyon-Gosselin, évoque l'Acadie (et notamment la poétesse Rose Després qui en est originaire) dans son rapport avec la littérature française.

Face à l'ampleur des domaines parcourus ici, on comprend sans peine la difficulté qu'il a pu y avoir à structurer le volume en parties cohérentes, et l'on ne s'appesantira donc pas sur les critiques qui pourraient être adressées au plan de l'ouvrage : par définition, l'examen de « dialogues » et des « relations » entre des œuvres pose un défi à la répartition par zones, qui plus est dans un monde où l'appartenance des auteurs et autrices à tel ou tel espace littéraire est en soi un casse-tête insoluble. Si l'on accepte son plan avec sa part inévitable d'arbitraire, on peut traverser

ce volume riche et impeccablement mis en forme (bibliographies, index, résumés) en se laissant charmer par la salutaire hétérogénéité des points de vue qu'il pose sur la production littéraire des Amériques, mais aussi, puisque l'on a envie d'utiliser le pluriel dans ces cas aussi, des Europes et des Afriques. Dans un contexte socio-politique où les oppositions binaires caricaturales (« universalistes humanistes » contre « particularistes militants »), quand ce ne sont pas les invectives, menacent de se substituer à la réflexion académique, il est heureux que des articles convoquant le féminisme décolonial (celui d'Assia Mohssine), le radicalisme lesbien d'Adrienne Rich (Marie-Pierre Harder) ou la pensée de Judith Butler (Flavia Bujor) voisinent avec d'autres convoquant Jacques Derrida (Anny Dominique Curtius), Édouard Glissant et Jacques Rancière (Harder également) ou encore Dominique Maingueneau et Pascale Casanova (Benoît Doyon-Gosselin). Le volume reflète le dynamisme d'une recherche comparatiste riche de la pluralité de ses sources théoriques, tout en éclairant le rôle essentiel des autrices dans le champ littéraire des vingtième et vingt-et-unième siècles, en particulier dans des corpus de langue française, anglaise et espagnole. À défaut de proposer un discours critique ferme sur la délimitation possible ou sur les implications théoriques d'un « Atlantique littéraire au féminin », cet ouvrage collectif esquisse des lignes de fuite au croisement de questions diverses (mémorielles, esthétiques, identitaires, historiques, politiques) et de corpus dont l'importance culturelle est de plus en plus indéniable.

Gwennaël Gaffric. *La Littérature à l'ère de l'Anthropocène : une étude écocritique autour des œuvres de l'écrivain taiwanais Wu Ming-yi.* Paris : L'Asiathèque, 2019. Pp. 420. ISBN : 9782360571901.

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Ouvrage consacré à une figure majeure de la scène littéraire taiwanaise, *La Littérature à l'ère de l'Anthropocène* de Gwennaël Gaffric ne peut laisser indifférent par le bouillonnement d'idées qu'il offre à chaque page, par les problématiques très contemporaines qu'il aborde et par le questionnement permanent de nos catégories de pensée habituelles. Il se donne pour objectif d'étudier l'œuvre de l'écrivain Wu Ming-yi (né en 1971) d'un point de vue écocritique en invoquant la notion d'Anthropocène, selon laquelle la planète Terre serait entrée entre la fin du XVIII^e siècle et le milieu du XVIII^e siècle dans une ère nouvelle, où l'activité humaine serait la force dominante du système géologique terrestre. La lumineuse préface de Stéphane Corcuff fait état de la croyance – qui sous-tend l'œuvre de Wu Ming-yi et, par là même, l'étude de Gwennaël Gaffric – en la capacité de la littérature à mobiliser, à aider à réfléchir sur l'humanité et son devenir et à changer les choses : « La littérature, par la fiction, peut sans doute façonner les cœurs à l'insu d'esprits restés rétifs face à la preuve », écrit le politiste spécialiste de Taiwan (16). D'une plume élégante, ce dernier évoque quelques pages plus loin l'espoir que porte Wu Ming-yi à travers son œuvre fictionnelle de « réduire la cavalcade de nos désirs consuméristes, de cesser d'entretenir les grandes industries qui ravagent la planète [...] et d'alléger un peu le fardeau de notre responsabilité de pollueurs avérés » (21).

Dans cette monographie issue de sa thèse de doctorat, Gwennaël Gaffric adopte une approche disciplinaire relevant à la fois des études taïwanaises, de la critique postcoloniale et de l'écocritique – alliance de méthode critique et de discours éthique située à la croisée des arts et des sciences. Dans l'introduction, il prend soin de rappeler les fondements de l'écocritique, qui a pris son essor dans les années 1990 aux États-Unis et connaît depuis une décennie un certain écho en Asie et en Europe. L'écriture de la nature ou *nature writing*, genre littéraire né au XIX^e siècle aux États-Unis et auquel peut se rattacher l'œuvre de Wu Ming-yi, est un objet d'étude privilégié de l'écocritique en tant que narration de l'expérience vécue de la nature sauvage (*wilderness*), mais également parce qu'elle permet d'appréhender l'écologique, le politique, le social et l'économique (95). Gwennaël Gaffric remonte aux débuts de la littérature environnementaliste (littérature de reportage, de voyage, pastorale) tout en soulignant les origines romantiques du genre, caractérisé par une projection sentimentale d'une force spirituelle sur le paysage naturel auquel sont conférées les vertus d'une nature primordiale opposée à une civilisation aliénatrice. Or Wu Ming-yi va plus loin : non content d'exalter la beauté de la nature, il cherche également à en comprendre les mutations, les réseaux d'interactions entre espèces, préférant la notion d'*écosystème* à celle de *nature*. Doublant sa création d'une activité militante, il pratique une écriture qui ne se veut pas seulement poétique, mais « poïétique » (au sens où elle agit). Gwennaël Gaffric préfère parler à ce propos d'*écopoétique* plutôt que d'*écriture de la nature* afin d'échapper à la binarité entre le sujet écrivain et l'objet écrit. Wu Ming-yi refuse en effet la dualité de la nature et de civilisation, qui, à l'évidence, sont devenues perméables à l'heure de l'Anthropocène. Déconstruisant les idées reçues dans le sillage de son mentor le sinologue Gregory B. Lee, Gwennaël Gaffric va jusqu'à interroger la notion même de *nature*, catégorie pourtant souvent envisagée comme allant de soi, mais dont on peut se demander si elle doit être nécessairement conçue comme extérieure à l'homme. Pour étayer son propos, il se réfère au sociologue Bruno Latour, pour qui l'écologie politique marque la fin de la nature comme entité distincte, fixe et englobante, convaincu que nature et culture sont étroitement imbriquées (*Nous n'avons jamais été modernes*, 1997).

Plusieurs auteurs taïwanais considérés comme adeptes du *nature writing* ont profondément marqué Wu Ming-yi : Liu Ke-hsiang (né en 1957), surnommé « l'homme-oiseau », qui exalte le plaisir du voyage solitaire et l'échappée du monde urbain, ou encore Wang Jia-hsiang (né en

1966), qui se distingue par une pratique spirituelle bouddhique. D'une certaine manière, Wu Ming-yi hérite également du courant taïwanais de la littérature « du terroir », représenté par Hwang Chun-ming (né en 1935), qui entremêle les désastres environnementaux et leurs conséquences sociales dans *Libération* (1987), ou encore Sung Tse-lai (né en 1952) dont le *Taiwan en ruines* (1985) apparaît comme une dystopie prémonitoire de la catastrophe nucléaire de Fukushima au Japon en 2011.

Au fil des pages, Gwennaël Gaffric analyse tour à tour différents romans de Wu Ming-yi, qu'il a souvent traduits lui-même d'une plume alerte : *Les Lignes de navigation du sommeil* (2007, paru en français chez You Feng, 2012), *L'Homme aux yeux à facettes* (2011, paru en français chez Stock, 2014), *Le Magicien sur la passerelle* (2011, paru en français à l'Asiathèque, 2017), etc. Très documentée, enrichie de détails scientifiques ainsi que de photographies et de dessins de sa main (à l'instar de son aîné Liu Ke-hsiang), l'œuvre de Wu Ming-yi se caractérise par son intratextualité (on y retrouve des personnages-passerelles d'un écrit à l'autre) ainsi que par sa transtextualité : les références peuvent être aussi bien d'ordre littéraire que philosophique, anthropologique, écologique. Des conceptions issues de la tradition textuelle chinoise sont décelables, mais Gwennaël Gaffric nous met en garde contre le risque d'une interprétation trop simpliste de cet apport : ériger en système fixe une conception « chinoise » de la nature est impossible, souligne-t-il, en attirant notre attention sur la dérive actuelle de l'idéologie nationaliste et culturaliste de la République populaire de Chine consistant à mettre en avant une supposée spécificité culturelle chinoise afin de justifier des pratiques non démocratiques (67).

Certaines conceptions issues du bouddhisme sont également mises au service de cette quête environnementaliste, rejoignant en cela une tendance européenne et américaine « visant à retrouver les racines d'une philosophie cosmique alternative respectueuse des autres formes de vie » (288). Ainsi, dans *Les Lignes de navigation du sommeil*, la bodhisattva Guanyin ne fait plus figure de « divinité aux pouvoirs infinis capable de secourir tous ceux qui l'implorent » (283), devenue désormais incapable d'agir sur le destin du monde. Conformément à cette pensée, l'écrivain refuse l'approche anthropomorphiste, notamment pour traiter de la question animale qui occupe une place particulière dans son œuvre et révèle son intérêt prononcé pour les papillons.

Le chapitre 6, intitulé « Catastrophes », aborde plusieurs questions, notamment l'effet papillon, théorie avancée en 1972 par le météorologue

Edward Lorenz selon laquelle un battement d'ailes de papillon serait capable d'entraîner des changements à une échelle bien supérieure. On sait aujourd'hui que l'altération d'un écosystème peut avoir une portée globale. Un autre thème est celui du choix des énergies dans le futur face au « besoin énergétique toujours croissant des sociétés humaines, preuve d'un anthropomorphisme invétéré » (296). Gwennaël Gaffric attire notre attention sur le fait que les études écocritiques se penchent de plus en plus, pour leur rapport aux questions écologiques, sur les récits de science-fiction, dont relève partiellement *L'Homme aux yeux à facettes*. Il compare le récit de Wu Ming-yi, dans lequel un gigantesque vortex de déchets du Pacifique Nord frappe la côte est de Taiwan, à certains romans apocalyptiques comme *Taiwan en ruines* de Sung Tse-lai, évoqué plus haut (où Taiwan est anéantie par une catastrophe nucléaire majeure), *Marée de déchets* (2013), roman cyberpunk du Chinois Chen Xiufan, ou encore *La Submersion du Japon* du Japonais Komatsu Sakyô (1973). Il fait observer qu'à l'heure de l'Anthropocène, les forces géopolitiques sont à reconsidérer, alors que c'est un « nous » humain qui se trouve confronté dans sa globalité aux *communs*, ces entités ou espaces partagés par l'ensemble d'une communauté biotique (incluant humains et non-humains). Pour caractériser le vortex de déchets qui menace Taiwan, l'auteur convoque la notion d'*hyperobject* proposée par Timothy Morton pour désigner les phénomènes qui nous invitent à repenser notre mesure du temps et de l'espace tels que la radioactivité, le réchauffement climatique ou la pollution des océans.

Cette réflexion brillamment menée s'achève dans le chapitre 7 (« Écotopies ») sur une note optimiste en évoquant la possibilité offerte par les œuvres de Wu Ming-yi de « réinventer le temps et l'espace ». Ainsi, *L'Homme aux yeux à facettes*, dénonçant l'idéologie capitaliste et son penchant pour la vitesse, fait l'éloge de la marche, occasion de rencontres avec d'autres hommes et d'autres formes de vie, en écho au *nature writing* américain. Car, comme l'indique Alain Montandon dans sa *Socio-poétique de la promenade* (2000), la marche « est notre manière la plus immédiate d'être au monde [...] sans doute pour cela est-elle l'une des expressions les plus immédiates de l'écriture » (334). Un autre espoir est apporté par l'hétérotopie de « l'église de la forêt » présentée dans le roman de Wu Ming-yi, où les visiteurs doivent entrer dans un rapport corporel avec leur environnement. La notion d'hétérotopie, empruntée à Michel Foucault, décrit un espace à l'écart, incarnant une utopie, héberge un imaginaire et obéit à des règles différentes du reste de la société. Dans le

roman, ce havre de paix, dont l'entrée est ici baptisée « porte du Paradis » et qui pourrait renvoyer à un lieu réel à Taiwan nommé « Musée de la forêt » (situé près du village de Luanshan dans le district de Taitung), permet d'échapper au système économique, de redéfinir les liens sociaux et de réenchâter le rapport à l'environnement. Car, comme le fait remarquer très justement Gwennaël Gaffric, « au-delà des catastrophes qu'elle provoque, [la crise écologique] ébauche aussi les trames de nouvelles relations entre les êtres vivants, humains ou non humain » (350).

Par sa méthodologie et son discours, cet ouvrage dense et foisonnant dépasse largement, en fin de compte, l'étude de cas présentée ici. Il nous démontre que les problématiques écologiques traitées par Wu Ming-yi relèvent autant de l'histoire taïwanaise que de l'histoire mondiale et nous invite à réfléchir à notre tour à une « ontologie de la relation » entre humains, et entre humains et non-humains.

IN MEMORIAM

Homage to Steven Sondrup (1944–2020)

Colleagues visiting the ever-convivial Steven Sondrup – if he were not away on a guest stint or at a congress – would find him either busy at Brigham Young University in Provo or at home further to the north in old Salt Lake City. There, too, his combined *amor patriae* and international verve were unmistakably on display. The huge basement of the Sondrup family home he would soon inherit was, in fact, a multitask well-equipped communications center, and an impressive radio tower in the rear garden worthy of a commercial station enabled Steven to dialogue with people around the globe.

Steven attended schools in Salt Lake City before graduating magna cum laude from the University of Utah with a BA in German. Steven brought his unbounded intellectual curiosity and formidable focus to Harvard University where he earned an MA and PhD (1974) with an emphasis on modern German and Scandinavian literatures. From his dissertation came his first book, *Hofmannsthal and the French Symbolist Tradition* (1976), to be followed by some further two dozen volumes of monographs and edited works, across a range of modern Scandinavian and European literature, and including the proceedings of several major conferences of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA).

Already as of 1973, precociously polyglot Steven became Professor of Comparative Literature and Scandinavian Studies at Brigham Young University, and soon was attracted into the lively cosmopolitan scholarly activities of ICLA as whose western hemisphere Treasurer he served from 2000 to 2004. In addition to positions in several important regional and national journals, he twice served in the demanding job of Editor of the ICLA Bulletin (1988–2000, 2006–2010) which, in print and electronically, went out to hundreds of libraries and some 7,000 members worldwide. This exemplary service convinced the membership of ICLA to elect Steven twice to the yet more demanding job of co-Secretary General (2004–2007, 2007–2010) and thus almost inevitably as President (2010–2013) and Honorary President for life (2013 ff).

Steven's interest in Scandinavian authors and topics made him an ideal leader for the special contingent of scholars inside and outside the Nordic countries that designed and has begun implementing an ambitious research program on a regional basis, analogous to work on several cross-cultural subseries in ICLA's pioneer super-series "Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages." The first volume of the Scandinavian subseries, organized around spatial nodes, came out in 2019 (<https://benjamins.com/catalog/chlel.xxxi>); the second volume, expected in 2021, is structured around temporal nodes; and the last volume will be on figural nodes. Readers wanting to explore Steven's larger personal career as a scholar can consult his just published collection titled *Concepts and Contexts: A Retrospective* (2020), bringing together 28 selected essays of his over several decades in their original chronological order.

Steven's youthful service as a Mormon missionary in Germany and Italy probably first sparked his enthusiasm for experiencing cultures everywhere. Many years and voyages later, as a sage leader of ICLA, he demonstrated a truly catholic verve (small c!) for supporting new research initiatives and helping fulfill the promise of ICLA's steady expansion of its collective research capacity onto a truly global plane. Steven continued the tradition of ICLA presidents in fostering both openness to the actual diversity of cultures and the ability to describe their key features, including – but also for the modern researcher regardless of – the ruling political myths of particular places and eras.

Gerald Gillespie
Stanford University

En hommage à Steven Sondrup (1944–2020)

Le ou la collègue qui souhaitait rendre visite à Steven Sondrup, dont l'hospitalité et la convivialité étaient bien connues, était susceptible de le trouver soit à l'Université Brigham Young à Provo, soit chez lui, plus au nord, dans la vieille ville de Salt Lake City – à moins qu'il n'eût été en déplacement, pour répondre à une invitation officielle ou pour participer à un congrès. Jusque chez lui, son amor patriae et sa fibre internationale étaient manifestes. L'immense sous-sol de la maison de la famille Sondrup, dont il avait hérité, était en fait devenu un centre de communication multitâche bien équipé et, dans le jardin arrière, une impressionnante tour radio, digne d'une station commerciale, permettait à Steven de dialoguer avec le monde entier.

Steven fréquenta les écoles à Salt Lake City avant d'obtenir un diplôme en allemand magna cum laude de l'Université d'Utah. Steven apporta son insatiable curiosité intellectuelle et sa formidable capacité de concentration à l'Université de Harvard où il obtint une maîtrise et un doctorat (1974) avec une spécialisation en littératures modernes allemande et scandinave. De sa thèse dérivait son premier livre, *Hofmannsthal and the French Symbolist Tradition* (1976), suivi de deux douzaines de volumes – monographies et ouvrages édités – sur un éventail de sujets en littératures scandinave et européenne modernes, sans oublier les actes de plusieurs colloques de l'Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée (AILC).

Dès 1973, Steven, très tôt polyglotte, devint Professeur de Littérature Comparée et d'Études Scandinaves à l'Université Brigham Young, et il s'engagea rapidement dans les activités savantes cosmopolites et animées de l'AILC dont il fut le trésorier pour l'hémisphère ouest de 2000 à 2004. Outre diverses fonctions dans des revues régionales et nationales importantes, il occupa à deux reprises le poste exigeant de rédacteur en chef du Bulletin de l'AILC (1988–2000, 2006–2010) qui, sous forme imprimée et électronique, était diffusé à des centaines de bibliothèques et à quelque 7000 membres dans le monde. Son engagement exemplaire amena les membres de l'AILC à élire Steven, à deux reprises, au poste encore plus

exigeant de co-secrétaire général (2004–2007, 2007–2010) et donc, de façon ensuite presque naturelle, à celui de président (2010–2013) puis de président d'honneur à vie (depuis 2013).

Steven, qui était une référence sur les auteur-e-s et les sujets scandinaves, tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur des pays nordiques, fut le président et animateur idéal du groupe de chercheurs et chercheuses menant à bien un programme de recherche ambitieux sur ces questions, programme analogue et parallèle au travail mené dans plusieurs autres séries interculturelles développées dans le cadre de la collection pionnière de l'AILC, « Histoire comparée des littératures en langues européennes ». Le premier volume de la série scandinave, organisé autour de problématiques spatiales, a été publié en 2019 (<https://benjamins.com/catalog/chlel.xxxi>) ; le second volume, attendu en 2021, est structuré autour de questionnements temporels ; et le dernier volume portera sur des questionnements figuratifs. Les lecteurs souhaitant explorer toute la diversité de la production de Steven en tant que chercheur peuvent consulter le recueil récemment publié, intitulé *Concepts and Context: A Retrospective* (2020), qui regroupe 28 de ses articles sélectionnés sur plusieurs décennies et présentés dans leur ordre chronologique d'origine.

Sans doute le désir toujours enthousiaste de Steven de découvrir les cultures du monde n'est-il pas étranger à son engagement de jeunesse en tant que missionnaire mormon en Allemagne et en Italie. De nombreuses années et voyages plus tard, en tant que sage dirigeant de l'AILC, il a fait preuve d'une ouverture d'esprit et aux autres véritablement éclectique dans son soutien à de nouvelles initiatives de recherche et dans son engagement en faveur du développement des capacités de recherche collective de l'AILC à l'échelle internationale. Steven a poursuivi la tradition des présidents de l'AILC en encourageant à la fois l'ouverture à la diversité réelle des cultures et la capacité de décrire leurs principales caractéristiques, y compris les mythes politiques qui dominent des lieux et des époques particuliers – mais aussi, pour le chercheur moderne, indépendamment de ces mythes mêmes.

Gerald Gillespie
Stanford University

Traduit par Katharina Herold et Anne Tomiche

Homage to Wladimir Krysiniski (1935–2020)

A citizen successively of Poland, France, and Canada, who eventually came to speak or read a dozen languages, Wladimir Krysiniski exemplified the invaluable cohort of international comparatists who tirelessly circulate throughout the world and help knit us together. He earned his master's degree at Lodz in his native Poland in 1957 with a thesis on a major Polish modernist and his doctorate in 1966 in Strasbourg, France becoming his adopted second homeland, with a dissertation on Pirandello and a range of French modernists to existentialists. At that point Krysiniski accepted an appointment at Carleton University in Ottawa, where he rose in the ranks to full Professor of French and Comparative Literature by 1975. Accepting a full professorship in Slavic Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Montreal as of 1976, he continued exclusively as a comparatist from 1989 at this home base.

In an astonishing display of scholarly energies, Krysiniski also served as a guest professor on a score of occasions from 1963 onward in France, Canada, Italy, Brazil, Israel, Argentina, Germany, and Japan. His emphasis was on topics concerning modernist literature and theater, and modernist to postmodernist theory, often reaching out to Latin American literature as a major love of his mature years in Canada. All the while he remained an indefatigable participant at conferences at home in Canada and abroad, including in such nations as Austria, (former) Yugoslavia, Spain, Ireland, Mexico, South Africa, Poland, the Netherlands, and China.

Notable is that several of Krysiniski's critical works in French have enjoyed yet wider diffusion in translation. A glance at the WorldCat will quickly remind his fellow comparatists, above all those who are broader-gauged modernists, that his often essayistic style has left a deep mark. Probably his most influential work worldwide, *Carrefour des signes : Essais sur le roman moderne* (1981), appeared somewhat later also in Spanish as *Encrucijada de signos* (1997). The French version, *Le paradigme inquiet : Pirandello et le champ comparatif de la modernité* (1989), actually followed its Italian version, *Il paradigma inquieto: Pirandello e lo spazio*

comparativo della modernità (1988), but waited a good while for the Spanish companion version, *El paradigma inquieto: Pirandello y el campo de la modernidad* (1995). Krysinski became a strong critical presence in Latin America through such Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese-language works as *La novela en sus modernidades: A favor y contra de Bajtin* (1997), *Il romanzo e la modernità* (1998), *Comparación y sentido: Varias focalizaciones y convergencias literarias* (2006), and *Dialéticas da transgressão: O novo e o moderno na literatura do século XX* (2007).

Gerald Gillespie
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Relire Wladimir Krysinski : De l'analyse du roman, à la reprise et à l'inversion de la vulgate critique (1960–1980), et à l'avenir de la littérature

L'entreprise critique de Wladimir Krysinski se lit de trois manières : selon ses deux principaux livres, selon la reconstruction, qu'il a pratiquée, de données théoriques, et selon le dispositif métacritique, qu'il a encore construit, comme moyen de son parcours comparatiste.

Carrefour de signes : Essais sur le roman moderne (1981) prend dans une perspective sémiotique – un roman repose sur une série de systèmes modélisant, hiérarchisés – une palette de romanciers – Dostoïevski, James, Gide, Irzykowski, Unamuno, Benn, Blanchot, Gombrowicz, Simon, Mann, Carpentier, Asturias, Aquin, Marquez, Roa Bastos. L'accent est mis, à l'encontre des thèses structuralistes dominantes, sur les figurations d'un sujet/narrateur, toujours explicite, et sur les perspectives cognitives que celui-ci implique. Ces perspectives font lire systématiquement les variations spatio-temporelles internes aux romans considérés ; elles permettent de lire la composition des jeux cognitifs dans l'histoire des romans de la modernité. *Le Paradigme inquiet : Pirandello et le champ de la modernité* (1989) fait de l'œuvre de Pirandello un analyseur de la modernité littéraire. L'écrivain vaut pour lui-même, comme une illustration de cette modernité et, par ses constructions et déconstructions des paradigmes de la modernité, comme un opérateur de lecture de nombre d'œuvres et de champs critiques. En une analogie avec le statut et la fonction reconnus au sujet/narrateur du roman, l'écrivain et son œuvre sont des prismes cognitifs.

Ces deux ouvrages reposent sur des choix critiques constants de Wladimir Krysinski. Il faut revenir à la modernité : certainement une période, mais aussi, selon Wladimir Krysinski, ce qui, en chacun de ses moments, suscite une perception spécifique de l'actualité. Au long de cette période, on n'a pas cessé de reconnaître des points d'histoire et de

pensée difficilement définissables ; la modernité est ainsi le voile d'une utopie qu'on tente d'inscrire dans le temps, celui de l'histoire et celui de l'intensité de la recherche du présent. L'agent de cette inscription est l'écrivain ; de cet écrivain, le narrateur du roman, mais aussi le sujet lyrique d'Octavio Paz, sont les figures fonctionnelles. Si le présent est le temps de cette utopie qui ne peut se dire expressément, on comprend que toute œuvre soit de plusieurs systèmes modélisant et que les idéologies soient moins des doxas ou des contraintes que les simples supports de subjectivités dans le présent. On est ici à l'inverse des thèses venues du marxisme selon lesquelles l'individu est subjectivé par les idéologies. On dispose le sujet comme nécessairement critique, s'il se reconnaît comme sujet.

L'originalité de Wladimir Krysinski réside dans la manière dont il reprend les thèses et les analyses dominantes dans les années 1960, 1970, et 1980. Il refuse de les imiter ; il les passe en les ramenant à leurs éléments constitutifs, comme l'illustre son article, « *Modus imitandi* ». Aussi, inverse-t-il l'usage de ces thèses, par exemple, celle qui concerne le fragment. Celui-ci, note Wladimir Krysinski dans un commentaire d'Adorno, n'appartient pas au jeu d'une déconstruction ; il permet d'exposer le pouvoir de l'énonciation, la libération face à tout figement du sens, et ne se comprend par aucune totalité, faite ou dé faite. En lui-même un point de vue herméneutique sur toute idée, toute réalité, il est, pour le sujet, un micro-logos. En conséquence, l'écrivain peut écrire, le lecteur lire hors de toute contrainte d'une généralité, selon un discours plénier. Tout roman de la modernité est composition selon un tel micro-logos. Celui-ci permet la communication, l'écriture et la transmission littéraires suivant bien des aléas, suivant une polytropie, suivant d'inévitables connexions, qui sont un jeu d'entropie, de négentropie, et de tabulations, c'est-à-dire de « sous-totalités originales » – par quoi, tout est librement représentable. L'œuvre se définit alors par le refus de toute reconnaissance d'un poids de la structure, par l'abandon de références à une totalité, une totalisation ou une détotalisation. Cela équivaut à mettre en évidence, à propos d'une œuvre, d'une série d'œuvres, de notre littérature, une dispersion des informations et une indétermination de la communication. On a ici une requalification de la poéticité du discours littéraire et du paradoxe de la communication selon l'intransitivité. Ces reconstructions critiques forment l'arrière-plan des arguments de *Carrefour de signes* et du *Paradigme inquiet*, et expliquent l'étendue et la diversité des œuvres analysées par Wladimir Krysinski.

On ne se souvient pas que Wladimir Krysinski cite Sartre. Il faut cependant lire ses propres dispositifs critiques comme ceux des moyens de la liberté de l'auteur et du lecteur dans notre modernité, hors du dialogisme de Bakhtine, qui, bien qu'il soit placé sous le signe d'un idéalisme, porte la plus nette évidence des obligations du discours social. Cette liberté est indissociable de la « recherche du présent », selon les termes de Wladimir Krysinski, elle-même caractéristique de la modernité, et signe d'une pensée ouverte de l'histoire et d'une liberté face à l'histoire. Cela se conclut de notre modernité et de sa littérature. Cela se conclut aussi, selon Wladimir Krysinski, au regard de l'avenir de la littérature et des études littéraires : celles-ci et celle-là ne sont que par la décision d'un sujet – on revient à l'accent que met Wladimir Krysinski sur le sujet – qui décide de penser selon des lettres et des récits. Quel est ce sujet ? Celui qui, par cette décision, se trouve soumis à toutes les interrogations de la critique littéraire qui entreprend de le définir. Autrement dit, il est un questionnement qui porte sur tout et sur quiconque, dans le présent, et qui fait des mots et des récits un tel questionnement. Aucun de ces questionnements ne sont vains : ils sont ceux de tout monde tel qu'il apparaît et de tous les signes de cette apparence, dont ce sujet même est charnellement indissociable. On revient à la sémiotique, science de ce questionnement, et au roman, à Pirandello, agents de ce questionnement et objets du même questionnement selon le lecteur. Le questionnement est libre, comme le sont les réponses apportées.

Jean Bessière

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Robert J.C. Young is Julius Silver Professor of English and Comparative Literature at New York University. He writes in the fields of critical race theory, cultural and political history, literature and literary theory, philosophy, photography, psychoanalysis, and translation studies, with a particular focus on colonial history, anticolonialism and postcolonial theory. His most recent work has involved editing, with Jean Khalfa, a collection of unpublished and uncollected work by Frantz Fanon, appearing first in the original French and subsequently translated into English as *Alienation and Freedom* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

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 dans le monde et encourage les échanges et la coopération entre les comparatistes, tant à un niveau individuel que par l'intermédiaire de la collaboration avec diverses associations nationales de littérature comparée. Dans ce but, l'Association promeut les études littéraires au-delà des frontières de langues 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 vision large de la recherche comparatiste s'étend à l'étude de sites de la différence comme 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 mondial 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 revues scientifiques et sous forme de livres. La revue annuelle de l'Association, *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research*, regroupe des essais 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 agenda leading to publications in journals and books. The Association's annual journal *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research* contains essays and reviews a wide range of scholarship in the field.

Comités de recherche de l'AILC / ICLA Research Committees

I. STANDING RESEARCH COMMITTEES

ICLA Standing Committee for Research on South Asian Literatures and Cultures

Chair: Prof. Chandra Mohan (India)

c.mohan.7@hotmail.com

Co-Chair: E.V. Ramakrishnan, Central University of Gujarat (India)

Evrama51@gmail.com

ICLA Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

President: Liedeke Plate, Radboud University (NL)

l.plate@let.ru.nl

Website: <https://sites.google.com/a/alaska.edu/icla-comparativegender-studies-committee/executive-board>

ICLA Research Committee: Comparative History of East Asian Literatures

Chair: Haun Saussy, University of Chicago (USA)

hsaussy@uchicago.edu

Co-ordinating Committee for Histories of Literature in European Languages (CHLEL)

President: Karen-Margrethe Lindskov Simonsen, Aarhus University (Denmark)

litkms@dac.au.dk

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://www.benjamins.com/#catalog/books/chlel/volumes>

ICLA Research Committee on Literary Theory

President: Robert J.C. Young, New York University (USA)

Website: <http://iclatheory.org/>

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Chair: Isabel Gómez, University of Massachusetts Boston (USA)

Isabel.Gomez@umb.edu

II. TERM-LIMITED RESEARCH COMMITTEES

ICLA Research Committee on Literature, Arts & Media (CLAM)

Chair: Massimo Fusillo, University of l'Aquila (Italy)

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ICLA Research Committee on Comparative African Literatures

Chairs:

Brahim El Guabli, Williams College (USA)

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Wendy Belcher, Princeton University (USA)

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In formation – soon to follow

ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative

Chairs:

Stefan Buchenberger, Kanagawa University (Japan)

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Kai Mikkonen, University of Helsinki (Finland)

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Tracy Lassiter, University of New Mexico (USA)

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ICLA Research Committee on Literature and Neuroscience

Chair: Suzanne Nalbantian, Long Island University (USA)

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ICLA Research Committee on Religion, Ethics, and Literature

Chair: Kitty J. Millet, San Francisco State University (USA)

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Website: <http://online.sfsu.edu/kmillet1/faultlinesgrp.html>

ICLA Research Committee on Scriptural Reasoning and Comparative Studies

Chair: Zhang Hui (China)

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AILC / ICLA
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE LITTÉRATURE COMPARÉE
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