Approaches to World Literature

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Content

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Preface: Approaches to World Literature

The present volume contains the revised versions of papers read at the conference "Approaches to World Literature," generously funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which took place at the Dahlem Humanities Center and the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies in June 2012. Both institutions are based at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, and are dedicated to the investigation of the principles of cultural dynamics, as well as to an internationally oriented type of comparative literary studies.[1] The volume is the first in a series named "World Literatures" (edd. Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, Stefan Keppler-Tasaki and Joachim Küpper), in which outstanding dissertations, "second books" written by postdoctoral researchers, and selected conference proceedings pertaining to the topic emblematized in the series' title will appear over the years to come.

The concept to which this volume and the series as a whole refer, "World Literature," is frequently associated with Goethe's name, though the central figure of German literary history did not create it, but rather helped popularizing it. Its basic idea, namely that the study of literature within the limits of boundaries defined by specific languages is largely insufficient, seems to be more relevant than ever in an age of all-encompassing globalization.

Present-day endeavors, however, have to go beyond the frames Goethe and his 19th century successors had in mind. They will aim at comprehending as "world literature" not only the texts produced in the larger Mediterranean world (which reaches from Egypt to Norway and from Portugal to the Euphrates, and has ramifications comprising the Americas and India); but rather integrate into literary studies also East Asian literatures, especially Japanese and Chinese.

There seem to be two different options of how to make such a vast corpus of texts viable within literary studies. One way is to deal with the texts by way of translations and so-called "world literature readers." An alternative approach consists in bringing together experts in a wide range of national literatures, in order to focus on a cross-dis-

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ciplinary discussion of certain theoretical tools and concepts. Take, for instance, the dichotomy of fictional vs. non-fictional: Does it exist—and if so, how is it shaped within traditions other than the Occidental ones? Which ways of systematizing the huge field of textual productions and practices were developed by non-Western traditions, and how might these various modes of ordering have influenced each other? Which are the consequences of a more calligraphic, or even an ideogrammic script system on the opposition familiar in the Occidental tradition between text and image? These and similar questions are discussed in the papers collected here.

As will be evident from the footnotes of many of the present articles, the discussion of "world literature in our time" has been mainly conducted in US academia. Hundreds of articles and some dozen volumes have been dedicated to the topic over the last thirty years. The reasons for this are not astonishing at all. Right from its founding, the United States have been considering themselves a post-nation State whose constitutional basis is a secularized (Christian) universalism. Over the centuries, the cultural hybridity of the country has increased in a most impressive way. Within a US framework it would be difficult to hold today that the literary canon consists only of texts written in English—with some Classical, Romance and German texts added to the mix. Nevertheless, the USA—as the by far most powerful actor on the international scene—are committed to one specific idiom, namely English, and to a strictly defined pattern of cultural norms and codes deriving from Calvinism.

It may be seen against the backdrop of this constellation that discussions concerning world literature have so far been marked by a strong tendency of countering all possible reproaches alleging that propagating such a concept would be part of an attempt to secure, or even strengthen, the dominance of Anglophone cultures in the present-day global arena. The corresponding attitude materializes in almost all publications available, namely in their stressing the importance of including texts from non-Western, "minor" and "subaltern" backgrounds into the panorama to be considered. Frequently, the anti-hegemonic attitude reaches the point of conveying, in a more or less veiled fashion, that the Classical Western core canon better be excluded from a future study of world literature.

The second feature characterizing the scholarly debates so far derives from what I term the phase of Gramscianism in Western intellectual history. With the waning prospects for a "classical" socialist revolution, the idol of Marx became replaced by Antonio Gramsci—or rather, by his "new" theorizing of the way to be taken in order to achieve the goal of an egalitarian society. Gramsci held that, under 20th century conditions, the direct way of expropriation is no longer possible. The revolution, the control of physical as well as economic power, has to be preceded by a process that secures the control over discursive power. The way in which a society speaks and thinks is decisive for the way in which it evolves.

Since the more or less tacit adoption of Gramscianism as a firm ground for Western (mainstream) intellectual debates, politicization has become the common trait of all of

these discussions. There is no field of scholarship that would escape this tendency to conceive the humanities' research as a battleground, where it is all about conquering discursive terrain. One pivotal point of these controversies has been the concept of identity, meaning that there is a legitimate way of self-conception which is not bound to the features of "Western," "male," "white," "Judeo-Christian" and "normal" (in terms of sexual orientation). Until now, debates on canon have been largely absorbed into this all-encompassing syndrome of "identity as diversity." The results for the discussions revolving around world literature stricto sensu are not at all negligible, and they have been highly productive: very similar to the anti-hegemonic attitude, the paradigm of (legitimate) diversity has brought texts and traditions into the arena that had hardly been discussed before.

While upholding the positive results of past discussions, the conference documented in this volume had the ambition to go beyond repeating what is available in the numerous articles apostrophized above. Different contexts may produce different approaches to the problems at stake. Within a continental framework, the hegemonic suspicion, and the resultant necessity to counter it, is of minor importance. Today, no one would suspect people advocating the integration of some French, Italian, or German texts into a future canon of world literature to be agents of these nations, perfidiously aiding their attempt at acceding to global dominance. Moreover, the profile of the "identity as diversity" debate (though it had a wide resonance in continental academia) is less pointed and less polemical within societies that never pretended to be universalistic in the strict sense. While the main points discussed over the last decades are present in this volume, they are here re-focalized in a more serene (though not an irenic) fashion.

The three papers opening the volume connect present-day discussions to historical backgrounds. Jérôme David ("The Four Genealogies of 'World Literature'") begins by reconsidering the discussions initiated by Goethe and holds that there are four distinct genealogies of the notion: philological, critical, pedagogical and methodological. Individual contributions within this space have, according to David, been characterized by a specific intertwining of two or more of these genealogies. The frequent misunderstandings which punctuate current debates on world literature may, in part, be due to incompatible combinations of these intellectual legacies.—Robert J. C. Young ("World Literature and Language Anxiety") also opines that the fundamental issues raised by Goethe's ideas on world literature have not changed significantly. Goethe's remarks are inextricably bound up with the problem of translation, the contact between nations or cultures and with Europe's global expansion. The concept as suggested in Goethe is contradictory in so far as the idea is at once global and European, with the Ancient Greeks as the ultimate model. It is characterized by language anxiety as the dominance of Latin in Europe (or, later, of French) begins to break up as a result of the rise of vernacular literatures. Today—this is Young's central tenet—the issues are basically the same; it is only their forms that have changed.—Jane O. Newman ("Auerbach's Dante: Poetical Theology as a Point of Departure for a Philology of World Literature")

examines one of the first post-Goethean discussions of the concept in Erich Auerbach's essay, "Philologie der Weltliteratur" (1952). For Auerbach, writing after the end of World War II, while the catastrophe of World War I was equally present in his mind, the discussion of how to refashion Goethe's nineteenth-century deliberations after half a century of global warfare was no idle task. For Auerbach, Newman argues, philology was thus politics by other means. Still, in Auerbach's mind the political philology of and for the future would (perhaps counter-intuitively) have its methodological roots not in the approach he inherited from Goethe, but rather in a much more distant past, namely the Thomist poetical theology of Dante Alighieri. As we anticipate the articulation of approaches to the study of world literature in our own post-secular times, we may do well, Newman opines, to recall the urgency with which Auerbach turned to ideas derived from a pre-nationalist, Medieval theology as a point of departure for a new philology—and a new politics—of the globe.

The volume's second section is dedicated to more theoretical problems. Ayman A. El-Desouky ("Beyond Spatiality: Theorizing the Local and Untranslatability as Comparative Critical Method") focuses on the significance of the shift from approaching world literature as an "object" of study—after the initial canonizing acts, and mostly through the thematization of units of texts—to the conceptualization of analytic problems behind the different approaches; that is, to the question of method. By the 1990s, the approaches and design of courses and syllabi had radially shifted away from René Wellek's 1949 charge of "vague, sentimental cosmopolitanism" to strongly align themselves with current, mainly political, postcolonial and critical cultural stances. Nevertheless, the more recent debates concerning the earlier approaches and canonizing acts led to a focus on definitions of the "world" in world literature and a culture-based ethnographic approach that undermines the literary nature and aesthetic traditions of non-European literatures; El-Desouky holds that these have over-politicized the modes of reception, particularly when it came to the theory and practice of translation, but indeed critical practices in the humanities at large. Against the backdrop of a variety of literary texts from "other than Western" origins, this essay speaks for the legitimacy of the "local" and for untranslatability.—David Damrosch ("Global Scripts and the Formation of Literary Traditions") presents writing systems as offering a category of literary production and circulation that cuts across classic categories of nation and empire. Writers absorb a great deal of cultural information as they learn a script, and script systems can form a world of their own, a field within which literary texts can circulate across languages, and often across imperial, as well as national boundaries. The paper specifically looks at the spread of cuneiform writing in and beyond ancient Mesopotamia, the introduction of the Roman alphabet in Northern Europe and colonial New Spain, and the creation of new script systems vis-à-vis the classical Chinese system in Korea and Vietnam.—Vilashini Cooppan ("Codes for World Literature: Network Theory and the Field Imaginary") explores how the field of network theory, with its roots in world systems theory, poststructuralist communications theory, and

posthumanist philosophy, may inflect our understanding of language, literature, history, and culture in distinctly global ways. Considered as a network system, world literature invites consideration of the nonlinear patterns and nodal intensities of literary history, as well as of the affective dimensions of the texts in question. If network theory directs our attention to the informational code of world literary texts (philology, scriptworlds, print cultures, digital media), it also focuses our investigation on the ways in which these texts condense particular historical sensibilities, anxieties, and feelings of both global and local dimensions. The paper illustrates the usefulness of the theoretical approach suggested by turning to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Joan London's *Gilgamesh: A Novel*, and Neal Stephenson's cyberpunk novel *Snow Crash*, a text network spanning vastly different geographies, histories, and cultural traditions.

The third section is dedicated to discussing the problem of how to conceive of world literature from a decidedly non-Western perspective. C. Rajendran ("The Actual and the Imagined: Perspectives and Approaches in Indian Classical Poetics") draws a detailed panorama of the conceptual figures revolving around categories labeled, in Occidental terminology, as "literature" and "aesthetics" in the classical (that is, pre-colonial) Indian tradition. As for "fiction" and "nonfiction," "real" and "marvel," "beauty" and "ugliness," there are certain similarities, but also decided differences to the concepts that have been customary in Western debates from Plato and Aristotle onward. For the discussions conducted within Western academia, this mix of conceptual convergence and divergence might have highly stimulating effects—in particular, as Rajendran holds, when it comes to describing phenomena of present-day literature, both written and visual.— Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit ("On Bookstores, Suicides, and the Global Marketplace: East Asia in the Context of World Literature") tackles the problems emerging from an observation of the contemporary East Asian book market. She first looks at the process by which the notion of world literature took root in East Asia, taking Japan as a case in point. It is a story that is intimately linked with the master narrative of modern Japanese intellectual and cultural history, presented in this essay through several key episodes of modern literature. The article then turns to a discussion of intra-East Asian and Arabian-East Asian literary encounters and their relevance for the concept of world literature, pointing out the theoretical questions to be discussed when taking into account phenomena of intercultural exchange not comprising the West.—Mitsuyoshi Numano ("Shifting Borders in Contemporary Japanese Literature: Toward a Third Vision") starts with the observation that Dostoevsky's impact on modern Japan has been tremendous; but authors ranging from Shakespeare to Tolstoy and Kafka have also been able to attract a large Japanese readership. In contemporary Japanese literature, writers such as Otohiko Kaga, Kenzaburo Oe, Haruki Murakami, and Masahiko Shimada are well versed in and significantly influenced by Russian literature. If borders still exist that surround Japan and the Japanese language, these borders have been shifting. For in contemporary "ambiguous" Japan, writers such as Hideo Levy and Minae Mizumura have appeared: Levy is an American-born author, writing exclusively

in Japanese. Mizumura is famous for her bilingual novel *An I-Novel From Left to Right*, which is written in Japanese, but with a profusion of untranslated English phrases inserted into the body of the Japanese text. After such precedents, there has been a whole generation of younger "border-crossing" writers: Shirin Nezammafi (from Iran), Yan Yee (from China), Arthur Binard (from the USA), and Tian Yuan (from China). All of them chose Japanese as their language of literary expression, although Japanese is not their native language. Thanks to the efforts of such writers, non-Japanese readers can liberate themselves, suggests Numano, from the *idée fixe* of exotic Oriental literature, and accept Japanese culture on the common platform of the contemporary world. World literature is a machine in perpetual motion that moves between the two poles of universality and diversity.

The paper "Some Remarks on World Literature," with which the volume concludes and which is authored by myself, is deliberately somewhat polemical. It addresses the ethnographic approach that has been very influential in debates concerning world literature over the last two or three decades. In particular, it problematizes the thesis that there is a sort of link between ethnic and cultural belonging. It also scrutinizes critically the classical Marxian thesis of the dominating culture as the culture of the dominant class or nation, advocating, in turn, an attitude that considers cultural artifacts, including literary texts, as universally appropriable. It proposes considering the varying reception of different literary works: some as received across the world and over long periods of time, others as limited in resonance and even forgotten after a certain number of years, as primarily conditioned by the "needs" (in terms of a world model, of a pragmatic content, of a compensatory dimension) and desires of the readers and communities who invest time and effort in the reception of a specific text or work.

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JÉRÔME DAVID

The Four Genealogies of "World Literature"

Translation by Mary Claypool

What can we learn from a historical semantics, a *Begriffsgeschichte* of "world literature?" First, that it is necessary to return to the texts in which Goethe evoked *Weltliteratur*—but also that it is necessary to take into account the way in which these texts have been interpreted and translated *since Goethe*. The period that separates us from Goethe's Weimar has indeed seen the notion of "world literature" take on innumerable meanings that it hardly had at the end of the 1820s: social, ideological, or intellectual meanings that have been added to it due to its subsequent inscription in revolutionary, scholarly or university contexts unknown at the time of its first formulation.[1] Historical semantics cannot be reduced to an exegesis of texts Goethe left on the question.[2]

Historical semantics then contribute to situating the contemporary debates in the *longue durée* of critical thought, of citizen education, of aesthetic reflections. They thus bring to light the diverse ramifications of the notion of "world literature," and their particular temporalities. This reminds us that there is not a linear, cumulative history of what one calls "world literature" since Goethe—no definitive Great Narrative to hope for—, but rather competing genealogies whose patient examination reveals persisting anachronies or heterochronies.

These historical semantics reveal, at least according to me, four different genealogies of the notion of "world literature." I propose to first sketch the development of each genealogy up to the 1990s. Then I will turn to the *contemporary* controversies in order to study, this time, not what remains of *each* of these genealogies in the recent works on "world literature," but how various *combinations* of these four genealogies in some way draw the most striking theoretical proposals of the past ten to fifteen years in different

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[1] I developed some elements of this history in: Jérôme David, *Spectres de Goethe. Les métamorphoses de la "littérature mondiale"* ["Specters of Goethe: The Metamorphoses of 'World Literature'"] (Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires, 2011). In this paper I would like to draw several conclusions from it.

[2] This is also, for the most part, John Pizer's point of view, cf. John David Pizer, *The Idea of World Literature: History and Pedagogical Practice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

directions—so different, in fact, that the misunderstandings in the debates are more numerous at this point than real exchanges. I will conclude by raising some of the points that I think should, despite everything, be discussed today—because they underlie the current controversies without being clearly stated, or because they are tacitly agreed upon and worth re-examining.

The Philological Genealogy

The first of these genealogies, known as *philological*, is formed in the relationships Goethe envisioned between "world literature" and translation. As we know, the term *Weltliteratur* appears for the first time, in the Goethian lexicon, over the course of a conversation with Eckermann.[3] Goethe, in January 1827 reads a Chinese novel, *Les Deux Cousines* (*The Two Fair Cousins: A Chinese Novel*) translated into French by Abel Rémusat, and he, too, is in the process of translating *Serbian* poems, for which he has just received a *French version*, *into German* for his journal *Kunst und Altertum*. It is at that moment that he has an intuition about what "world literature" could be: a literary conversation between all nations, from which each one would emerge culturally greater, that is to say more universal.

Using this term *Weltliteratur* is inseparable from a *practice* of translation (as a reader and as a translator). This practice also is linked to Goethe's *reflections* on the benefits and the risks of translation: what exactly can we retain of literature when we transfer a poem or a novel from one language to another? Is not this language obstacle also an opportunity, in the sense that it challenges the translator to broaden or loosen his own language to the point of being able to welcome, with the least amount of damage possible, a work written in a foreign language? These questions were not solely Goethe's, since he shared them notably with Novalis and the Schlegel brothers.[4] Nevertheless, they are decisive in the birth of the notion of "world literature."

The *philological* genealogy of the notion is derived from this anxious preoccupation with what the literary works *mean*, from the initial concern of respecting the authentic *meaning* of the texts, their *words* as much as their *spirit*. It is accompanied by a very close attention to language, or languages; it measures the *aesthetic* experience of the literary works according to a *linguistic* experience.

"World literature," in this genealogy, has the diversity of languages as a *philological* background; it engages an imaginary of the more or less difficult *passage* of texts from one language to another, from one nation to another, from one culture to another, from

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[3] Fritz Strich established in the 1940s the almost exhaustive catalog of the uses of the word "Weltliteratur" by Goethe; cf. Fritz Strich, *Goethe und die Weltliteratur* (Bern: Francke, 1946).

[4] Cf. Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany* [first edition in French, 1984], trans. S. Heyvaert (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

one "civilization" to another. "World literature," from this point of view, helps with getting one's bearings in the Tower of Babel.

This philological genealogy of "world literature" was introduced in the United States at the end of the 19th century thanks to Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett.[5] We find it again, and more significantly, in Richard Moulton's work published in 1911 *World Literature and its Place in General Culture*[6]. In it, Moulton defends the idea that civilization has a legacy of foundational texts including the Bible, and works by Homer, Euripides, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, and Goethe.

Must one read these texts in their original language or in English? Since it is a question of "general culture," of popular education, that is, at the beginning of the 20th century, the answer is unequivocally clear for Moulton: each reader must be able to access these foundational texts in the English translation, because this language was at the time, for many Americans, the only one they spoke. Thus, "world literature" immediately implies a reflection on translation.

Moulton's case, however, is remarkable because the philological attention he applies to the *original* versions of the works seems at first glance to be almost non-existent—for strictly pragmatic reasons related to the limited language abilities of the target audience. And yet, Moulton justifies this stance by using arguments in which we observe a very sharp awareness of the linguistic issues—in other words, a very philological concern. It is because he thought about what translating involves that Moulton can challenge, from the inside, as it were, the philological misgivings of the fetishism of the original language.

"Moulton's argument," as it could be called, is the following: what we lose by reading Homer in English is not the literature per se, but the ancient Greek; or rather, what we lose is the very minimal part of the ancient Greek whose *ethos* the translator is unable to reproduce by subtly working the English language.[7] For Moulton, as we can see, either the reflections on "world literature" will come to terms with translations, at the risk of losing only a small part of what characterizes the *spirit* of a particular language (ancient Greek), or they will be condemned to being unavoidably localized, which is to say not worldly at all, since they rely on language skills that are always limited.

There seems to be a paradox here: Moulton rids himself of the problem of translation, but he does so with philological arguments. And his "argument" leads him to conceive of literature independent of language. We will discover the pedagogical consequences of this argument a bit later.

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[5] Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, *Comparative Literature* (London: Kengan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886), Book IV ["World-Literature"], pp. 233–336.

[6] Richard G. Moulton, *World Literature and its Place in General Culture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911); cf. Sarah Lawall, "Introduction, Richard Moulton: Literature and Cultural Studies in 1911," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 39 (1990–91), pp. 7–15.

[7] Moulton, *World Literature and its Place in General Culture*, pp. 3–4.

We owe another striking development in this philological genealogy of "world literature" to one of the greatest Romanists of the 20th century, Erich Auerbach. In an article published in 1952, Auerbach defended the idea that "our philological home *is* the earth, [it] can no longer be the nation."[8]

This article has an evocative title: "Philologie der Weltliteratur."[9] What is it about? For Auerbach, it is a matter of entrusting "world philologists," as he calls them, with the task of reminding their contemporaries of the diversity and the historical depth of their linguistic and cultural roots. Philology is an anamnetic task, and "world literature," the banner of the "world philologists" who would dedicate themselves to the cause in the field of literary studies.

Auerbach is teaching at Yale at the time; he knows he has heart disease; he would die five years later. He does not speak as a researcher, but from the position of a professor concerned with passing on his intellectual convictions to his students. "Philology of world literature," in this sense, is to come. And we know that Auerbach's lesson would be heard in the United States: for example, Edward Said gives unending praise to the scholar he considered his true precursor, beginning with his work *Beginnings* (in 1975).

The philological genealogy of "world literature," as Auerbach reappropriated it, was nevertheless largely redirected. And it is this reorientation that assured its success. Indeed, Auerbach rehabilitates Giambattista Vico very early (he translates his *Scienza Nuova* into German in 1920). He finds in this philologist from the beginning of the 18th century a fundamental axiom: humanity creates itself, and it is because the *historical* world is the product of human beings that we can understand the past. Furthermore, the past is not only discovered in *texts*, but also in any trace of human activity (customs, proverbs, popular beliefs, styles of dress, etc.).

This conception of philology leads to a dual consequence for "world literature": the "world philologists," by underscoring the diversity of languages and literatures, would strive not to determine the genius of different languages and different nations, but to index the "forms of life" ("*Lebensformen*") humanity has used to conceive of itself. Furthermore, the "world philologists" would envision their textual objects in very large cultural contexts—unlike Spitzer's stylistics, for example—which, at the same time, concentrated solely on linguistic traits.

It is easier to understand how Auerbach could have been presented, at times, as the tutelary figure for *cultural studies* and *postcolonial studies*. And how this *philological* genealogy of "world literature" could, when applied on a less than planetary scale, like

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[8]   I use here Jane Newman's new translation of Auerbach's text: Erich Auerbach, "The Philology of World Literature," trans. Jane O. Newman, in: James I. Porter, ed, *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [forthcoming]).

[9]   Erich Auerbach, "Philologie der Weltliteratur," in: Walter Muschg and Emil Staiger, edd., *Weltliteratur. Festgabe für Fritz Strich zum 70. Geburtstag* (Bern: Francke, 1952), pp. 39–50.

colonial empires, give rise in particular to one of its famous variants: "secular criticism," championed by Said in a text from 1983[10].

The Critical Genealogy

At this point, it is necessary to consider another genealogy of world literature, which also will lead us to the threshold of *engaged* thoughts at the end of the 20th century. I am of course thinking of the *critical* genealogy.

Its first formulations can be found in Goethe, once again. First, because Goethe defended the notion of *Weltliteratur* against the idea of *Nationalliteratur*. German literature, from the point of view of "world literature," ceases to be the expression of a *Volksgeist*, a national spirit. It becomes a geographically (and culturally) situated literature, certainly, but one whose aspirations are the same as those of French, Italian, or English literatures: namely, to achieve, with its own methods, the expression of a certain *universal* of the human condition, of a certain timeless beauty.

This critical dimension attached to *Weltliteratur* evolved from 1827 to 1832. Goethe no longer criticized *Nationalliteratur* so much, but rather a certain "world literature" that he considered commercial and insignificant, and which he realized, with terror, had been carried along by the emergence of a "world market" (this was the *Weltmarkt*, a corollary of *Weltliteratur*). "World literature" took shape, but in his eyes it was the product of a globalization *from below*, so to speak. This disenchantment prompted him at the beginning of the 1830s to wish for an "invisible church" of writers, modeled after the Freemasons, charged with contributing in secret to an alternative world literature *from above*.

The birth of this *critical* genealogy of "world literature" took place under the dual auspices of the challenge of the national scale and of the elitist adhesion to a very normative definition of literature (a definition that excluded productions considered commercial or popular).

The first of these two critical registers—the international or transnational stance—became, with only a few exceptions, an obvious fact for all the authors who later claimed to follow Goethe: "world literature" *implied* in an almost logical way the questioning of the national unconscious. Of course, from time to time, we find the return of this specter of national roots, the temptation of *literary nationality*. Goethe succumbed to it sometimes, in spite of his calls for the establishment of a "world literature"—for example when he hoped that "world literature," understood as a conversation among all living writers the world over, would contribute to the strengthening of *German* literature and the liberation of *German* writers from their provincialism.

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[10] Edward W. Said, "Introduction: Secular Criticism," in: Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 1–30.

To return to Richard Moulton, for his part, he distinguished between "universal literature" and "world literature." For him, "universal literature" included the sum of all things that had ever been written in the history of humanity, whereas "world literature" was the portion of this "universal literature" that a *national* culture had claimed for itself, the particular *canon* that this national culture had extracted from it, and in which it claimed to recognize its founding values. For Moulton, therefore, there was an American "world literature" different from French "world literature." And Japanese works, even though an integral part of "universal literature's" heritage according to him, had no pertinence for an American citizen.[11] They would not have had a place in American "world literature."

But if the nation indeed remains a variable of "world literature" for these different authors, its analytical pertinence is subject to re-evaluation. In this sense, literary nationality, when it is envisioned *from* "world literature," is nevertheless always accompanied by a *critique* of an exclusively national approach to exchanges between literary cultures.

The second critical register—the denigration of "bad" literary globalization—also had, for its part, a remarkable history. Goethe accepted the idea that there were a good and a bad "world literature"—a legitimate globalization of aesthetically significant works, and a globalization *from below*, formed by the cohort of commercial productions. This value judgment was in keeping, at the time, with Goethe's classicism, but it has endured up until now. It is still the tacit assumption for the majority of contemporary reflections on world literature.

Firstly, at the end of the Second World War, Erich Auerbach denounced the supposed process of "cultural homogenization" on a planetary scale—a process he quailfied in a letter to Walter Benjamin as an "International of Triviality" and a "culture of Esperanto."[12] His idea of an "invisible church" would be composed of "world philologists," whom he tried to train at Yale at the end of his life.

David Damrosch is no less normative, in his own way. Thus, in his articles, he denigrates what he calls "the leveling process of a spreading global consumerism," i.e. "'global literature'"—as opposed to "'world literature'"—"junk novels" or "'market realism'" intended, according to him (following Tim Brennan and Tariq Ali), to comfort consumers and their cultural prejudices.[13]

We could also mention Pascale Casanova, since in *The World Republic of Letters*, she denounces, under the cover of sociological rigor, works which her tastes as a reader, or woman of letters, deny any literary value. It is "world fiction," as she calls it,[14] that

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[11] Moulton, *World Literature and its Place in General Culture*, p. 333.

[12] Cf. Karlheinz Barck, "5 Briefe Erich Auerbachs an Walter Benjamin in Paris," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 9. 6 (1988), pp. 688–694, p. 692. My translation.

[13] David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 18−19, p. 25.

[14] Pascale Casanova, "La *World Fiction*: une fiction critique," *Liber. Revue européenne des livres* 16 (1993), pp. 11−15.

she condemns, the work of Vikram Seth, Umberto Eco, or David Lodge, while at the same time, in her *World Republic of Letters*[15], she praises the novels of Paul Auster—all, of course, without explaining the criteria for these aesthetic evaluations. The boundary between good and bad "world literature" therefore goes without saying, even for a sociologist who reflects on the social modalities of artistic legitimation. This shows just how much this aristocratic or elitist leaning has been shaping any reflection on "world literature" for the past two centuries. I will return to this in the conclusion.

This *critical* genealogy of "world literature"—in both its versions: anti-nationalist and elitist—is used here in the intellectual field of aesthetic reflection. Very early, this genealogy would know another reappropriation, this time more directly political, under the aegis of Marxism.

"World literature," from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* on, becomes in effect a critical lever of primary importance. Not as a corpus whose bourgeois ideology must be denounced, nor as a resource for social criticism, but as an indicator of the development of power struggles between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. "World literature," according to Marx and Engels, is a tremendous thing, in the sense that its emergence signals the globalization of the bourgeoisie, the consolidation of its economic expansion in the cultural domain. However, for them, this globalization is the condition of a globalization of the proletariat, such that "world literature" announces and calls for, in a dialectical reversal, the proletarian revolution itself.

I won't get into the details of the developments of this Marxist variant of the critical genealogy in the Soviet Union or East Germany. I did, however, need to mention its existence, beginning in the middle of the 19th century, because we will find traces of it in the work of Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova.

The Pedagogical Genealogy

Let us now examine the third of the genealogies I have defined: the *pedagogical* genealogy. Goethe indirectly laid the foundation for this genealogy when he conceived of *Weltliteratur* as a conversation between living writers who would discuss their works and respective literatures. "World literature," thus conceived, coincides with an international artistic emulation. Moreover, it contributes to the creation of taste for each of the literary cultures involved. In sum, it is akin to the mutual education of writers.

When he wonders about *Weltliteratur*—considered in its *patrimonial* dimension this time—in other texts, Goethe never fails to mention the place he accords to Greek and Latin literatures in "world literature." We are familiar with Goethe's classicism. For him, the great works of antiquity are to be considered models. They allow an individual to become familiar with a certain aesthetic, which Goethe deemed unsurpassable. At the

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[15] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, [1st ed. in French, 1999], trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 166 and p. 169.

same time, they instill in the reader a certain idea of human dignity. In this sense, therefore, *Weltliteratur* is not only a school of aesthetic judgment, but also a resource for *Bildung*—an element favoring any individual's attainment of intellectual and moral autonomy.

Let us now recall Moulton's title: *World Literature and its Place in General Culture*. This term "general culture," in 1911, related Moulton's enterprise to the claims of the English, then American, movement of "university extensions," whose goal was to give courses—outside of the campus (in the city) and outside normal working hours (in the evening or on the weekend)—to employees or workers who wanted to round out their personal development through the disinterested acquisition of knowledge, which was up until then only accessible to regular students. In a single word, this was a movement whose goal was to give workers access to true *Bildung*.

As one might guess, it is the *pedagogical* genealogy of "world literature" that operates in such a context. "World literature" is made to serve an educational project: it is in reading certain passages taken from the founding works retained by Moulton that we can appreciate the aesthetic pleasure of the text and better understand the foundations of the "civilization" of which we are a part; in order to perform such a reading, we have to be taught how to do so. "World literature" here serves at once as an apprenticeship and an inculcation, an education of taste and a discipline of values.

The pedagogical genealogy from then on flirts with propaganda and falls into it completely in the 1930s in the Soviet Union, when Karl Radek distinguishes between a "bourgeois world literature" and a "proletarian world literature" at the first Soviet Writers Congress in 1934.[16]

On the other side of the iron curtain, beginning in 1956, *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces* (now known as *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*), in the economical form of a collection of selected texts, would combine the aesthetic pleasure of the closely read excerpt and the accepted transmission of certain *values*—a consistent group of values to be passed down in the classroom, which the preface of the sixth edition would still summarize in these terms, as recently as in 1992 "the Judaic-Greek-Roman-European-American traditions of thought and feeling."[17]

In my opinion, it is with this pedagogical genealogy of "world literature," very ideologized at the time, that the Saids wanted to break in 1969, when they decided to leave the term *Weltliteratur* in German in their English version of Auerbach's article

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[16] Cf. Karl Radek, "Contemporary World Literature and the Tasks of Proletarian Art," in: Maxim Gorky, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukharin, and Andrei Zhdanov, *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism in the Soviet Union*, trans. H. G. Scott (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), pp. 73–182.

[17] Mack Maynard and Sarah N. Lawall, *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, 2 vols. (New York: Norton, 1992), vol. 1, p. XIII.

"Philologie der Weltliteratur."[18] The phrase "world literature" no doubt seemed to them so ideologically compromised that it could only obscure the radical novelty of Auerbach's reflections.

These three genealogies outline a preliminary possible cartography of the contemporary debates. I would like to demonstrate this by comparing three authors who seem to dominate debates on "world literature" today: David Damrosch, Franco Moretti, and Pascale Casanova (I will add Gayatri Spivak to this list shortly). To which of the three genealogies of "world literature" can their work be connected?

Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti's contributions can undoubtedly be inscribed in the *critical* genealogy: For Casanova, "world literature" is merged with a global structure of symbolic domination—a structure that serves to impose, under the cover of universality, a Western conception of literature on the whole world. For Moretti, "world literature" designates an unequal system of exchanges in which a center exports its formal innovations to a periphery or semi-periphery.[19] What separates Casanova from Moretti, however, in terms of what interests us here, is that Moretti's work also borrows from the *philological* genealogy of "world literature," unlike Casanova.

Neither of them, it is true, takes literary *texts* as an analytical unit. Casanova's research focuses on *beliefs* writers associate with literature—what she calls, using the sociological language of Pierre Bourdieu, the *illusio* of the literary field. However, this *illusio* does not give itself up in the works, but in the paratext (in the prefaces, correspondence, interviews of the writers). It is not the meaning of the works that matters for Casanova, but the strategic positioning the works give rise to, on behalf of the writer. Here, philology dissolves into sociology.

This is not the case for Moretti. His attention to "world literature" texts has not disappeared; it has simply changed focus, concentrating instead on units smaller than texts (such as literary devices, tropes, narrative postures). "World literature" in Moretti's eyes is not made up of beliefs or discourse on literature, but rather of literary forms. And this formalism is again born of the *philological* genealogy.

David Damrosch also fully inscribes himself in the *philological* genealogy. Close reading is for him, in many regards, the most appropriate method to examine texts of "world literature." And he combines the work which Auerbach called "world philolog[y]" with a "creative juxtaposition"[20] of two or three selected works. In this way, in his work *What is World Literature?*, he suggests comparing a Japanese literary production of the 11th century, the *Tale of Genji*, with the *Thousand and One Nights* and

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[18] Erich Auerbach, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," trans. Maire and Edward Said, *The Centennial Review* 13. 1 (1969), pp. 1–17.

[19] Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1. (2000), pp. 54–68.

[20] "World literature today offers us exceptional opportunities for creative juxtaposition and fresh affiliation, which can add new dimensions beyond the filiative links provided within a work's home tradition," in: David Damrosch, "Secular Criticism meets the World," *Al-Ahram Weekly* 769 (17–23 November, 2005).

Boccaccio's *Decameron*.[21] In doing so, we will find, he says, an enlightening diversity of narrative temporalities.

Who exactly takes it upon him-/herself to move forward with "triangulations"[22] of texts coming from very distant literary cultures? Here, the background of the three genealogies that I just described turns out to be illuminating. Damrosch, in fact, approaches world literature above all from the point of view of its teaching: he is the heir apparent and proselyte of the *pedagogical* genealogy. The "creative juxtaposition" of texts, which according to him makes us feel the aesthetic experience specific to "world literature" most strongly, corresponds to a reading activity *oriented toward the class-room*. Yet, what happens in the classroom does not interest Moretti.

Finally, we can underscore Damrosch's and Moretti's dramatically different relationships to the *critical* genealogy. Moretti sees in "world literature" a system of exchanges whose description should make us understand the mechanisms of capitalist globalization. Describing the *literary* inequalities across regions of the world, for him, is to map the symbolic power struggles of our modernity.

What exactly does Damrosch expect from a "creative juxtaposition" in class? Not the *political* denunciation of the power struggles between a center and a periphery, but a *moral* aesthetic experience above all else. For him, "world literature" is the privileged "sphere" of an encounter with cultural alterity (a Japanese court in the 11th century, for example). It encourages decentering and tolerance.

The Methodological Genealogy

Discussion of the last genealogy of the notion of "world literature" remains—the *methodological* genealogy.[23] It does not go all the way back to Goethe, but rather to the 1950s.

This genealogy brings together authors who envisioned "world literature" as a *limit case* for their ordinary analytical and interpretive practices. It is the case for Auerbach, it is the case for Moretti, and it is without a doubt the case for Gayatri Spivak[24] as well. For them, "world literature" is related to a *thought experiment*. The *rational fiction* of "world literature"—as a political aspiration, intellectual goal, critical project—allows them to imagine the type of revitalization their conceptual tools would need in order to make this fiction thinkable. Auerbach, although very stingy with theoretical reflections,

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[21] Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, pp. 298−300.

[22] Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, p. 300.

[23] This fourth genealogy became suddenly obvious to me after a brief discussion with Virginia Piper in Madison, Wisconsin, in April 2012. I seize this opportunity to thank her here.

[24] Cf. Gayatri C. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); and more recently: Gayatri C. Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), especially chapter 22, "The Stakes of a World Literature," pp. 455–467.

provides the key to his work in "Philologie der Weltliteratur" through the notion of *Ansatzpunkt*. Moretti, in his "Conjectures on World Literature," ventures to propose the idea of "distant reading," which has regularly startled textualists the world over ever since. As for Spivak, her notion of "planetarity" is a sort of regulative idea in the Kantian sense, reinterpreted in light of the "late Derrida" (not the one of *différance*, but the one of hospitality).

In all of these cases, "world literature" is not so much an object, but a challenge—a challenge that demands a radical, epistemological litmus test of literary studies. In this sense, "world literature" designates everything our interpretive habits do not incorporate: neglected languages, forgotten works, and silent cultures. It invites us to imagine the type of theory that could save what our present is in the process of losing or has not retained: the diversity of cultures, for Auerbach; the thousands of novels that no one reads anymore, for Moretti; the multitude of "subalterns", for Spivak. "World literature" is merged with an attempt to symbolically restore or repair—an attempt that knows it is condemned from the start, by the vastness of its task, but that demands, by its very intention, a certain form of aesthetic or cultural justice.

Critique, Philology and Zong Baihua's Puzzle

I will conclude by dwelling on some of the at times contradictory assumptions of the current debates on "world literature." There are in fact, it seems to me, some points of marked divergence among the authors, but they are rarely conceptualized as such. Conversely, there also are certain tacitly accepted facts that would benefit from being critically examined. Referring back to the four genealogies I outlined will allow me to formulate some of these facts with precision.

Within the critical genealogy, I see two dividing lines. First, there is a division between the political critique and the moral critique. The first strives to denounce the mechanisms of domination (social, cultural, or symbolic); it links the study of "world literature" with a meditation on *power*. The second, the moral critique, condemns the "single-mindedness" of academic traditions, the prejudices (of class, race, gender) of readers and commentators of literary works. "World literature" is thus the space in which our certainties (western, imperialist, androcentric, etc.) are destabilized. Its vanishing point is no longer power, but rather alterity. And its method is not denunciation but reconciliation.

The second dividing line within the critical genealogy opposes two conceptions of power. In other words, the political critique splits into two camps that are hardly compatible. On the one hand, power is conceived as the practice of domination over *populations* (of human beings or cultural goods): power pits the dominator and the dominated against each other; it draws the unequal triangle of the center, the periphery and the semi-periphery; its effects are felt on a *series* of texts, on the scale of literary

genres, for which the global hegemony of some (sonnet, historical novel) is consolidated to the detriment of all the others.

On the other hand, power is specifically envisioned as the manufacturer and the government of these *populations*. Power comes down to this inclusion in a series, to the inscription of implacable differences in identity networks. And the *critique* of power then becomes an enterprise of radical singularization of individuals (whether people or texts), an effort to take them out of the violence of any univocal categorization, an attempt destined to recall the singular complexity of each human being or each text. Reflections on "world literature" are merged, in this case, with the project of deconstructing any *definition* of literature and any *synthetic* perspective of the world—and this deconstruction begins at home, so to speak, since it strikes out at existing theories on "world literature." It is noticeable in the critiques Spivak addresses to Moretti in *Death of a Discipline* or in the content of exchanges between Spivak and Damrosch published last year in the review *Comparative Literature Studies*[25].

Current debates in "world literature" therefore pit very different orientations of critique against almost opposite metaphysics of power.

But there are still other stumbling blocks. Within the philological genealogy, we can also distinguish two camps: the camp of *texts* and the camp of *forms*. Is a literary work a text or a form? Must the interpretation of a work take into account the linguistic materiality of its utterances? Or does it consist instead of modelling elements in part independent of the language used by the writer—structures or schemas like the plot, the narration, the rules of versification or formal literary devices (the clue in the crime novel, free indirect speech, etc.)? In sum, what part of the meaning of the work is contingent on the language? The division here separates a hermeneutic philology, concerned with *extracting* significant passages from the work that will be subjected to "*close reading*," and a somewhat different philology, whose method engages in a process of *abstraction* of scattered elements in the literary work and of recombination of these elements separate from constraints or conventions of the written language.

This divide brings about, on both sides, radically different consequences for any reflection on "world literature." If hermeneutics call for "thick description" of texts, the original language is an unavoidable parameter of interpretation. In other words, one must master the language in which the text was written so as to not risk confusing the work of the writer with the work of the translator. And, for "world literature" this requirement is not a minor one. If, however, interpretation is conceived as the establishment of a pattern of elements that are in part *dissociable* from the original language, translation is not an obstacle to philology. And one can even, well beyond Moulton's argument, defend the even more radical idea of *no longer reading texts*: the establishment of a template necessary to the study of "world literature" will be based on

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[25] David Damrosch and Gayatri C. Spivak, "Comparative Literature/World Literature: A Discussion with David Damrosch and Gayatri C. Spivak," *Comparative Literature Studies* 4. 48 (2011), pp. 455–485.

efforts of abstraction already carried out by other researchers on a smaller scale than the world (whether a nation, a language, a continent).

These polarizations within the critical genealogy and the philological genealogy do not necessarily constitute a system. We can, for example, plead in favor of "close reading" in the name of a critique that is moral *or* political, and we can defend the use of translations for critical reasons (if it is a matter of locating the unequal circulation of certain literary genres) as well as pedagogical reasons (as in the case of world literature anthologies). But I will stop the inventory of the dividing lines there.

Indeed, I would like to conclude, to change things a bit, by pointing out a point of implicit *convergence* in the current debates on "world literature." A tacit consensus that I believe deserves to be verbalized and interrogated. I am referring, as I said, to this persistent idea according to which there are supposedly two literary globalizations and therefore two "world literatures": a globalization *from below*, carrying with it a commercial "world literature" whose works, which are hardly exceptional, do not achieve a literary quality; and a globalization *from above*, engaging a "world literature" worthy not only of being read, but also interpreted, because it is composed of works whose aesthetic is at once unique, reflective *and* critical—critical with regard to traditional or dominant literature and critical with regard to the very conditions in which the literature is produced, distributed and consumed.

The bad "world literature" would be, in this hypothesis, the insignificant reflection of a globalization from below—itself infinitely regrettable. The good "world literature," on the other hand, would be composed of works in keeping with the iconic categories of literary studies (dialogism, intertextuality, aesthetic metadiscourse, etc.)—works which, furthermore, would propose a circumstantial critique of this globalization *from below* to which they would declare they did not belong.

This prejudice thus intervenes, prior to interpretation, in the *judgment* of works decreed to be worthy of being put to use for the benefit of a reflection on "world literature." But it seems problematic to me. Especially at a time when multinational editorial companies and the Frankfurt International Book Fair welcome, in their catalogues and in their halls, the authors of commercial bestsellers and Nobel Prize winners alike—and where innumerable literary productions appear simultaneously on every continent in twenty different languages.

An anecdote will suffice to summarize these issues. When Goethe used the term *Weltliteratur* for the first time in 1827, he was in the middle of reading, among others, a Chinese novel translated into French, as well as Chinese lyric poetry published in an English collection. It is this contact with what he considered to be masterpieces from a faraway culture that gave him an idea of what humanity would gain by intensifying its literary exchanges—it is in reading *this* novel and *this* poetry that he saw what *Weltliteratur* could be. And it is this contact with Chinese literature that gave him such a high idea of the literature that should circulate on a global scale.

Nevertheless, as a Chinese philosopher in the 1930s, Zong Baihua, recalled, the novel that Goethe was reading at the time was a commercial novel—a low-quality production that was assigned no literary value, even in China.[26] In short, even the elitist conception of "world literature" was based, unwittingly, on an eminently marketable globalization from below, which allowed for a bad Chinese novel to be translated and published in Europe. I must say I am not yet sure what all the lessons to be learned from this founding misunderstanding might be.

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[26] Cf. Jing Tsu, "Getting Ideas about World Literature in China," *Comparative Literature Studies* 3. 47 (2010), pp. 290–317.

ROBERT J. C. YOUNG
World Literature and Language Anxiety

The fundamental questions raised by Goethe's various remarks on *Weltliteratur*, made over the course of the years 1827–1831, have not changed significantly up until today.[1] Goethe's observations are inextricably bound up with the following issues:

(a) Translation, and the new German philosophy of translation developed in previous decades by Herder and Schleiermacher.
(b) Contact between nations and cultures, a perception of growing interculturalism that was concomitant with contemporary European global expansion.
(c) In Goethe's different formulations, *Weltliteratur* is something of a contradictory concept in so far as the idea is presented sometimes as global and sometimes as European (for whom the ancient Greeks serve as the ultimate or originary model).
(d) Goethe shows anxiety with respect to the increasing amount of literary production, the sheer volume of which raises the question of its readability, its conceptualization, and its taxonomical organization.
(e) The historical moment of language anxiety as the dominance of Latin and French in Europe begins to break up in the face of the rise of vernacular literatures (the term literature being considered here in its older sense[2]).

Today the points in question remain largely the same, but their forms have changed. Contemporary ideas of World Literature are inextricably bound up with:

a) Questions of translation, and the rise of Translation Studies.
b) The development of multiculturalism, postcolonial literatures, and the resurrection of the concept of World Literature in the context of globalization.

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[1] English translations of Goethe's remarks on *Weltliteratur* have been conveniently collected by Alok Yadav, cf. http://mason.gmu.edu/~ayadav/Goethe%20on%20World%20Literature.pdf (retrieved May 27, 2013).
[2] Cf. Jacques Rancière, *Politique de la littérature* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2007), pp. 12–13.

c) The effect of globalization and World Literature on Comparative Literature departments which are attempting to globalise a previously largely European concept of World Literature, despite the continued dominance of Euro-American models and academic institutions.

d) The theoretical and taxonomical conundrum of how to organize the sheer mass of World Literature—as anthologies and compilations, as distinct national literatures, or through "distant reading."

e) New forms of language anxiety, which are specifically postcolonial but which in certain respects can be compared to the situation described by Goethe in the 1820s.

For reasons of space, I will concentrate my remarks on 1 (e) and 2 (e), but before I do so I would like to supplement the entries (c) by remarking that although the conceptual issue remains the same, what has changed between Goethe's time and ours is the institutional basis for the problem. Goethe does not address the idea of World Literature in institutional terms though he does discuss the publishing media and raise questions about the relations between nation states. Since the later nineteenth century, World Literature and world languages have been mediated institutionally through the formation of university departments of Philology and Comparative Literature. Arguably, Comparative Philology, which is conceptually based on the model of language families, does not have the same taxonomical problem of how to organise its material, and on what basis, as Comparative Literature. While Comparative Literature confined its attention to Europe, with a mission for post-war national reconciliations, the problem was less obvious. Now that its literatures of study have been globalised, the question of how to organise relations between literatures and the individual texts in them has become one of the definitions offered for World Literature itself, to which we can add the postcolonial question highlighted by Aamir Mufti, namely, whose literature, whose world?[3] Whose concept of literature? Whose idea of value, of an aesthetic value or something else? Is the relatively recent European idea of literature the same, for example, as the Arabic *al-Adab*?

I

I do not wish to pursue these substantial questions further here, but will rather focus on one particular issue, namely the historical moment of language anxiety as the dominance of Latin and French in Europe began to break up in the face of the rise of vernacular literatures. As Pascale Casanova describes it, the rise of the vernacular was part of a power struggle between Rome and nascent Protestantism, which importantly centred on the question of translation, as well as a national struggle for cultural prestige

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[3] Aamir Mufti, "Orientalism and the Institution of World Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 36. 3 (2010), pp. 458–493.

in the vernacular between France and Italy.[4] Goethe's later play for German literature brought these two separate elements together, which suggests the possibility that the invention of the idea of World Literature was a product of, or result of, the breakdown of the hegemony of Latin (and French) and the irruption of forms of language anxiety as a result. It is language anxiety, I want to argue, that puts the writer in a particular relation to the world, or marks an awareness of a relation to the world beyond the local, that we might call translational. In time, that translational relation would also come to define the situation of the postcolonial: the corollary of my argument is that postcolonial writing has been resituated in this position in the twentieth century. This means that what is in some sense postcolonial is arguably more worldly than world literature itself, because it is a literature whose relation to the world beyond itself forms an unavoidable part of the creativity of its foundational moment, not something to which it ascends at a later moment when it moves out of its immediate local or national context to become a part of "World Literature." In this context we might remember that, before the more recent resurgence of the idea of world literature, it was Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak who were emphasising the worldly nature, the worlding, of literature.[5]

According to Casanova, small literatures are challenged by a problematic relation to world literary space because they lack literary capital. In making this argument, she assimilates the provincial and the colonial, arguing that they are essentially the same: "whether they are former colonials or simply provincials […] they all find themselves faced with the same alternatives and, curiously, discover the same ways out from the same dilemmas."[6] I want to argue that despite the potential similarities between the colonial and the provincial, there are also differences, and one of these comes with respect to language anxiety. Though a small literature may betray an anxiety with respect to dominant literatures as a result of the power relations between their languages, the colonial situation is more complicated and the alternatives are not so simple. The relation to language inevitably also involves a constitutive relation to colonial violence, not merely to a language that has greater cultural prestige. The postcolonial in some sense repeats the founding situation of Goethe which was both provincial in relation to French, the prestige language of the eighteenth century, and, if you include the Napoleonic invasion and the brief and unsuccessful attempt to impose the French language forcibly on Germany, in some respects a postcolonial one.

Goethe's idea of *Weltliteratur*, conceived in terms of the circulation of high works of literature, stemmed in part from his desire to increase the prestige of German, and in part from his enthusiasm for translations of texts from other cultures in the era of European global colonial expansion, amongst which English and French translations from the Chinese, as well as Sir William Jones's translations of the Persian poet, Hafiz,

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4   Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* [first edition in French, 1999], trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 45–73.

5   Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Gayatri C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1986).

6   Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 176.

and of the Sanskrit play *Shakūkuntalā* (1789), figured notably.[7] At the same time, although Goethe's idea of *Weltliteratur* expands to take in writers from India, Persia, China, and Serbia, many of his remarks also remain fundamentally European in orientation, and are addressed to the prospect of the accession of Germany and German literature onto the European literary scene. This moment is inextricably linked to the perceived need to refashion the literary register of German through the translation of literary classics into German. According to Friedrich Schleiermacher this would in turn bring about the translation of German itself into a richer European language; following Schleiermacher, Goethe subsequently claimed that as a language German was particularly open to translation at that moment. Such arguments formed part of the project to develop a "high" German for literary purposes, that is German as a language of aesthetic writing, beyond the bureaucratic, mercantile and Lutheran idioms of standard German, a written language that in turn remained distinct from the diversity of spoken Germans.[8]

   The break-up of Latin and the rise of the vernaculars in Europe arose out of a state of affairs that can be compared to the colonial situation, involving the presence of a dominant foreign language imposed by a foreign institution or power (here the Roman Catholic church), which had led to a division between the oral and written usages of local languages, and the prescribed use of a now constructed foreign language for official institutional purposes of writing. The postcolonial debates about languages in the twentieth century follow from the same fundamental situation, and are always situated in some sense from below, in relation to a dominant language imposed as the result of colonial violence from above. In each case, as in Goethe's German, there is also an assumption, promoted by the colonists and their educational systems, that this local (in the postcolonial case, sometimes predominantly oral language) language does not have the richness or refinement, the cultural and literary capital in Bourdieu/Casanova terms, of a cultivated literary language. Or we have a more complex situation such as in India, where aside from the status of English in relation to vernacular Indian languages, communal politics meant that Hindustani had to be divided and turned into Hindi and then into a literary language that could attempt to rival the more elaborate, literary Urdu. The task of the vernacular writer from a minor literature in the first instance therefore is not only to create a literature, but also a language for that literature. That is also the postcolonial task, a double task that determines the choices that will be made. From the writer's point of view, this means that he or she will be writing in a language which will always be conditioned by a relation to another, potentially more powerful or cultivated language that exists in a dominant relation to the writer's own vernacular. One might say that the writer will always be in a situation of being conditioned by an awareness of world literature, but world literature conceived in the first instance as a formation of resourceful, more powerful languages which have been imposed upon the local culture and which the writer has chosen either to utilise or refuse. Postcolonial literature, like Goethe's

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7   Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 212.
8   Ruth H. Sander, *German: Biography of a Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

German, is paradoxically therefore always more worldly in a way than the established literatures against which it competes, because the language situations that it confronts are the particular result of a very worldly situation, namely colonialism which has forcibly imposed another, alien language as part of its institutional power structure of control and rule.

II

I want to suggest then that within the overall rubric of World Literature, which by definition includes all literatures ever written since the very beginning of time, there is one characteristic that is specific to postcolonial literatures, and that is language anxiety—which interestingly and perhaps paradoxically can be compared to the situation that produced Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* in the first place. Of course there are many different forms of anxiety, the anxiety of writers, the anxiety of critics, as well as writers' anxiety about language and their relation to it.[9] The postcolonial form of language anxiety rests simply on the question of the writer living in more than one language where the different languages have a colonial power relation to each other.

Let me begin by risking a distinction between World and Postcolonial literatures. World Literature comprises all the literatures that have ever been produced, the literature of all humanity. Postcolonial literatures are called postcolonial because they develop in the situation of the aftermath of colonial or imperial rule or its prospect. They are therefore historically and geographically bounded in a specific way, even if the postcolonial is now being pushed back into medieval and classical times—there is much postcoloniality in the history of a world of successive empires. The distinction also operates in relation to the way in which world and postcolonial literatures are read. In general terms, world literature is prized for its aesthetic value while postcolonial literature is valued in the first instance for the degree to which it explores the effects upon subjective and social experience of the historical residues of colonialism, including language itself. This last point, the question of language, is important, for otherwise the literary element might seem to have disappeared altogether, as indeed it sometimes appears to do in weaker or more sociological or anthropological forms of postcolonial analysis. It is language that prevents the postcolonial from being characterised as simply the external to the literary's internal, in the characterisation of Casanova. For Casanova, the postcolonial is a method of reading, whereas I would argue that it begins as a mode of writing. The postcolonial does not just reduce the literary to the political, as Casanova claims, any more than Goethe does: for post-

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[9] For one relevant recent discussion that stresses the range of possible different forms of language anxiety in relation to the history of the English language, cf. Tim William Machan, *Language Anxiety: Conflict and Change in the History of English* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

colonial literatures, the questions of language, language choice and translation, are always central, and always political.[10]

While Casanova criticizes the postcolonial for being political at the expense of the aesthetic, she herself sometimes completely misses the aesthetic dimension in her readings, particularly with respect to language. A perfect example would be the reductive account that she gives of V. S. Naipaul, where her dismissive vignette of him as simply an "assimilated" writer, absorbed into the Anglophone cultural center, entirely overlooks the ways in which Naipaul's cultural anxieties as a colonial writer feed into the parsimonious nature of his language, a language which richly expresses the ambivalence of the anxieties of his situation. Casanova as a result shows herself oblivious to the rich ironies of the very flatness of Naipaul's delivery or the complex linguistic work being done in his writing. Nothing in Naipaul works simply at face value. To take a single example, in *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) Naipaul notices that when he prepares the compost heaps on the estate, Pitton the gardener substitutes the word "refuge" for "refuse" (as is common in the English West Country):

> This vegetable graveyard or rubbish dump Pitton described as a "garden refuge," and a certain amount of ingenuity went into finding or creating these hidden but accessible "refuges." That was how Pitton used the word: I believe he had two or three such refuges at different places. Refuse, refuge: two separate, unrelated words. But "refuge," which Pitton used for "refuse," did in the most remarkable way contain both words. Pitton's "refuge" not only stood for "refuse," but had the additional idea or association, not at all inappropriate, of asylum, sanctuary, hiding, almost of hide-and-seek, of things kept decently out of sight and mind.[11]

For all his interest in local rural English life at the level of minutest detail, Naipaul gives no indication that he understands that Pitton was engaged in composting: nothing could be of greater interest to the true gardener than the mysterious art of composting, by means of which the gardener transforms the rejected garden weeds and trimmings into the fertilising soil that will propel the plants into luxuriant flowering and the vegetables into richly cropping abundance in the years to come. "Graveyard" or "rubbish dump" misses the point entirely, and doubtless creates for Naipaul further enigmas around the character of the eccentric Pitton. But if Naipaul is no gardener, the confluence of the two words allows him to come back again and again to their identification with each other, leading him to develop a powerful and evocative meditation on the ironies of the links between refuge and refuse, with respect to the composting Pitton and other vulnerable workers whom he encounters but also of course to himself, he who has taken refuge, shelter and asylum, in the closed sanctuary of English village life but remains haunted by his status as an unattached colonial subject from Trinidad, haunted by the memory of the colonial English view of Trinidadians as refuse. He cites the received view elsewhere: "'Generally colonies are peopled by the

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[10] Pascale Casanova, "Literature as a World," *New Left Review* 31 (2005), p. 71. Here Casanova unexpectedly lines up with Harold Bloom in his criticism of what he calls the "literature of resentment."

[11] V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* [1987] (London: Picador, 2002), p. 218.

refuse of the Mother Country, but Trinidad is peopled by the refuse of the other colonies.'"[12] At the same time, the noun refuse can also become the verb refuse, and all the instances in which it is cited involve a refusal or defiance of some sort on the part of the West Country agricultural workers, and in the same way the refusal also works to deny Naipaul's own status as colonial refuse: "So the past for me—as colonial and writer—was full of shame and mortifications. Yet as a writer I could train myself to face them. Indeed, they became my subjects."[13] It is hard to read Naipaul's comment without suspecting that perhaps he does understand the principle of composting after all, for his writing enables him to reprocess the shame and mortification of his coloniality into his art. So much for the man who has been easily dismissed as simply an "assimilated" writer. The whole point of Naipaul is the persistent and unending anxiety that comes with the sense that he will never be fully assimilated, a continuing unease that above all erupts in the subtle insinuations of his language.

With respect to Casanova's general argument against the postcolonial as too political and too worldly, one can respond by pointing out that Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* seems surprisingly postcolonial, in certain respects, for it involves above all the provision of a judgment on the domestic from the perspective of the foreign, the judgement on the centre from the periphery or the margin: "world literature develops in the first place when the differences that prevail within one nation are resolved through the understanding and judgment of the rest."[14] Moreover, World Literature is not merely literary, an aesthetic product creating its own world, or literary space, but has a specific "use" or function, as Goethe puts it, beyond itself, that might be termed political, and that is to create intercourse and tolerance between nations. Its literariness, on the other hand, is never in doubt.

Whereas world literature is often conceived in terms of a range of particular authors expressing themselves in their own language and literary forms, which we may however read in translation and which may require the mediating role of the critic, the assumption that literature is a form of expression in one's own language is never simply a given for the postcolonial writer, who very often exists in a state of anxiety with respect to the choice of language in which he or she is going to write. Though the subaltern can speak, the means of expression is not straightforward. It is for this reason that language anxiety is fundamental to postcolonial writing, for a postcolonial writer's relation to language is always at the same time a relation to colonial history and a defence or defiance against the colonial tendency to "glottophagie," or language devouring, to invoke Louis-Jean Calvet's term.[15] This anxiety produces a certain kind of literature full of questions about language, and the diversity of languages and cultures on the edges of which it lives. That diversity is not just the diversity of the world overall but the diversity of local experience that produces a literature haunted by the collisions, suppressions, impositions and interactions of languages. We find therefore a specific linguistic texture

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[12] V. S. Naipaul, *The Loss of Eldorado: A History* (London: André Deutsch, 1969), p. 285.

[13] V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*, p. 267.

[14] Cf. Goethe, *Letter to Sulpiz Boisserée* [October 12, 1827].

[15] Louis-Jean Calvet, *Linguistique et colonialisme: petit traité de glottophagie* (Paris: Payot, 1974).

pervading such writing. If world literature consists of literary works that successfully circulate internationally beyond the confines of their own borders by typically wearing their own original cultural context "rather lightly" as David Damrosch has argued, any work of postcolonial literature will always be riven by its own context, since it will be the literature of a culture forcibly internationalised, made worldly, by the impact of foreign cultures and languages from beyond that were imposed on that culture without choice.[16] Encounters between languages are never neutral and literature can never escape the cultural conditions of the politics of language. A postcolonial literature will always be actively marked by the presence, or absence, of other dominant or repressed languages that operate within its own specific local environment.

The question of language choice will always have to be made, but whatever language he or she chooses, many postcolonial writers nevertheless retain a certain equivocalness in their relation to the particular language in which they write, the more so if this is a major European language such as English or French. The language debates amongst colonial and postcolonial writers, which began in India (for example in the work of Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873) who switched from writing in English to Bengali) and Ireland in the nineteenth century, have been well rehearsed, even if surprisingly no one has written their history, and I am not going to elaborate them at length here. I just want to point to two things: first that these debates, usually presented as a question of simple choice, that is a question of internationalism vs. nativism, in fact also represent an anxiety about language choice that tends to develop in a non-European environment which has a number of local or indigenous languages but in which there is also the presence of a dominant European language as a product of colonial rule. This situation does not generally change significantly in the postcolonial period (Vietnamese French would be an interesting test case, while a striking variation would be the Palestinian writer Anton Shammas's decision to write his novel *Arabesques* [1986] in a very allusive and layered Hebrew that resonates with the rhythms of Arabic, provocatively inserting a Palestinian voice forever within the domain of Hebrew literature). The most common responses to this colonial or postcolonial dilemma of language choice take three forms: first to use the colonial language but modify it so as to make it more local (African, as with Chinua Achebe, Indian as with Salman Rushdie, Irish, as with James Joyce, or Caribbean, as with Aimé Césaire or Edouard Glissant). The second possibility is to choose to write in a third, different language altogether, as in the case of Samuel Beckett, for whom French represented a neutral language. For others, on the other hand, such as Assia Djebar, French was a problematic language for the same reason that English was for Beckett. So too, Dalit writers in India find English attractive because it is a caste-free language, whereas for earlier writers such as Dutt or Mohandas Gandhi it had to be rejected as a colonial language. Gandhi took the third course, namely the rejection of the colonial language altogether in favour of the local vernacular, a practice that began in the nineteenth century but today is most associated with the name of Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Paradoxically perhaps the first and third choices (crudely the use of the colonizer's or the local language) both have a comparable result,

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[16] David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 139.

namely the development of a new written form that conforms to neither original language: the modified European language choice produces a new literary language that has no verbal equivalent, and indeed is often almost unreadable, even if it is supposed to represent the local inflection of the European language: think of Joyce, Erna Brodber, or Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English* (1986) as examples of those who write in English but in a language that is no longer English. While writing in the vernacular, on the other hand, also inevitably produces a new written form, since no one writes as they speak, it sometimes happens that the language employed also increasingly embodies the frozen time-capsule of a language remembered in exile from the past. The net result is a transformed European language internally translated into a different idiom, or the forcing of the non-reader of the non-European language into translation. In different ways, all options push the reader into a translational mode of some kind. The anxiety of language choice always leads on to an anxiety of translation.

III

Although language choice will always be an issue for writers in a general sense, anxiety about language choice, and a continuing preoccupation with it, is especially characteristic of postcolonial writers. I want to conclude by asking a question for which there is no simple answer, namely, why, unexpectedly, does postcolonial language anxiety seem to be greatest in the Maghreb? It is true that outside its own geographical region, Arabic literature seems to be the literature perhaps least known in all the literatures that make up World Literature today. On the other hand, for those writing in the Maghreb and the Middle East, Arabic literature offers one of the richest historical literatures of the world and certainly has no deficiency of literary cultural capital in Casanova's terms. The availability of Arabic as a literary language, and its proliferating power as the language of one of the world's great literatures, might have been expected to produce a situation in which language anxiety would not be an issue for recent North African writers, but in fact the very opposite is the case.

In this sense, the "anxiety about language—which can only be an anxiety of language, within language itself,"[17] which the Algerian-French philosopher Jacques Derrida announced in 1963 in "Force and Signification," marked him out already as both a "postcolonial" and Maghrebian writer. Derrida, like Joyce, whom he wrote about at length, shared a marked sense of being estranged within his own language, through being estranged from that other language that he never learnt but which should in some sense have been his mother tongue. French remains the language which he speaks but which is not his. As he puts it in *Monolingualism of the Other*, "You see, never will this

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[17] Jacques Derrida, "Force and Signification," in: *Writing and Difference* [1967], trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 3.

language be mine. And, truth to tell, it never was."[18] Derrida, you might even say, was anxious because he did not have a language choice, which, as a Maghrebian, he felt by rights he should have had. The very situation made him anxious, and the whole of his work in a certain sense is based on an anxiety about language. Assia Djebar found herself in a similar situation to Derrida. In her case, she was brought up in Algeria to speak French, but haunted by the forbidden Arabic by which she was surrounded, she was never fully at home in the French which always seems to remain the language of the other:

> I cohabit with the French language [...] French is my "stepmother" tongue. Which is my long-lost mother-tongue, that left me standing and disappeared?... Mother-tongue, either idealized or unloved, neglected and left to fairground barkers and jailers!... Burdened by my inherited taboos, I discover I have no memory of Arabic love-songs. Is it because I was cut off from this impassioned speech that I find the French I use so flat and unprofitable?[19]

Djebar's whole work has in a sense been constituted by the disquieting question of language, multilingualism and language choice, and represents one of the most profound analyses of its continuing effects upon the postcolonial writer.[20] Of course for Djebar, as for Derrida, there was in practical terms really only one possibility, but this can hardly have been said to reduce the anxiety that she felt about it—indeed it seems to have exacerbated it.

What is it that is particular to the Arab region that seems to heighten this situation of language anxiety? This domain brings together the two situations which I began by comparing, namely that of Goethe in the eighteenth century and postcolonial questions of language anxiety of the twentieth. Though the Maghreb, like most Arab lands, has been multiply invaded and colonized, first by the Arabs themselves, then by the Ottomans, then by the British, French, Spanish, Italians and Americans, you might assume that it would avoid issues of postcolonial language anxiety, given the presence of classical and modern standard Arabic across the whole region. The situation in Arabic speaking countries to some degree offers a situation comparable to that of Latin in medieval Europe, or perhaps more closely to the situation in China with respect to Mandarin, Wu, Cantonese (Yue), Min, Xiang, Hakka, Gan, and their many regional varieties, together with Japanese, in which the written form is universally legible while the spoken languages can be distinct enough to be mutually unintelligible to the degree that some could technically be called another language (Italian or to a lesser extent even German would offer comparable cases in Europe). In this situation, the post-Romantic European emphasis on the need for literature to reflect the authenticity of vernacular

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[18] Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or, The Prosthesis of Origin* [1996], trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); cf. Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

[19] Assia Djebar, *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* [*L'amour, la fantasia* 1985], trans. Dorothy S. Blair (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1993), pp. 213–214; cf. Assia Djebar, "Ecrire dans la langue de l'autre," in: Assia Djebar, *Ces voix qui m'assiègent ... en marge de ma francophonie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), pp. 41–50.

[20] Assia Djebar, "Territoires des langues," in: Lise Gauvin, *L'écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1997), pp. 17–34.

speech does not obtain in the same way, any more than it did for Europeans who wrote in Latin up until the eighteenth century. For Arabic, this situation was at least in part the result of the way in which printing was introduced after 1821 and exploited by the Al-Nahda (Revival) movement which developed the written form of modern Arabic. The result today is that, as the writer and translator Abdelfattah Kilito puts it in his provocative book, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language* (2002):

> As is well known, written Arabic, unlike spoken Arabic, has undergone only slight and secondary changes throughout its history, so that whoever today can read Nizar Qabbani can read al-'Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf, and those who can read Salah 'Abd al-Sabur can read Salih ibn 'Abd al-Quddus, and whoever reads *Midaq Alley* can also read *The Book of the Misers*. This is a strange and amazing phenomenon, rarely encountered in other cultures.[21]

We might contrast the situation in Turkey, highlighted by Erich Auerbach, where because of the language reforms of the 1920s, few Turks can read books published in Turkish before that date. The perhaps unique position of Arabic can help us to understand why nationalist language politics has not been cathected with the same importance in this part of the world as in South Asia. What this means is that as well as having avoided some of the negative consequences of these language movements (such as the devastating wars prompted in part by language movements in South Asia), literature in Arabic is always already more fundamentally transnational than other literatures, and this has meant that the Arabic speaking world has maintained a rare cultural unity, sustained by the unique link between the language, especially in its written forms, and Islam. Writing offers a historical transnational or indeed prenational language in a way that complicates any assumption that World Literature offers the summation of different national literatures of the world and challenges the standard national vernacular literatures.

   All these qualities might have been expected to have meant that the fundamental postcolonial question of language choice has not been such an issue for Arab writers. Things, however, are not so simple. First of all there are the two forms of written language, classical and modern, and secondly there is the diglossic situation of the division between literary and spoken Arabic, and the difference between standard Arabic and local dialects. Arabic is in some sense doubly determined, on the one hand by its quasi Latinate status, on the other hand by a typical postcolonial situation. The language question is not absent, particularly for writers in the more multilingual environment of *le maghreb pluriel* where the possibility of choosing between local languages such as Arabic and Berber, and the colonial languages of French and Spanish, has placed writers such as Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, or Abdelkebir Khatibi in a position comparable to the other classic formulations of the problem of what language a writer in a multilingual, formerly colonial environment should choose to write in.[22] In the Maghreb in particular, it is often the idea of writing in French that produces similar problems to

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[21] Abdelfattah Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, trans. Wail S. Hassan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 10.
[22] Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel* (Paris: Denoël, 1983).

those in Africa or India who write in English. On the one hand, we have writers such as the Algerian Rachid Boudjedra who wrote first in French and then in Arabic, both of them in linguistic registers that have proved almost equally too difficult to translate into English. On the other hand, there is Khatibi's *L'Amour bilingue*, which suggests the overthrow of dualistic either/or choices by recognizing the simultaneous presence of different languages at the same time, creating a space where co-present languages can meet without merging, in a state of translation in which the writer imperceptibly switches languages, a situation in fact more representative of the state of languages in multilingual environments, where speakers code switch into different languages for the different situations as appropriate.[23] One might also note here the additional use of Italian (Kalifa Tillisi), Spanish (Mohamed Sibari, *El Caballo* [1993]), and in recent years of English—which has proved particularly attractive for diasporic Arab women writers, such as the Jordanian-British author Fadia Faqir, or Leila Aboulela, originally from Sudan, or the British-Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif. Perhaps writing in English, in another language altogether, is one way of learning not to be anxious.

What complicates further this rich polylingual situation is the question of the relation of modern standard Arabic to vernacular forms of Arabic as well as to dialects and other languages such as Berber. North African writers sometimes say that they often prefer to write in French or English because Modern Standard Arabic, especially in its written form, is a foreign language for them like almost any other, and very distant from local speech forms, as well as from certain areas of human experience, such as intimacy, which, writers argue, it finds impossible to express. This situation is particularly empha-sized by women writers, and it is notable that perhaps for this reason many Anglophone Arabic writers are women. Gradually, Arabic is being written in more diverse ways, a process that was first highlighted for the English-speaking world with Driss Ben Hamed Charhadi's *A Life Full of Holes* (1964), which was transcribed and translated from Moroccan Arabic or darija by Paul Bowles. Today, one of the effects of the use of social media, blogging etc., associated with the Arab Spring, has been the development of new forms of written Arabic that reflect local vernaculars much more closely and which are radically transforming the hegemony of Modern Standard Arabic in a "new imaginative geography of liberation."[24] So the contemporary situation can perhaps be compared, in certain ways, to the gradual break up of standard Latin in Europe from the sixteenth century to the time of Goethe, in a postcolonial historical environment.

Language anxiety in the Maghreb, therefore, seems to result from the presence of all major European languages, with the exception of German, together with the wide range of spoken forms of Arabic, as well as other languages such as Berber, that collide with the special situation of a Modern Standard written Arabic, to produce a situation of on the one hand acute language anxiety, but, on the other hand, as is often the case with anxiety, extraordinary productivity across North Africa and the so-called Middle East. And that energizing dynamic is precisely what makes Arabic literature so uniquely interesting amongst all great literatures of the world today.

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[23] Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Amour bilingue* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1983).
[24] Hamid Dabashi, *The Arab Spring. The End of Postcolonialism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), p. 226.

Jane O. Newman

Auerbach's Dante: Poetical Theology as a Point of Departure for a Philology of World Literature

Which Worlds?

Already in 1827, Goethe famously remarked to his friend Eckermann that "'the epoch of world literature [*Weltliteratur*]'" was at hand.[1] Marx and Engels equally as famously went on to confirm Goethe's claim not too many years later, when they wrote in 1848 that in the place of the "old wants," or desires, of nations for only their own literary heritages and national traditions of texts, "new wants" had arisen, particularly among the *bourgeoisie*, new appetites that could in turn only be satisfied by always new "products."[2] The argument was prescient, for, as Michael Denning has argued, like world music, world literary products are extremely popular these days, part of a booming culture industry that Emily Apter suggests can quite easily become a "facile globalism" if and when it eschews the specifics of contingent and distinct literary and textual forms in favor of a single, easily digestible cosmopolitanist canon crafted to suit the tastes of the emerging market.[3] World Literature lite, we might say.

Here, however, it is not the impact of consumer culture on poetry but, rather, the expansionist temporality central to Goethe's and Marx and Engels's discussions of World Literature that is of interest. Not surprising in texts either by these particular men or by others from the historical period when they were writing, the dogged progressivism that characterizes their claims has resurfaced recently in what should be counter-intuitive ways in our allegedly post-Enlightenment age.[4] Indeed, these debates actually seem to contravene what is often taken to be their topographically organized devotion to ex-

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1. Goethe to Eckermann, 1827, as cited in Stefan Hoesel-Uhlig, "Changing Fields: The Directions of Goethe's *Weltliteratur*," in: Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Literature* (London: Verso Books, 2004), pp. 26–53, p. 34.
2. Marx and Engels as cited in Hoesel-Uhlig, *Directions of Goethe's* Weltliteratur, p. 51.
3. Michael Denning, "The Novelists' International," in: Franco Moretti, ed., *The Novel, Volume 1: History, Geography, and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 703–726, p. 703; and Emily Apter, "Literary World-Systems," in: David Damrosch, ed., *Teaching World Literature* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2009), pp. 44–60; p. 56.
4. Pascale Casanova discusses the "temporalities" of World Literature from a somewhat different perspective: "Literature as a World," *New Left Review* 31 (2005), pp. 71–90; pp. 76–78.

panding the way we understand relations between the local and the global when, in their insistence on an ever greater inclusionism, they rely on a logic of linearity not unlike the one that shapes Goethe's and Marx and Engels's claims. This is something other than the recently much decried "Eurochronology," the importation of periodization schemes based on only Western examples to help us organize both our reading lists and world literacy's dominant hierarchies of aesthetic value.[5] Rather, concerned about which protocols of selection might best apply in the face of the always politically vexed conundrum of representation and coverage, theorists of World Literature actually fail to choose when they line the increasingly rich, but also increasingly disparate assortment of artifacts and texts available for study all up in a row, with the most recent additions to the canon often leading the way. The result does appear to be a spectacular kind of globally all-enfranchising parade. But the procession is often choreographed according to the ex- rather than inclusionary principle described by medievalist Kathleen Biddick as "supersessional[ism]."[6] In this model, each "new" generation of not necessarily more recent, but always previously absent literatures and texts takes its place at the front of the line; as a result, earlier generations necessarily fall behind, or eventually even drop out. This kind of expansionism is not truly additive. Nor can it in the long run ever aspire to accommodating anything like the totality of the world's literatures, since its movement forward is based on a protocol of eclipse rather than of embrace. Ironically, the pedagogical benefits of this way of teaching both the object and the problem of World Literature critically are also unclear, since most early twenty-first century students (in the United States at least) belong to a generation that came of age just after the culture wars had begun to die down. For many of them, a diversified and globally updated canon now seems pretty traditional and the lesser-taught (western) Classics strikingly new.

Understanding the supersessionalism of the World Literature debates challenges us to recognize the limitations of even the most inter- and transnational of the new counter-canons. Calling for the theorization of these canons is of course fully justified in order to resist formerly hegemonic versions of the world literary tradition by strategically privileging texts not previously considered as core. And certainly these other traditions have immeasurably enriched our understanding of the abundant and diverse forms of literary capital that circulate outside of and beyond the Western-metropolitan market system. Yet, precisely the aptness to World Literature debates of the vocabularies of domination and resistance and of periphery and core reminds us of the other periodization logic that has governed the field, one based on the narrative that has long shaped the way the history of social and political modernization-cum-secularization is told.[7] In this narrative, each new participant in an ever more crowded world of world civilizations can only accede to its social and political maturity by leaving earlier de-

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[5]   Cf. Christopher Prendergast citing Arjun Appadurai in Prendergast, "The World Republic of Letters," in: Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Literature*, pp. 1–25; p. 6.

[6]   Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary. Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 2–3.

[7]   Casanova, *Literature as a World*, comments on a somewhat different "modernization" thesis, pp. 75–76.

pendencies on traditionalism, superstition, and so on behind—regardless of how un- or even anti-progressivist or critical of what has come to count as secular "civilization" or modernity any one of these previously minoritized voices might be.[8] Any given collective's cultural modernity (and, only apparently counter-intuitively, its post-modernity too) thus comes to be defined as the age in which that collective (large or small, state-identified or not) claims sovereignty over its right to create and defend its own identity-forming tradition of artifacts and texts. The story relies on what I call an implicit Westphalianism, the de facto result of which is actually a kind of "de-worlding," the creation of a mosaic of traditions that, ever insistent on autonomy and differentiation, remain uncoupled from one another, co-existing in often uneasy proximity, but unable to see how together they form a whole. In the end, this system of "new" and independent canons remains beset by the same challenges as the more literal Westphalian system to which it is indebted as an ostensibly pluralist system, that is, in which each and every sovereign state, large and small, is allegedly accorded an equal place at the table, but where a "great power" logic in fact determines relations between the states—and thus also between literary canons and cultural traditions—when they continue to be organized by inequities of size, power, and prestige.[9] Finally, any one of the countless, newly empowered writer-participants in the rainbow pluriverse of a world literary canon "enriched" by admitting a whole host of new traditions in this way runs the risk of experiencing a new kind of subjection, this time to "ethnic nominalism," to the pressure, in other words, to adjust his or her individual voice to the task of representing only a "national[ly] neutral" version of his or her canon and thus of speaking only in an idiom that coincides with that canon's identifiable common voice.[10] This is not World Literature as I would like to conceive it.

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[8] This overlap between cultural and political agency is not new; as Anthony D. Smith writes, "nationalism" typically relies on narratives of "cultural gestation and representation," even when the political collective in question exists below the level or outside and beyond the parameters of the classical nation-state. Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge/Oxford/Malden: Polity Press/Blackwell, 2001), pp. 6–7. Casanova (*Literature as a World*) debates the assumption of this synchronization, as did (famously) Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'," *Social Text* 17 (1987), pp. 3–25, on Frederic Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986), pp. 65–88.

[9] Lawrence Venuti analyzes the trends that characterize texts translated from English into other languages versus the reverse in order to demonstrate the "asymmetries" that result from the "overwhelming domination" by "English-language cultures" of world textual availability. Cf. Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 160–165. Following Moretti, Vilashini Cooppan discusses this same asymmetry in the World Literature classroom, where, even when a "diverse" canon is taught, it is usually the top 0.5% of the world literary canon, usually by Novel Prize winners, that is assigned. Cf. Vilashini Cooppan, "World Literature and Global Theory: Comparative Literature for the New Millennium," s*ymplokē* 9. 1–2 (2001), pp. 15–43; p. 33.

[10] Emily Apter, "Untranslatables: A World System," *New Literary History* 39. 3 (2008), pp. 581–598; p. 581.

In the face of the challenges associated with the supersessionalist model and in light of the proliferation of hierarchical and potentially identitarian canons to which it leads, other World Literature theorists have suggested an array of anti-telic counter-chronologies (such as Wai Chee Dimock's "deep time" or Vilashini Cooppan's "ghostly repetitions and uncanny hauntings") and alternative geometries (such as David Damrosch's "ellipses"), whose purpose is to discourage both progressivism and atomist isolationism by juxtaposing or reading two or more individual and closely read world texts and traditions together, with their terms of engagement involving complex relations of genre, medium, and theme. Still others, including Franco Moretti, have proposed altogether differently scaled approaches designed to help "map" and "graph" the regularities of even grander inclusionary "networks" and "systems" of world letters that rely on forms of "distant reading" that allow large-scale patterns to become clear.[11] Both approaches are useful in providing models for how to wrestle the sheer enormity of the worlds of World Literature to the ground, and suggest less tiered ways of keeping up with the race to cover more and more of the matter of world literacy broadly defined. Each represents its own kind of challenge, however. For, when we shrink the world to the case of either a single or even paired example or strip it of its motley, fractal texture through large-scale data mining, what we lose is the sense of the ways in which any one of World Literature's intriguingly dense and detailed texts both contains its own universe and fits into an equally as variegated world-literary whole that is "unified" precisely in its heteronomous "multiplicity," as another great theorist of World Literature, Erich Auerbach, once wrote.[12]

The several impasses represented by these two sets of approaches (hopelessly simplified here) call for investigating the possibility of thinking about World Literature from the both literally and discursively distinct point of view associated with what some contemporary International Relations theorists call our current "post-Westphalian" moment.[13] As noted above, the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) is often taken to mark the

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[11] Wai Chee Dimock, "Literature for the Planet," *PMLA* 116. 1 (2001), pp. 173–188; Vilashini Cooppan, "Ghosts in the Disciplinary Machine: The Uncanny Life of World Literature," *Comparative Literature Studies* 41. 1 (2004), pp. 10–36; David Damrosch, "Literary Study in an Elliptical Age," in: Charles Bernheimer, ed., *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 122–133; Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (2000), pp. 54–68; Apter, *Literary World Systems*.

[12] Erich Auerbach, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," trans. Maire and Edward Said, *The Centennial Review* 13. 1 (1969), pp. 1–17; p. 4, originally published as "Philologie der Weltliteratur," in: Walter Muschg and Emil Staiger, edd., *Weltliteratur. Festgabe für Fritz Strich zum 70. Geburtstag* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1952), pp. 39–50, and available in: Erich Auerbach, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie* (Bern/München: Francke Verlag, 1967), pp. 301–310; p. 302. In what follows, I cite the Saids' translation, with the page references to the 1967 German version following the page references to the English. Cf. also my (re)translation of this essay as "The Philology of World Literature," in: James I. Porter, ed., *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [forthcoming]).

[13] Cf. Richard Falk, "Revisiting Westphalia, Discovering Post-Westphalia," *The Journal of Ethics* 6 (2002), pp. 311–352. For the "myth" of Westphalia's "modernity," cf. Stéphane Beaulac, "The

beginning of modernity's "axial age," when a world whose localisms and particularities were previously collected under just a few large-scale umbrellas, among them the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire, was carved up into autonomous states that used their newly acquired territorial sovereignty to defend against difference on the outside and to impose uniformity within. By definition, these states saw no standard above themselves, no external instance capable of relativizing their claims to absolute authority by positioning them within a greater whole. Understanding the world through a post-Westphalianism lens is not exactly the same as adopting an internationalist or cosmopolitanist stance. Rather, it calls for defining a supranational, even post-sovereign sovereign position, not via a return to any facile universalism of course, but by acknowledging distinctions and difference from above, as it were. Gayatri Spivak has proposed that a "planetary" Comparative Literature might play this role for the world of world letters; the language she uses to describe what she calls "planet-thought" suggests precisely this kind of trans-mundane stance. "Planet-thought" belongs, Spivak writes, to an "inexhaustible taxonomy of names" for and "transcendental figurations" of an absolute, all-containing "alterity" that is "underived from us." "[D]iscontinuous" from any one "differentiated political space" and thus non-hegemonic, "planetarity" is "mysterious" in its ability to transcend hierarchies of ranked difference.[14]

Already some fifty years before Spivak, Erich Auerbach defined World Literature as "planetary" in a somewhat less oracular way, writing in his essay, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" (1952), that "our philological home" is "no longer the nation," but, rather, "the earth" (*die Erde*).[15] Auerbach's call in the posthumously published *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (1958) for the practice of a "radical" historicist "relativism" capable of engaging the internal complexity and poetic-aesthetic specificity of any and all particular texts within a common frame nevertheless assumes the same kind of "mysterious," translocal presence to which Spivak alludes, for there Auerbach defines that text's role—in its specificity—as a marker of the "absolute essence" of an absent, yet virtually real and all-inclusive World Literature, a kind of world literary *nunc stans*, that "can only be apprehended in its particular historical forms."[16] Emily Apter has proposed the term "negative

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Westphalian Model in Defining International Law: Challenging the Myth," *Australian Journal of Legal History* 8. 2 (2004), pp. 181–213.

[14] Cf. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 72–73 and p. 102. Conceiving of culture in planetary fashion may well be an important alternative to the current dominance of neo-liberal theories of the globalization of capital as the only version of post-sovereign transnationalism that exists. Jürgen Habermas has argued that we must deliberately develop versions of (political) cosmopolitanism mindful of their charge to act as counter-weights to, or "bridles" on, market-driven forms of trans-nationalism to the end of creating equity and stability, again, both within and between states. Cultural "planetarity" might play the same role. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "The Constitutionalization of International Law and the Legitimation Problems of a Constitution for World Society [2007]," in: Jürgen Habermas, *Europe. The Faltering Project* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 109–130.

[15] Auerbach, *Philology and* Weltliteratur, p. 17/p. 310.

[16] Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim [1965] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 13.

philology" in association with the work of Edward Said as a way of acknowledging "what is no longer there."[17] The term can be adapted here to describe an Auerbachian philology for World Literature that treats, rather, what was and actually is "here" in all of its rich and particular specificity, doing so, however, in full recognition of its representative place in the intricate constellation that is the presumed, yet indescribable fullness of the sum of its myriad parts.

For Auerbach, this negative philology was thus not truly negative. Rather, as I show below, it can be best understood in terms of the positive form of the sacred science from which his way of reading the whole-in-the-part derives, namely, the theology of the thirteenth-century Dominican philosopher, Saint Thomas Aquinas. Invoking late medieval Scholastic doctrine may seem a strange way to challenge the Westphalianized debates about how to define World Literature, debates which—like the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) itself, which allegedly banned matters of faith to the interiorized realm of "personal belief" in order to bring the nearly 100 years of bloody religious wars that had rolled across Europe to an end—habitually exclude religion and its discourses from "modern" secular literary-critical study as potentially divisive, if not also irrelevant because, like belief, they are deemed subjective and unscientific.[18] Spivak's puzzling vocabularies of transcendence and the "non-derived" status of the planet make sense when we juxtapose them with the form such discourses took in earlier times and for Auerbach's generation in particular, when, as Benjamin Lazier writes, "theology" was a "vehicle for commentary on the political, aesthetic, and philosophical present" and "not merely […] [a] parochial pursuit."[19] Rather than suggesting that it is personal preference—or local politics—that could or should dictate any one reader's private or any one collective's partisan canon, Auerbach's Thomistically-inflected philology of World Literature, based on his famous concept of the *Ansatzpunkt*, or point of departure, provides a model of how to read a text at the level of the planet, that is, both for the world that it contains within itself and for its ability to "radiate out" into "world history" and into an all-embracing world literary universe too.[20] It should come as no surprise that this model was in fact quite a bit less secular than is conventionally assumed and originally also pre-Westphalian in the strict sense of the term, since it relied on a clearly pre-modern and thus differently scaled theological understanding of the all-embracing and necessarily non-hierarchizing perfection of divine Creation, described by Auerbach in his 1929 book on Dante in the following way:

[17] Cf. Emily Apter, "Terrestrial Humanism: Edward W. Said and the Politics of World Literature," in: Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas, edd., *A Companion to Comparative Literature* (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 439–453; p. 444.

[18] On Westphalianism, cf. Jane O. Newman "Perpetual Oblivion? Remembering Westphalia in a Post-Secular Age," in: Isabel Karremann, Cornel Zwierlein, and Inga Mai Groote, edd., *Forgetting Faith? Negotiating Confessional Conflict in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 261–275.

[19] Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted. Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 3.

[20] Auerbach, *Philology and* Weltliteratur, p. 15/p. 309.

St. Thomas explained the diversity of things through the theological tenet that the world was made in God's image. In view of the fundamental imperfection of created things and of their essential dissimilarity to God, no *one* species of created things can possibly achieve likeness to God. Accordingly a diversity of created things becomes necessary, in order that in their totality, they may approach a perfect likeness to God […]. Thus, in regard to Creation as a whole, diversity is looked upon not as an antithesis to perfection, but rather as an expression of it.[21]

By turning to the conceptual origins in Thomism of Auerbach's approach to World Literature, I am not suggesting that the next "new" way to construct a world literary canon is to appeal to religion—although it would certainly be worth thinking about the synchronized explosions of academic discussions concerning the need to recognize the post-secular turn of the world and the need to theorize a properly inclusive World Literature canon, respectively. Instead, what I am suggesting is that by repurposing his life-long engagement with the late medieval, Thomist poetical theology of Dante Alighieri into a theorization of how to approach the "infinite task" of an "extra-territorial"[22] political philology for World Literature in his essay of 1952, Auerbach was able to define linguistic and literary "diversity" as a sign of an anti-supersessional "totality" that would be more than the "standardized," "leveled," and homogenized world of "Esperanto"-World Literature he feared was becoming the new norm.[23] In what follows, I explore the several contexts in which it made sense for Auerbach to understand Dante's poetical theology as a version of Thomist doctrine in the first place and then to refashion it into a theory of World Literature for post-Westphalian times.

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[21] Erich Auerbach, *Dante. Poet of the Secular World*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 84; originally published as *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1929), p. 105. In what follows, I cite the English version of Auerbach's *Dante* book parenthetically, but also indicate the page numbers in the German edition after the page numbers of the English.

[22] Citing the French translation of Auerbach's *Literary Language*, Jérôme David emphasizes Auerbach's commitment to a radical historicist hermeneutic as "une tâche infinie." Cf. Jérôme David, *Spectres de Goethe. Les Métamorphoses de la "Littérature Mondiale"* (Paris: Les Prairies Ordinaires, 2011), p. 167. On Edward Said's approach to literature, much indebted to Auerbach's, as "extra-territorial philological humanism," cf. Debjani Ganguly, "Edward Said, World Literature, and Global Comparatism," in: Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, edd., *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), pp. 176–201, as cited in Apter, *Terrestrial Humanism*, p. 440.

[23] Cf. Auerbach, *Philology and* Weltliteratur, p. 2/p. 301, on the "standardizing" tendencies. Auerbach had long had this fear. Some fifteen years earlier, he wrote from Istanbul to Walter Benjamin about the "destruction of the historic national character" of the Turkish language and culture under Atatürk in particular, calling this a sign of a looming "Esperanto" culture all over the earth. Cf. Auerbach to Benjamin, 3 January, 1937, in "Scholarship in Times of Extremes: Letters of Erich Auerbach (1933–46), on the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Death," introd. and trans. Martin Elsky, Martin Vialon, and Robert Stein, *PMLA* 122. 3 (2007), pp. 742–762; p. 751.

Theologus Auerbach: Auerbach's Thomist Dante

In a lecture on Dante that Auerbach gave in 1948 at Penn State, the German-Jewish Auerbach declares that it was the late medieval Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, to whom Dante owed his vision of the "powerful realism" of the afterlife. "Is there any explanation," Auerbach asks, "for Dante's powerful realism in rendering human individuality?" He answers immediately: The "concrete concept of human immortality" that we find in Dante the Pilgrim's ability to experience "the divine order" as a series of "concrete" phenomena and in Dante the Poet's "genius" in rendering that divine order in verse "was supported by […] the Aristotelian philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas."[24] Auerbach's post-war interest in Dante's Thomism was not new. Rather, it originated much earlier, in his pre-*Mimesis*, indeed pre-Istanbul years as a young scholar of Romance Literatures in Weimar Germany, and is developed at greatest length in his *Dante. Poet of the Secular World* (1929), the book with which he secured his first and only professorial chair in Germany, in Marburg during that same year. Of particular interest here is that book's important third chapter, "The Subject of the 'Comedy'," in which, for some thirty pages, Auerbach takes a position on debates about Dante's philosophical alignments in his entire oeuvre, but most prominently in the *Commedia*.

In these pages, Auerbach appears to be modestly well informed about the scholarship on late medieval philosophy, both in and of itself and as Dante might have known it, and gives a competent overview of the debates. But he clearly begins warming up to his topic only about half way through the chapter, making the strong claim that Dante in fact "regarded the Thomist-Aristotelian philosophy […] as the best possible material for a poetic work" (p. 81/p. 102), like his own, that sought to capture the "unity" and "unified world view that he wished to set forth" (p. 79/p. 99), and thus of God's "Creation as a whole" (p. 84/p. 106). Auerbach's account of this philosophy takes on discernibly more urgency as he begins to discuss what he calls "Thomist psychology" (p. 84/p. 106). At stake are not only Thomas' doctrines of the soul as the "form of the body" (p. 85/p. 106) and thus of the "unity of the personality," which he calls the "concordance between the body and the soul" (p. 86/p. 108), but also, and as a result of these doctrines, Auerbach writes, the principle of what Thomas calls Man's habitus. An individual's habitus is formed as a result of the imprint of that individual's "disposition" on his "substance," which creates "the residuum in man's soul of [the] soul's [empirical] history" (p. 85/p. 107). It is this Thomist doctrine of "concordance," of the "relation between the soul and its acts," that yokes together one's "situation in the hereafter" with one's material history of deeds and experiences, one's "situation on earth" (p. 88/p. 110), thereby creating the incredible realism of Dante's poem. More recent scholars, including Manuele Gragnolati, have studied precisely this same issue in Dante, namely, the question of the poet's position on the "unicity"-of-the-soul doctrine

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[24] Erich Auerbach, "The Three Traits of Dante's Poetry," in: Karlheinz Barck and Martin Treml, edd., *Erich Auerbach. Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2007), pp. 414–425; pp. 424–425.

as it was debated by many late medieval minds, including Bonaventure and Aquinas, Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus, and many more.[25] For Auerbach, however, it was the specifically Thomist joining at the hip of Man's two "situations" that was the basis of the incredible plasticity of the figures in Dante's "other"-world and revealed the coherence of all of God's Creation, in both the "worldly" (and thus not at all "secular") world (*irdische Welt*) and the Beyond.[26] For Auerbach, the future theorist of realism in Western literature, the worldly "realism" of Dante's Beyond was grounded in this doctrine.[27]

There are several questions to pose concerning the argument Auerbach makes about Dante's Thomism, first in 1929, and then again in 1948. The first and perhaps most important one is: how much did he actually know about late medieval philosophy and about "Thomist-Aristotelian" philosophy in particular? No less important: What did citing a specific version of Thomism signify at the time, both for Auerbach and in general? Answering these questions involves telling the story of Auerbach's sources. It is a complex tale, but we can begin to pick up its threads in the footnotes to the 1929 book, which indicate the tradition of texts he consulted to make such claims. For both general background on late medieval Scholasticism and on Aquinas in particular, Auerbach cites two major sources; the first, Alois Dempf's *The Dominant Form of the Medieval Weltanschauung* (*Die Hauptform mittelalterlicher Weltanschauung*) (1922), the second, Étienne Gilson's *Thomism* (*Le Thomisme*) (originally 1919, but Auerbach cites a later 1922 edition). Here I discuss primarily the lesser known of these figures, namely the German Catholic philosopher Alois Dempf, although there is much to consider about Auerbach's references to the work of the French Thomist historian of medieval philosophy, Étienne Gilson, too.[28]

Auerbach's references to Dempf throughout the *Dante* book indicate the approximate parameters of the terrain that must be reconnoitered with great care in order to understand their place in the several versions of neo-Thomism circulating in Germany in the

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[25] Manuele Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife. Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

[26] The translation of the title of the book in which these pages appear as "secular world" is thus misleading, since for Auerbach's Dante, the worldly world is deeply informed by God's plan.

[27] Later in the *Dante* book, he writes: "To put it very cautiously, it seems to me that with regard to the *Divine Comedy* such a limit has almost been attained when philosophical commentators begin to praise its so-called poetic beauties as a value in themselves and reject the system, the doctrine, and indeed the entire subject matter as irrelevancies which if anything call for a certain indulgence." Indeed, "[t]he subject and the doctrine of the *Comedy* are not incidental; they are the roots of its poetic beauty" (p. 159/p. 196).

[28] Indeed, there are parts of Auerbach's 1929 Dante book that read like virtual quotations of Gilson on Thomas. Gilson writes, for example, that for Thomas: "A la fin dernière n'est pas la négation de nos fins humaines, elle les recueille au contraire en les sublimant, et nos fins humaines sont à leur tour comme autant d'imitations partielles et de substituts imparfaits de notre dernière fin" (Étienne Gilson, *Le Thomisme* [Paris: Vrin, 1922], p. 227). Aquinas' doctrine of the synergism of the two realms, this world and the next, is confirmed here. For a more recent assessment of the "theological humanity" of the figures in Dante's poem, cf. A. N. Williams, "The Theology of the *Comedy*," in: Rachel Jacoff, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 201–217; p. 204.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to what is known as the Modernist Heresy within Catholic theology. One of the most virulent forms of Catholic Modernism appears to have taken root in southwestern Germany in the early to mid-nineteenth century, when somewhat more historical and speculative theologians saw the possibility for, indeed, the necessity of some kind of rapprochement between Catholic doctrine and "modern" Idealist philosophy, indeed, with the modern world writ large.[29] To stay relevant in this world, traditional Catholic doctrine would have to adapt. Progressive Catholics in Germany held a conference in Munich in 1863, at which the main topic was the academic freedom of Catholic scholars to consider dogma anew. Such innovations obviously did not sit well with Rome, and several generations of popes struck back, issuing, in 1864, for example, the encyclical *Quanta cura*, with the "notorious *Syllabus of Errors*" (the so-called "Syllabus" indicating the 80 "errors" of "Modernism") "appended" (pp. 331–332), and then convening the First Vatican Council in 1870, at which *Pastor Aeternus*, the declaration of papal primacy and infallibility was announced. Pope Leo XIII coordinated doctrine with this affirmation of papal sovereignty, issuing the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in 1879, which declared the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas as normative for Catholic teaching. Starting with *Aeterni Patris* and continuing up through the *motu proprio*, *Doctoris Angelici*, issued under Pius X in 1914, and the Code of Canon Law, issued under Benedikt XV in 1917, Thomist teachings were pronounced mandatory in all "Universities, Academies, Colleges, Seminaries, and Institutions enjoying by apostolic indult the privilege of granting academic degrees" (pp. 342–343).

It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of neo-Thomist orthodoxy on early twentieth-century Catholics in Germany. The political travails of the German Catholic Church in Germany, inherited from the late nineteenth-century *Kulturkampf*, or "battle between [religious] cultures," that continued to be waged on the Church by a post-1871 hegemonic Protestant state, had not gone away in the immediate pre-war years, and were exacerbated by military strategy conducted under the banner of a militant Lutheran *Kriegstheologie*, or war theology, that allowed for targeted bombing of cathedrals, for example, in Belgium and France.[30] In the run-up to and after 1914, and then also after Versailles, the fog of war nevertheless makes the confessional battle lines hard to make out. Helmut Walser Smith has shown that of the myriad party platforms on both the left and the right, and among both Catholics and Protestants, some vied for a piece of the nationalist pie while others resisted the earthly bellicosity to which that stance gave rise.[31] It is often difficult to tell who was more nationalist or anti-nationalist, or, for that matter, internationalist, and to what end. While it is clear,

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[29] For the following, I rely on James C. Livingston, "Movements of Recovery and Conservation: Ultramontanism and the Neo-Thomistic Revival," in: Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 327–355. Page references are noted parenthetically in the text.

[30] Cf. Jane O. Newman, "Enchantments in Times of War: Aby Warburg, Walter Benjamin, and the Secularization Thesis," *Representations* 105. 1 (2009), pp. 133–167; pp. 135–139.

[31] Cf. Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

then, that the Jewish Auerbach grew up in and was assimilated into a more or less Protestant milieu by virtue of his schooling in Berlin, for example, and may have been influenced by Protestant teachers in Heidelberg and Berlin such as Ernst Troeltsch, all of these details make it equally as obvious that one could not talk innocently about Catholic theology in general and "Thomism" in particular at a time when debates were raging between and among Catholics about the afterlife of the "philosophia perennis" of the saint, particularly insofar as the Church was (or was not) responding to "modern" social and political conditions and needs created by a nationalist "Liberalism" and to the benefits and ills that had been brought to the young German nation-state in particular by some of the more militarized forms of "progressive" modernity itself.[32] In the outpouring of both scholarly and popular laudatios to "our Dante" in Germany in the jubilee year of 1921 (the 600th anniversary of Dante's death), the battle lines were often drawn in similar ways.[33] It would be difficult not to assume knowledge of these debates on Auerbach's part.

In the midst of this messy political-confessional world of post-war Weimar Germany, it is revealing that in his 1929 *Dante* book, Auerbach cites as one of his main sources on Thomism the work of a man who was both decidedly Catholic and decidedly ecumenical in faith and deed, namely, the politically anti-Liberal, but apparently progressively anti-nationalist philosopher, Alois Dempf (1891–1982).[34] While Dempf is perhaps most famously associated with his later anti-Nazi treatise, *German Catholics and the Crisis of Faith* (*Die Glaubensnot der deutschen Katholiken*), published in 1934 under a pseudonym in Switzerland, the book for which he was most well known in the Weimar years was entitled *Sacrum Imperium*, and was published in 1929.[35] Auerbach of course does not cite this book in his book on Dante, published the same year, but, rather, as noted above, Dempf's earlier *The Dominant Form of the Medieval Weltanschauung* of 1925, a dense and lengthy tome in which Dempf gives a detailed account of the genealogy of the all-inclusive systematic thinking associated with the Scholastics known as the *Summa* (which is the "dominant form" of his title), which, in its "all inclusive universality," provides an antidote and alternative to the "fractured

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[32] Cf. the documents discussed in Karlheinz Barck, "Erich Auerbach in Berlin: Spurensicherung und ein Porträt," in: Barck et al., *Erich Auerbach*, pp. 195–214; Matthias Bormuth, "Menschenkunde zwischen Meistern—Erich Auerbach und Karl Löwith," in: Barck et al., *Erich Auerbach*, pp. 82–104, also argues for Protestant influences, especially Adolf von Harnack, on Auerbach's early thinking.

[33] Cf. Mirjam Mansen, *"Denn auch Dante ist unser!" Die deutsche Danterezeption 1900–1950* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003), pp. 24–76.

[34] These terms are notoriously difficult to parse in the Weimar years. To be anti-Liberal did not mean that one was not pro-Republic; a "progressive" Catholic might nevertheless also be a political conservative. Cf. Michael Hollerich, "Catholic Anti-Liberalism in Weimar: Political Theology and its Critics." Ms.

[35] On Dempf, cf. the articles collected in Vincent Berning and Hans Maier, edd., *Alois Dempf (1891–1982). Philosoph, Kulturtheoretiker, Prophet gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Weißenhorn: Anton H. Konrad, 1992). I cite Alois Dempf's *Die Hauptform mittelalterlicher Weltanschauung. Eine geisteswissenschaftliche Studie über die Summa* (München/Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1925) parenthetically in the text below. All translations are my own.

philosophy of today" (p. 1) faced by all. "The immanent order" of all of God's Creation is mirrored in the "inner integrity" (p. 12) of Thomas' *Summa* in particular, which, at the end of the book Dempf glowingly, if perhaps now somewhat counter-intuitively, calls "daring and modern" (p. 157). Thomas' *Summa* was "the first grand achievement of the Renaissance" (p. 156), he writes, in its ability to provide a model for an all-inclusive "universal picture of the world" and for the "entirety of knowledge" (p. 176). In his later *Sacrum Imperium* book, Dempf goes on to develop this thought by arguing precisely against what the title of that book appears to suggest.[36] Translated into German, that is, "sacrum imperium" means "sacred *Reich*," and would seem to endorse what later became known as "*Reichstheologie*," the theology of the (Third) *Reich*. But what Dempf is in fact specifically arguing against in 1929 and in the earlier book on the *Summa* is any kind of localized or state-sponsored, sectarian knowledge or system, indeed, against precisely what was being christened by Carl Schmitt and others as "political theology" at around this same time.[37] Indeed, in a 1926 article, Dempf explicitly dismisses what he calls the "divinization of the state" and argues for a renewed commitment to the "*bonum commune*, the common good of the whole people," under the moral leadership of an anti-militarist (but also sternly anti-capitalist and anti-Bolshevik) state and philosophical system on the basis of what he calls, in *Sacrum Imperium*, a "Christian universalism of social justice" that mirrors on earth the unity of God's Creation that Thomas had set out to map.[38]

Dempf's is thus definitely not the "dominant form" of the conservative neo-Thomist *Weltanschauung* described above. Indeed, it seems rather to suggest a passionate (theological) Modernism, more along the lines of what we later find in the work of the French Thomist Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), who in fact called on Dempf's idea of the *sacrum imperium* specifically to refute Schmitt and to argue for the existential urgency of acknowledging in this life the superiority and authority of the universal, non state-identified and non-particularist *regnum Dei*, the world beyond. The association of Dempf with this other form of a "modernizing" neo-Thomism makes sense. During these same years, he published frequently in *Hochland*, the Catholic journal of the time.[39] The title is difficult to translate; it literally means "high land," but signified the higher realm of God, to the reality of which all must attend as they live their lives here below. Interestingly, *Hochland* was founded in 1903 specifically as a venue for the staging of an encounter of modern literature with the Catholic faith. Targeted for placement on the Index for its troubles during the anti-Modernism years, the journal and its

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[36] Cf. Alois Dempf, *Sacrum Imperium. Geschichts- und Staatsphilosophie des Mittelalters und der politischen Renaissance* (München/Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1929).

[37] Cf. Sylvio Hermann De Franceschi, "Ambiguïtés historiographiques du théologico-politique. Genèse et fortune d'un concept," *Revue historique* 3. n° 643 (2007), pp. 653–685; pp. 666–667.

[38] Cf. Alois Dempf "Der großdeutsche Gedanke," in: Max Ettlinger, Philipp Funk, and Friedrich Fuchs, edd., *Wiederbegegnung von Kirche und Kultur in Deutschland: Eine Gabe für Karl Muth* (München: Kösel & Pustet, 1927), pp. 207–217, as cited in Hollerich, *Catholic Anti-Liberalism in Weimar*, p. 12 and p. 20, respectively.

[39] On *Hochland*, cf. Konrad Ackermann, *Der Widerstand der Monatsschrift* Hochland *gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (München: Kösel, 1965), especially pp. 19–27, on the early years.

supporters went on to experience a post-World War One shift of focus, when it opened its pages to more directly political pieces by men whose work Auerbach knew, including Dempf and the Catholic philosopher, Romano Guardini, on whose work Auerbach explicitly relied in his reading of Pascal.[40] Guardini, Dempf, and others nevertheless continued to use readings of literature to comment upon contemporary issues.

Dempf was also involved, finally, with another high-profile interdisciplinary journal called *Das Abendland* (The Occident), founded in 1925 by Hermann Platz, a leading scholar in Auerbach's professional field of Romance Studies and spokesman for the Catholic Center Party in the Weimar years. *Das Abendland* was one of the major Europeanist—which is to say anti-nationalist—literary and cultural publications of the post-World War One years, and we would do well to recall its high profile during the very years that Auerbach was launching his academic career in the field.[41] We may also want to reconsider how the subtitle of *Mimesis*: "Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der *abendländischen* Literatur," has been translated to date, and perhaps render it instead as "The Representation of Reality in Occidental Literature" to mark the Europeanist-internationalist character of the context out of which these journals grew as well as their—and perhaps also Auerbach's—commitment to reading literature as a way of reflecting on what unites nations, thus furthering the project of understanding the "common good of all people" from a progressive Catholic and decidedly anti-statist point of view. To understand, in other words, both the poetical and the political implications of Auerbach's 1929 citation of Dempf's presentation of what Dempf calls the "dominant form" of medieval philosophy, namely, Aquinas' *Summa*, for what Auerbach in 1929 calls Dante's "summa vitae humanae"[42] in the *Commedia* and, in turn, the afterlife of his understanding of Dante's poetical theology for his theory of World Literature, it is important to consider it in the context of the political and literary-critical advocacy projects being conducted within a Thomist frame during the Weimar period and beyond, debates that were apparently also taking place directly within Auerbach's professional field of Romance Literary Studies.[43] Given this context, his discussion of Dante's poetical theology in his 1929 book may be understood as more than simply a discussion of style. Indeed, he refers there somewhat obliquely to the challenges facing the particularist

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[40] Cf. Jane O. Newman, "Force and Justice: Auerbach's Pascal," in: Graham Hammill and Julia Reinhard Lupton, edd., *Political Theology and Early Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 159–180.

[41] Hollerich in *Catholic Anti-Liberalism in Weimar* indicates that Dempf tried to get Schmitt to write for *Das Abendland*. He (Dempf) nevertheless openly rejects Schmitt by 1934. The concept of *Das Abendland*, the Occident, was of course not entirely innocent. On the journal and the many circles in which the term was used, cf. Vanessa Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen. Ideen von Europa in Deutschland zwischen Reichstradition und Westorientierung (1920–1970)* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2005), especially pp. 27–56.

[42] Auerbach, *Dante*, p. 93/p. 118.

[43] On the larger context of the focus on the Occident and on Germany's role as a Romance Allemanic (rather than Germanic) nation during this period, as proclaimed explicitly by the Catholic intelligentsia, cf. Richard Faber, "Third Reich and Third Europe: Stefan George's Imperial Mythologies in Context," in: Melissa S. Lane and Martin A. Ruehl, edd., *A Poet's Reich. Politics and Culture in the George Circle* (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), pp. 251–268.

political world-system of the inter-war years and the relevance of turning to Thomist doctrine for conceptual solutions when he alludes to Dante's understanding of the "God-given balanced order [both] on earth" and in the Beyond as a "general philo-sophical and historical view," which, "despite its failure in history, has even today" (*noch jetzt*), "in an entirely different world, inspired some of the most lucid and au-thentic political and historical thinking."[44] The seeds for his later conceptualization of a "balanced" philology of World Literature in yet another "entirely different," bilaterally homogenized Cold War world, in which preserving the dense particularity of multiple traditions as part of Man's "common fate" was even more earnestly the task, may well have been planted here.

We can pick up the path that leads from the version of these early twentieth-century discussions of Thomism that we see in Auerbach's book on Dante to his later theory of World Literature in the version of the Occidental literary canon he lays out in *Mimesis*, the book he famously wrote during his eleven years of exile in Istanbul, looking back on a Europe, an "Abendland," in flames, an exile which had begun of course in 1935 and thus at a time when the confessional debates described above were still going full force.[45] In the all-important transition from the Dante chapter (chapter eight) to the Boccaccio chapter (chapter nine) in *Mimesis*, for example, Auerbach claims that the impact of the Thomist unity-of-body-and-soul thesis, which is what lies behind the poet's ability to have the "beyond become a stage for [all] human beings and human passions" (p. 201/pp. 192–193) in such a compelling way, the impact of this "concor-dance" is so strong that the "direct experience of life" in the poem counter-intuitively "overwhelms everything else" (p. 201/p. 193). Readers of the *Commedia* "experience an emotion which is concerned with human beings and not directly with the divine order in which they have found their fulfillment" (p. 201/p. 193). Thus, Auerbach claims, "the principle, rooted in the divine order, of the indestructibility of the whole historical and individual man turns *against* that order, makes it subservient to its own purposes, and thus obscures it." The result? "The image of man eclipses the image of God" in the poem (p. 202/p. 193). As "danger[ous]," he continues, as the worldly "farcical realism" of the late medieval mystery plays may have been for the "figural-Christian view of things," Dante's Thomist "style" is much more dangerous, for in their individual poetical-theological "fulfillment" of God's universal plan for Mankind in the

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[44]   Auerbach, *Dante*, p. 96/p. 120. On the origins of much inter- and post-war political thinking about transnational cooperation in the specifically Catholic and European political context to which Auerbach was certainly also alluding, cf. Michael Gehler and Wolfram Kaiser, "Toward a 'Core Europe' in a Christian Western Bloc: Transnational Cooperation in European Christian Democracy, 1925–1965," in: Thomas Kselman and Joseph A. Buttigieg, edd., *European Christian Democracy. Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspectives* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), pp. 240–266.

[45]   In what follows, I cite Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* [1953], 50th Anniversary ed. with introd. by Edward W. Said, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), originally published as *Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1946), parenthetically in the text. The page references to the German edition follow the page references to the English translation in the text.

Beyond, his "figures" (here, the characters of the historical human beings he represents in the *Commedia*) appear to become poetically "independent" (p. 202/p. 193) of that plan. Shorn of the eschatological casing of their Thomist realism, they become merely "worldly" in the reader's mind.

The literary-historical repercussions of what Auerbach characterizes here as the desacralization of Thomist universal-humanist "realism" in the *Commedia* for the move into a modernity of particularist, even localist literary realism become clear in the very next chapter of *Mimesis*, "Frate Alberto," which is about Boccaccio's famously secular—and specifically Venetian—farce in Day IV, story 2, of the *Decameron*. In the last part of the Dante chapter in *Mimesis*, Auerbach writes of the "danger" (p. 193/p. 202) associated with the occlusion of the Thomist frame. Here, in an ominous language of loss, the 1946 *Mimesis* echoes the very last words of Auerbach's 1929 book on Dante, in which he describes realism's fate in much the same way. In the final chapter of the 1929 book, which takes as its subject the "survival" of Dante's "vision of reality" in the history of "European representation"[46] (and thus represents a kind of dry-run for *Mimesis*), Auerbach had written that "Dante's Thomist world view" was "swept away by the rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." "No poet or artist after Dante required an ultimate, eschatological destiny in order to perceive the unity of the human person," he laments. As a result, "Dante's work remained almost without influence on the history of European thought" (pp. 176–177/p. 214). "But" ("[a]llein," p. 177/p. 215)—and the eleventh-hour shifts in argumentative direction in Auerbach's essays are legion, and worth pondering—"but," Auerbach writes, this is not the whole story of the afterlife of Thomist doctrine in this brave, new, and "modern" literary world. Indeed, Dante's ability to rebirth the "historical individual" in his poetry in each individual's—and thus also in all of Mankind's common creaturely—"manifest unity of body and spirit" in a way that implicates the carnal in the transcendent in fact led a robust secret afterlife in post-Enlightenment literature. Even in literature written by "very un-Christian artists" like Boccaccio, he claims, the "Christian force and tension" of Dante's poetry are "preserved" (p. 178/pp. 216–217).[47]

This is really an extraordinary claim, for what Auerbach is arguing here is that pulsing beneath the surface of "modern," secular mimetic work, with its focus on men's "individual destin[ies]" in the sub-lunar world, is the "eschatological vision" of God's divine Creation in the *Commedia* as that vision "flowed back into real history." The "fully immanent autonomy" of all dimensions and details of the "historical world," as represented by Boccaccio, must in fact be read as actually "secretly linked" with Dante's "eschatological vision," compelling only because its realism had drunk of the blood of the "authentic truth" of a Thomist Dante first (the image is Auerbach's). It is

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[46] Auerbach, *Dante*, p. 174/p. 212. In what follows, page references to both editions are noted parenthetically in the text.

[47] For the important debate about Auerbach's version of Boccaccio's "secularization" of Dante's system, cf. Albert R. Ascoli, "Boccaccio's Auerbach Holding the Mirror Up to Mimesis," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 20 (1991–92), pp. 377–397. For an (indirect) response that appears to confirm Auerbach's reading of the *Decameron*, cf. Tobias Foster Gittes, *Boccaccio's Naked Muse. Eros, Culture, and the Mythopoetic Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

for this reason, and this reason alone, that "man's earthly, historical reality" and the messy details of every individual's mundane life have any ability at all in subsequent literatures to convey the urgency of Mankind's "ultimate fate" as it is derived from the particulars of his or her "concrete […] life" (p. 178/p. 217). This new "realism," based as it is on the "grave dangers for mimesis," on the final autonomy, yet also fundamental dependency of this world on the Beyond as Dante scripted it, in other words, is nevertheless also full, Auerbach writes, of "rich new possibilities" (p. 179/p. 218). Despite the apparent loss of the Thomist frame to which he alludes, then, the afterlives of Dante's unifying figuralism in the crowded particularisms of modern Occidental realism, whose embedded details *Mimesis* goes on to track, are in fact deeply indebted to it. The task of literature is to "represent" the "unity" of the "world view" (p. 79/p. 99). The universal common project of all traditions, indeed, of all Humanity, is preserved even in the apparently most local and profane of texts.

Post-Westphalian World Literature: Auerbach's "Philology and *Weltliteratur*"

In *Mimesis*, Auerbach proposes that the modern fulfillment of the *figura* of Dante's Thomist achievement occurs in its secret (or not-so-secret) inheritance of the medieval figural frame, a frame whose origins and importance he learned to see in the possibility of a unified and unifying Thomist vision of the world as filtered through Dempf. Auerbach's claim that what undergirds the powerful impact on the reader of modern realism is poetical theology, the memory, or condensation, in each individual literary event of a divinely-guaranteed, grander unity in the order of Creation in which all men share, has consequences for the constitution of the western and the world literary canons. Re-reading Auerbach on World Literature through the lens of his engagement with what he identified as Thomist thought in fact makes it possible to create an anti-progressivist and anti-telic paradigm for telling the history of the "representation of reality in [not just occidental] literature," a new, de-territorialized literary history, in other words, precisely because Thomas's model treats all particulars as equal because of their equi-distance to the (divine) whole. Let us recall Auerbach's account of Thomist thinking (quoted above) in his 1929 book on Dante:

> [T]he philosophical doctrine [Dante] followed set great store by individual forms and seemed to justify their portrayal. St. Thomas explained the diversity of things through the theological tenet that the world was made in God's image. In view of the fundamental imperfection of created things and of their essential dissimilarity to God, no *one* species of created things can possibly achieve likeness to God. Accordingly a diversity of created things becomes necessary, in order that in their totality they may approach a perfect likeness to God […]. Thus, in regard to Creation as a whole, diversity is looked upon not as an antithesis to perfection, but rather as an expression of it. (p. 84/p. 105)

The matter is somewhat differently framed in the famous 1952 article, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," but that it harks back to a Thomist model is not surprising, given the re-

cursive temporality of Auerbach's planetary vision in that essay, which he famously concludes by suggesting that "we must return, in admittedly altered circumstances, to the knowledge that pre-national medieval culture already possessed: the knowledge that spirit (*Geist*) is not national."[48]

Indeed, in "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," Auerbach offers a philological model that is based precisely on a kind of "slow" "reading" that scorns supersessional or any kind of hierarchical logic at all, arguing that one ought always to begin with a particular, concrete *Ansatzpunkt*, and read in "centrifugal" fashion (p. 15/p. 309) outward from it. A good "point of departure," or "place to begin," is one that has a strong "radiating power" for "interpretation," which consists in a series of what Auerbach calls "elaborations," the "component parts of which hang together […] [in] an ordered exposition" that "possesses unity and universality," and allow us to "deal with world history" even as we engage the "particular" (pp. 14–16/pp. 308–309). The attention to the particular in this mode of reading provides a way of dealing with what he refers to as the "copiousness of the material," but avoids mere "agglomeration" (pp. 12–13/p. 307), and also counters acts of literary-historical forgetting and occlusion of specificity. Indeed, what Auerbach finds most troubling is the "undermin[ing]" of "all [of the] individual traditions," that, having their origin in what he calls the "*felix culpa*" of "mankind's division into many cultures," are now threatened by the "standardiz[ation]," the flattening out and homogenization of world literature in a hopelessly dichotomized post-war, Cold War world (p. 2/p. 301). The insertion of the vocabulary of the Fall of Man, theorized, as Auerbach knew, by Augustine, Thomas, and many others, stands out in what is ultimately a secularized version of his plea for a philology capable of preserving the diversity of literatures and cultures, based not on the relativism that René Wellek, for example, found so problematic in Auerbach's work, but, rather, on acquiring a "conception of man unified in its multiplicity" (p. 4/p. 302). For Auerbach, a philology for World Literature of the kind he desires must be based on acknowledging "the diverse background of a [single, shared] common fate" (p. 7/p. 304).

The parallels that this version of a philology for World Literature displays with the Thomist logic he discovered in Dante's realism seem apparent. In the 1948 lecture on Dante, for example, Auerbach speaks of the "infinite variety of human life," the "several hundred individuals" of all classes and times, that crowd the "three realms" of Dante's poem, each with his and her own "unmistakable peculiarity," "intensified, more concentrated" in the "eternal" than in the "temporal" order.[49] Each one "enter[s] the soul of the reader" "immediately" and with great "emotional and poetical power" in equal parts (p. 414), yet no one figure replaces any other; all are co-present in the sight of God. Their realism and our ability to recognize their "human individuality" are the result of the specific place each one of them occupies. But this is also a space that he or she shares with all the other individual figures in the poem in universally direct relation,

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[48] Auerbach, *Philology and* Weltliteratur, p. 17/p. 310. In what follows, page references to both editions are noted parenthetically in the text.

[49] Auerbach, *The Three Traits of Dante's Poetry*, pp. 423–424. In what follows, page references are noted parenthetically in the text.

without hierarchy, to the "divine order […] of the universe as a[n all] pervading pattern" (pp. 424–425). According to Auerbach, it was not just in the *Commedia* that Dante offered his own poetry as a model for this kind of reading. In the 1929 *Dante* book, he describes even the early lyric as, in each case, "aris[ing] complete and real, from an essential center," a "concrete point of departure" (here, "*Ausgangspunkt*") such as Beatrice's salutation, her recognition of Dante, to which the poet in every case "holds firm."[50] "Each poem [both captures and] is an authentic event," "unique and contingent," but, "by a kind of counteraction," destined to "expand into the universal […] to become an immutable vision of reality in general" (p. 68/p. 85). From here, it is not far to the Thomist logic that lies at the foundation of the *Commedia*, and Auerbach goes on to claim that "the Thomist-Aristotelian philosophy […] starts from sensory perception, which insists […] on the particularity of perceptible earthly forms and builds up an imaged" vision of the "universe" (p. 81/p. 101). In this universe, the particular—any particular—is read both for itself and as part of a larger system which contains both it and everything else. A philology for World Literature based on this model will likewise recognize what is specific to any particular text, but always within the horizon of the unity of the world literary canon which that individual text constitutes and confirms.

Auerbach read and reread the late medieval poet, Dante, throughout his entire life, and wrote essay after essay on pre- and early modern Christian theology. As he turned to the project of describing a philology for World Literature in 1952 in the wake of two devastating world wars and as he confronted a simmering Cold War, the idea of basing a schematic for imagining a different kind of (highly idealized) literary-historical modernity on an only minimally occluded Catholic doctrine that called for a unified Mankind may well have made sense. He was neither the first nor the only man (or woman) of letters either in the United States or in Europe to have found world literary study of such vital importance at the time. From the Classicist Gilbert Murray's presidency of the League of Nations-sponsored Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, beginning in 1926, to the Comparatist Fernand Baldensperger's work with the League of Nations-affiliate, the International Committee on Modern Literary History, beginning in 1928, to, finally, the founding of the International Comparative Literature Association in 1954 and of the American Comparative Literature Association in 1960, literature scholars around the world spoke and wrote of the importance of world literary co-operation and study for the "welfare" of both a national and planetary "body politic" in these years.[51] An especially significant proponent of this cause was in fact Fritz Strich, the dedicatee of the essay in which Auerbach mediates aloud on the fate of World Liter-

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[50] Auerbach, *Dante*, p. 44/pp. 56–57. In what follows, page references to both editions are noted parenthetically in the text.

[51] For the composition and work of these League of Nations-affiliated committees in the 1920s, cf. http://www.lonsea.de/pub/org/594 and http://www.lonsea.de/pub/org/903 (retrieved July 3, 2013). On the Cold War-era concerns of U.S. based Comparatists, cf. Werner P. Friederich, "On the Integrity of Our Planning," pp. 9–22; pp. 14–15; and H.V.S. Ogden, "On Defining the Humanities," pp. 53–63; p. 54, both in: Haskell M. Block, ed., *The Teaching of World Literature. Proceedings of the Conference at the University of Wisconsin, April 24–25, 1959* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

ature in 1952. In his most famous book, *Goethe and World Literature*, published in Bern in the same year and by the same press as *Mimesis*, Strich writes that his thoughts on the subject go back to a series of lectures he held in London "after the world war of 1914 to 1918," at a time when he considered it his duty to engage in projects devoted to "the reconciliation of nations"; he then goes on to describe how important Goethe and the topic of world literature became for him again when he relocated to Switzerland, the home of the League of Nations, where "representatives of all nations" were called together to confer on how to "abolish war." Now, yet again, in the fall of 1945, when "peace" has once again finally been (perhaps only provisionally) achieved, Strich turns to Goethe with renewed urgency, he writes, this time to Goethe as a "citizen of the world," at a time when everyone was on the lookout for the building blocks of a new "house of nations" more stable than the one erected some several decades before.[52]

It is more than likely that Auerbach would have reviewed Strich's book as he sat down to write "Philology and *Weltliteratur*." The diction of the opening pages of the essay certainly suggests that he did. The two men's common exilic fate as German Jews in the context of Hitler's Germany makes it clear how important the project of reinventing a project of common human purpose, tolerance, and universal rights in the midst of the aftermath of a half century or more of conflicts undertaken under the banner of ruinous state particularisms would have been to both of them.[53] Specifically for Auerbach, however, who had continued to work on Dante both in exile and after his emigration to the United States, looking back to pre-modern times for models of how to manage both world literature and world peace at the trans- or supra-national level in terms of a pre-Westphalian Thomism made particular sense. In the World Literature essay, Auerbach laments the passing of an era when the "fruitful multiplicity" of world literary diversity could be acknowledged and seeks a way to promote "mutual understanding" that could ensure a recognition of our "diverse" participation in Mankind's "common fate"—this instead, as he writes there, of solving antagonisms "through ordeals of sheer strength," still the default response in a dangerously dichotomized postwar world.[54] This is Thomist language used to parse how to respond to the Cold War. Ironically, one of the reasons why the relationship of Auerbach's intricate argument in his work on Dante about Thomist poetical theology to the later highly politicized philology of the World Literature essay may have been overlooked to date can be found in the very briefest of introductions that none other than Edward Said wrote to accompany

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[52] Fritz Strich, *Goethe und die Weltliteratur* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1946), pp. 7–10. My translation.

[53] There has been little commentary on Strich's Judaism (of which Auerbach would have been aware) in the context of his claims about World Literature. On Strich's prescient anti-nationalism in an explicit address on the 200th anniversary of Lessing's birth in 1929, cf. Wilfried Barner, "Lessing 1929. Momentaufnahme eines Klassikers vor dem Ende einer Republik," in: Wilfried Barner, Martin Georg Dellin, Peter Härtling, and Egidius Schmalzried, edd., *Literatur in der Demokratie. Für Walter Jens zum 60. Geburtstag* (München: Kindler, 1983), pp. 439–456, especially pp. 447–448. On the tradition of pre-1933 Jewish reception of Goethe, cf. Wilfried Barner, "Jüdische Goethe-Verehrung vor 1933," in: Barner, *Pioniere, Schulen, Pluralismus. Studien zur Geschichte und Theorie der Literaturwissenschaft* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997), pp. 129–149.

[54] Auerbach, *Philology and Weltliteratur*, p. 7/p. 304.

his 1969 translation (with Maire Said) of "Philologie der Weltliteratur." In the introduction to their translation, the Saids characterize the 1952 essay as a "major theoretical statement," to be sure, but also as an account of Auerbach's "work and mission as a *Phi[lo]log* of the old tradition" (p. 1). Some forty years on, in his introduction to the 50[th] anniversary edition of *Mimesis*, Said intensifies the version of traditionalism often associated with Auerbach's essay and the canon of World Literature with which he worked when he (Said) calls it "autumnal," "nobly inten[ded]" in its mission of theorizing "the unity of human history,"[55] but old fashioned and out of date. Without understanding how his earlier understanding of Thomism resonates in Auerbach's call for world-literary unity in diversity in 1952, it is difficult to see just how serious Auerbach was in that essay about rooting his understanding of World Literature in a version of "prenational medieval culture."[56] Reconsidering Dante's poetical theology as a point of departure for Auerbach's new political philology allows us to see how timely this "traditionalism" was—and could perhaps be again.

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[55] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. xvi.
[56] Auerbach, *Philology and Weltliteratur*, p. 17/p. 310.

AYMAN A. EL-DESOUKY

Beyond Spatiality: Theorising the Local and Untranslatability as Comparative Critical Method

In 1990, Claude Simon was invited to participate in the Cairo International Book Fair. As celebrated Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature only two years earlier, in 1988, and Simon three years before that, in 1985, it was decided that a public panel should be planned in which both figures would participate. Mahfouz confided to Mohamed Salmawi, Egyptian critic and Mahfouz's closest and most trusted friend in his late years, before the day of the panel: "What shall I say to this man? I read his novels but did not really understand much of his work!"[1] And it is true. The two writers could not have been more different in their styles and literary sensibilities. Later on, Salmawi recorded their brief encounter on the way to the panel. After a few brief words, Claude Simon remarked how Mahfouz was unique in his ability to evolve from one style to another, whereas he could only write in one singular style. Salmawi then recounts for us the following exchanges:

> Mahfouz then turned to Simon and asked about his views on the art of the novel. Simon replied that its effect should follow from language the same way music springs from melody. In order to achieve this effect it can deploy all available literary tools, including those of the tale or story. But the way the story is approached must be different from that of writing a children's story, or the way a person recounts an incident he had witnessed on the road. That is, it must move away as far as possible from chronological, linear narration.

> At this point Mahfouz remarked: 'That's really not very different from the style of the Qurʾān in narrating a story. We find for example elements of the story of Maryam in one chapter or *sūra* and then other parts of the story in many other chapters, the same is true for the story of Joseph, and so on.'

> Claude Simon replied, with signs of amazement on his face: 'This is the first time I hear of this! But we mustn't forget that the Qurʾān is a work of literature as well as a Holy Book.'[2]

This brief encounter is most telling in many ways, and there are complex arguments to be made. But for now I wish to articulate briefly a few critical observations, for the sake

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[1] Mohamed Salmawi, *Fī Ḥaḍrat Naguib Mahfouz* ["In the Presence of Naguib Mahfouz"] (Cairo: Al-Dar al-Misriyya al-Lubnaniyya, 2012), p. 92. My translation.
[2] Salmawi, *Fī Ḥaḍrat Naguib Mahfouz*, pp. 94–95. My translation.

of ultimately arguing beyond spatiality, beyond the recent raging debates surrounding comparative method's "commitment to cartography" and to a "poetics of distance."[3] The aim is eventually to arrive at the suggestion of a comparative critical method in which conceptual languages and discourses of knowledge are hermeneutically engaged across languages and traditions through central concepts that remain untranslated in the target language of critical discourse, as a locus of irreducible difference. The idea was conceived while working on the hermeneutics of proclamation in the different mono-theistic traditions, and on how the conceptions of the Word in each tradition inform particular narrative practices and a particular language experience. The initial project became even more urgent in the context of debates on approaches to world literature and in view of the need to implicate critical and theoretical discourses in these debates—not just for the positionality of the critic or theorist, who is far from immune to institutional practices and the hold of disciplinary formations within and even outside of institutions, as Hosam Aboul-Ela has argued.[4] But more crucially for the sake of the conceptual languages of knowledge production in non-European discourses which remain invisible in the debates. My own argument here has to do with the circulation of concepts as analytic tools beyond (but also bringing along with them) their hermeneutic provenances, more than with the geohistorical location (Edward Said's "Travelling Theory" thesis) of particular theorists and their theories, or even their gendered embodi-ment (one of Spivak's main arguments).

The circulation of critical and theoretical concepts too comes with power differ-entials that have to do with what constitutes knowledge in disciplinary practices. The

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[3] Cf. Nirvana's Tanoukhi's excellent article, making the case for comparative method's "carto-graphic claim to scale" not only as a logical paradox, one that safeguards against the national and nation-based geographies, but that also holds the key to the recent developments in the burgeoning disciplinary formations of approaches to world literature: Nirvana Tanoukhi, "The Scale of World Literature," *New Literary History* 39. 3 (2008), pp. 599–617.

[4] Hosam Aboul-Ela has offered an excellent critical account of what happens when we begin to include critics and theorists in the arguments over the world republic of letters offered by Pascale Casanova and the ensuing debates. Aboul-Ela's readings of Bourdieu's arguments over the implica-tion of the theoretician in class structure in France, in *Homo Academicus*, and Spivak's arguments over the gendered body of the theoretician as early as the famous article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" are particularly insightful examples of the materiality of the work of theory, the embodi-ment that refuses to be inventoried by the theoreticians themselves. Cf. Hosam Aboul-Ela, "The World Republic of Theory," to be published soon, parts of which were delivered during an inten-sive workshop on "Approaches to World Literature: Questions of Critical Methods Beyond Euro-centrism," held at The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), in London, organized by the Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies (CCLPS) in June 2011. Critics and theorists are as implicated as writers in the globalized systems of domination and in institutions. Critics and theorists must therefore raise consciousness as to the provenance of their own critical methods if we are to counter the "First World" monopoly on the production of disciplinary knowledge, of ideas and methods. The latter is largely the work of maintaining hegemony at the expense of the in-visibility of other critical traditions.

question of conceptual language and the invisibility of non-European knowledge-producing discourses has become even more urgent now as the debates in world literature have begun to open up to rigorous theoretical questioning and to other disciplinary methods, signalling radical shifts towards world literature becoming a discipline in its own right. A quick perusal of the contents of the recent volume *The Canonical Debate Today: Crossing Disciplinary and Cultural Boundaries*[5], clearly attests to the most recent phase in the debates as one of intersecting with other disciplines and an overall critical and theoretical firming up of the early practices and their cultural, political, historical and institutional contexts.

In the contexts of these recent debates, the debates on narrative and textuality, beyond genre-based approaches and top-down divisions of written and oral literatures, have emerged as central to our understanding of the literary production of other cultures. Within this particular set of debates, the approaches to foundational texts, including the recent approaches to the Qurʾān as a work of literature, have gained new centrality. The return to philology and the cross-cultural debates over issues of textuality and narrative discourses also coincide with recent radical shifts in literary studies within Area Studies, where the expertise still lies. My reflections here are, however, aimed at approaching the Qurʾān not in the context of recent Qurʾān scholarship but in relation to the recent debates on world literature. The recent turn to literary approaches in Qurʾānic studies and the turn to philology in these recent debates seem to share certain philological assumptions, constituting genealogies that go back to Auerbach and Spitzer and their generation, and even beyond to Goethe's time.[6] And yet they curiously seem to switch roles, for the world literature scholar turns now to the exploration of new forms of textuality and their histories and to the historical specificities of language experience, while the Qurʾān scholar turns to the literary in the Qurʾānic texts by drawing mostly on typological modes and classical assumptions of what constitutes literariness in a text—much as happened in early biblical studies, at least till Northrop Frye's notable attempt at delineating the nature of the voice "on the *other side* of the poetic,"[7] in his celebrated phrase.

The question of approaching narrative in the Qurʾān hinges on the nature of Qurʾānic voice, or *Naẓm* (literally "stringing together of pearls or verses"),[8] a particular language

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[5] David Damrosch, "Comparative World Literature," in: Liviu Papadima, David Damrosch, and Theo D'haen, edd., *The Canonical Debate Today: Crossing Disciplinary and Cultural Boundaries* (Amsterdam/New York: Editions Rodopi B. V., 2011), pp. 169–178.

[6] Cf. Jérôme David's recent work, especially his *Spectres de Goethe: les métamorphoses de la "littérature mondiale"* (Paris: Les Prairies Ordinaires, 2011).

[7] Northrop Frye, *Words With Power: Being a Second Study of 'The Bible and Literature'* (New York: Viking, 1990), p. 101.

[8] There is a continuous body of scholarship on the question of *Naẓm* in the Qurʾān since the 9th century, defining it here simply as voice is a shorthand on my part. Other than defining it in traditional linguistics and works of exegesis as literally the stringing together of words and verses in the Qurʾān, scholars are still debating the precise nature of its unique operations on the level of

style of dialogic voice, resonant syntactic structures and rhythmic repetitions. The style is seemingly discontinuous, disjointed and hardly offers straight narratives—much as Mahfouz attempted to explain to Claude Simon. It demands response on the level of the single verse or cluster of verses, as it was revealed, and thereby engages the personal temporality and biographical-historical-sacred imagination of the hearer or reader, to fill in details of the larger narratives of monotheistic revelations. What is most significant is that this discontinuity inspires an inevitable uniqueness of individual response, a new form of subjectivity in dialogue with the divine as it were.[9] The receiver of the word becomes also simultaneously an interpreter of the word, entering through the personal and the sacred imaginary an already interpreted space (actually named in the Qurʾān as *anbā' al-ghayb* or "news/accounts of the unknown"), much as Levinas has argued in the Hebrew traditions and Bultmann has argued for a situation of faith in an existential theology. The nature of the proclamatory voice in the Qurʾān, its modes of utterance and the speaker-addressee situation are clearly different from the narrative-based *Kerygma* or "proclamatory voice" in the New Testament, whether it is the text-as-person, or the word of preaching or the personalised narrative of conversion in Pauline theology. *Naẓm* and *Kerygma* (already a Greek term that is *samed*, or left untranslated, in European critical and theological discourses) are two veritable untranslatables, and both have crucial implications for the arts of narration as they emanate from particular language experiences. If Simon is right and narrative arts must flow so naturally from the language experience, then such experience and the localised histories of reception must be brought to bear on the interpretive act. And yet, supposing the scholar is in command of the language and its textual traditions, the question still remains: in what conceptual language is this knowledge produced? Just as there is always a ready default to European philology when it comes to non-European textual traditions, there is also a ready default to European critical and theoretical terminology and conceptual language when it comes to the interpretation and reception of non-European literary works and other forms of cultural production. The invisibility of non-European intellectual traditions and their modern critics and theorists—or at best their inclusion still as primary material—ensures the continuity of such ready shifts. All the expertise of Area Studies, which Spivak has called upon to supplement Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Studies,[10] will surely run the risk of the ethnographic approaches of the

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verses, chapters or *sūras* and the Qurʾānic texts as a whole. I am at present engaged in a study of Qurʾānic *Naẓm* as a form of voice unique to Qurʾānic revelations, and therefore demanding a particular hermeneutics of discontinuous narrative. It is worth noting that Frye had begun to contemplate possibilities of a discontinuous kerygma toward the end of his life in his *Late Notebooks* but tragically did not have time to pursue them.

[9] Emmanuel Levinas' hermeneutics of response is very similar in the way it outlines the uniqueness of individuality emerging in response to the call "beyond the verse," to the very fact of revelation and not just to the content of it, see for example the series of studies in: Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, trans. Gary D. Mole (London: Continuum, 2007).

[10] Cf. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

social sciences if it is unable to draw on the knowledge of such traditions and articulate it conceptually from within these traditions, introducing the wealth of conceptual languages and terminologies into the debates and institutional practices. Injecting the rigour of textual analysis into the work of Area Studies could only be the beginning.

What is also remarkable in the anecdote above is the apparent exchange of positionalities between Simon and Mahfouz with regard to what is perceived to be culturally different. Mahfouz is able to recognize Simon's experiments with language and narrative, discontinuous and disjointed, with reference to the unique style of the Qurʾān, a culturally domesticating act of translation so to speak. In Mahfouz's own work, however, he appropriates not the narrative styles of Qurʾānic *Naẓm* but the voice that is able to move freely within historical vision and social realities while still producing the larger vision (psychological, social, political and historical). Mahfouz does so for the most part in seemingly realist style and traditional, chronological narrative, even as he is experimenting with the form of the novel. On his part, Simon too could appreciate Mahfouz's evolvement in style but from within Western categories of realism, modernism, and so on. The note of amazement toward the end signals the possibility of a turn toward mutually negotiable positions, but the exchanges seem to end precisely at the point where a genuine dialogue could emerge.

At this point I wish also to remind my readers of another perhaps better known encounter in which what is at stake is even greater when the dialogue actually begins. My reference here is to Heidegger's famous 1954 "Dialogue on Language,"[11] the result of an encounter with the Japanese Professor of German Poetry, Tezuka Tomio[12]. The dialogue is a masterful example of a probing critical consciousness attempting to understand a different culture, and the movement of thinking is re-enacted in the dialogue in typical Heideggerian style, offering dramatically Heidegger's own thesis that "'East and West […] must engage in dialogue at this deep level.'"[13] "The Dialogue" here could stand as a metaphor for debates on the "world" in world literature and on the global and the local, and the danger reveals itself in the language of aesthetics (and we can extend it to politics and culture in more recent debates) in which the dialogue transpires:

> I: The name "aesthetics" and what it names grow out of European thinking, out of philosophy. Consequently, aesthetic consideration must ultimately remain alien to Eastasian thinking. […]
> J: Aesthetics furnishes us with the concepts to grasp what is of concern to us as art and poetry.

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[11] Martin Heidegger, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache. Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden," in: Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1959), pp. 83–155.

[12] Tezuka Tomio was a student of Count Kuki, whom Heidegger had met in the 1930s in another significant encounter. Kuki had not only left a strong impression on Heidegger, he also later established a school of thought in Kyoto with a strong Heideggerian influence.

[13] Tezuka Tomio, "An Hour with Heidegger," in: Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on his Work*, trans. Graham Parkes (London: Routledge, 1996), chap. 7, pp. 59–78, p. 62.

I: Do you need concepts?

J: Presumably yes, because since the encounter with European thinking, there has come to light a certain incapacity in our language.

I: In what way?

J: It lacks the delimiting power to represent objects related in an unequivocal order above and below each other. […]

I: The danger is threatening from a region where we do not suspect it, and which is yet precisely the region where we would have to experience it. […]

I: No. The danger arose from the dialogues themselves, in that they were dialogues. […]

J: The languages of the dialogue shifted everything into European.

I: Yet the dialogue tried to *say* the essential nature of *Eastasian* art and poetry.[14]

Toward the end of the "Dialogue" the Inquirer begins to probe into Japanese aesthetics with the aid of Tezuka Tomio and Japanese terminology (*Iro* 色 and *Ku* 空, the counterparts of *Aistheton* and *Noeton*—though the former still have their Classical Chinese origins, just as the latter retain their Greek histories). The hermeneutical negotiations of such untranslatables could offer good grounds for a comparative critical method, and possibly for a new type of circulation, not beyond borders but with borders as horizons of interpretation fusing the localised and mapped out cartographies or hermeneutical provenances on either side. The terms of the dialogue must keep shifting in the process of knowledge production, and not abbreviated in the "time of discourse,"[15] to use Johannes Fabian's sharp phraseology in his critiques of anthropological method.

The two encounters could stand metonymically for the debates on the "world" and on "literature" in world literature, and the problem in both is that the language of the dialogue inevitably shifts to European conceptual language and terminology. Notably

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[14] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language: between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in: *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1971), pp. 2–4.

[15] Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture: Arguments and Reminders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 22. By "the time of discourse," Fabian refers to the conceptual production of knowledge, the writing that comes after research wherein the knowledge that was produced through co-presence is re-presented in a conceptual language that denies the "coevalness" of the other, or in his words, "when the same ethnographers represent their knowledge in teaching and writing they do this in terms of a discourse that consistently places those who are talked about in a time other than that of the one who talks" (p. 22). See also the Preface to his earlier study, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. xli, where he articulates this act as one of "denial of coevalness" and describes this type of discourse as "allochronic." Fabian refers to this Preface here, but, significantly, he also refers earlier to the time of theory: "Theory has no place unless it has time…[We need] to reflect, not so much on theory's place as on its time, that is, on moments in the production of knowledge leading from research to writing in which we must take positions; moments that determine how we get from one statement to another, from one story to another, indeed, from one sentence to another," citing his own introductory talk to a workshop significantly titled "The Point of Theory," in: *Memory Against Culture*, p. 7; see also pp. 33–51.

though, Mahfouz insisted on understanding Simon's experiments and views on the art of narration in relation to language in his own way and in relation to the Qurʾānic texts as the paradigm of discontinuous narrative. It is rather unfortunate that we do not have the records of the public panel, but had the private exchange continued, it would have been interesting to see in what conceptual terminology the dialogue would have had to take place.

René Wellek's early comments in 1949 on the practice of teaching world literature as betraying a "vague, sentimental cosmopolitanism,"[16] perhaps refers more to what was then available on the American scene for the general reader.[17] Around the same time Wellek delivered his early remarks, the more "serious" work was being undertaken on the pages of academic journals, such as Erich Auerbach's "Philology and *Welt-literatur*," which was translated by the young Edward Said in 1969. But this was of a particular philological variety, and did not have the same impact on the subsequent history of comparative literature as Auerbach's more famous *Mimesis*[18]. As we now know more, Spitzer's and Auerbach's post-war Turkish detour holds significance not only for modern philology and the early history of comparative literature, but also for the early questions of world literature, even while both still lived in Istanbul.[19] Jane Newman has been working very closely on Auerbach, whose model of close reading in *Mimesis* is still very inspiring and while it has been standard training for all of us in comparative literature, it has yet to be examined for methodological purposes. Emily Apter discusses how the early connections between classical philology and nationalism in the Turkish seminars may have been the first step toward "working through what a philological curriculum in literary studies should look like when applied to non-European languages and cultures."[20] While this argument may have some historical validity, it is still stretching the point if we were to remain within European conceptual languages.

More recently, Michael Holquist posed the question: "[…] [W]hy invoke so relentlessly antiquarian a discipline in the discussion of the still very new phenomenon of

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[16] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 41.

[17] The significance of Wellek's 1960 essay "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" and the occlusion of the American scene itself in later practices have been highlighted recently by Damrosch in: *Comparative World Literature*, pp. 169–178.

[18] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* [1953], 50th Anniversary ed. with Introduction by Edward W. Said, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[19] See the excellent series of studies from the Turkish archives included in the symposium which took place in Istanbul in honour of Said after his death, and published in: Müge Gürsoy Sökmen and Başak Ertür, edd., *Waiting for the Barbarians: A Tribute to Edward W. Said* (London: Verso, 2008).

[20] Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 55.

world literature?"[21] After citing a much longer history going back to the priests and scholars of Sumeria, Holquist makes a connection between Friedrich August Wolf and Goethe, and ultimately articulates the connection between world literature and philology in terms of redefining the latter after Sheldon Pollock as the critical self-reflection on language—a similar answer to Heidegger's hermeneutical thesis in the "Dialogue on Language": Philology as the theory of text and textuality, hermeneutics as the theory of language and thinking on language. Combining both would lead us to Derrida's acts of rearticulating philosophy through translation—as in "Plato's Pharmacy"—as Barbara Johnson and Peggy Kamuf have argued, followed by Emily Apter, as I shall explain, and as Jonathan Rée has done in relation to translations of Heidegger's *Dasein*.[22] In the differential of text, language and critical self-reflection on both, Derrida, for example, seems to always think simultaneously of a long series of untranslatable concepts in the original languages. These concepts are cited in the original, or *samed* in the target language, the language of critical reflection, and yet *othered* in the very act of thinking and reflecting critically, as Apter has noted.[23]

The question of untranslatability has emerged again recently in the folds of the problems of philosophical translation between European languages, and in more relevant ways in the project edited by Barbara Cassin and published in 2004 by Le Seuil, *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles*. An English edition of the Dictionary is currently under preparation by Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood under the working title of *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Emily Apter, as I shall explain later, has offered to keep sacred languages untranslated as part of the new project (as a "Translational Interdiction"), while keeping to the context of translation, the project would still entertain the potential for including non-European concepts and terms.[24] The cases of *Naẓm* and *Kerygma* are offered here, in a somewhat schematic manner and in the mode of a "perpetual epistemological preparation,"[25] as good cases in point, and it is not necessarily only because they name sacred voice in different traditions. The voice, its generated textual modalities and the language experience they index are also of significance to the understanding of narrative styles in these traditions and formal experiments with established genres such as the novel.

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[21] Michael Holquist "World Literature and Philology," in: Theo D'Haen, David Damrosch and Djelal Kadir, edd., *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 147; see also in the same volume, David Damrosch, "Hugo Meltzl and 'The Principle of Polyglottism,'" pp. 12–20.

[22] Cf. Emily Apter, "Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability: Translation as Critical Pedagogy," *MLA Profession* (2010), pp. 53–55.

[23] Cf. Apter, *Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability*, p. 54.

[24] Cf. Apter, *Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability*, pp. 53–55.

[25] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translating in a World of Languages," *MLA Profession* (2010), pp. 35–43.

The Danger in the Dialogue: The Question of Method and the Agency of the Non-European

The conceptualisation of analytic problems in an ever-expanding field signals its redefinition as a viable discipline. The recent debates in world literature have inspired pioneering investigations into questions of critical method, which have so far ranged between world systems theory, modes of circulation across borders, theorisations of the local, cartographic scaling and the new philology. Moretti's offering of world systems theory as a model for approaching both the world and its literatures is still highly problematic and does indeed re-introduce precisely the same hierarchic premises that underpin questions of dependency—not least of which is the proposal to read the world's literatures *at a distance from the text itself*, and for such an act to be the *condition of knowledge* of the text and its world. Moreover, the problematic remains suspended between western *form* and non-western *realities*. However, it still names a radical shift in approaching world literature: the shift from the field, its range and scope as an "object" of study, which had plagued it in its early phases, to the field as a "problem," which leads to the question of critical method. As he puts it, "the literature around us is now unmistakably a planetary system. The question is not really *what* we should do— the question is *how*. What does it mean, studying world literature? How do we do it?"[26]

As Emily Apter has argued, "Moretti advocates a kind of Lit Crit heresy that dispenses with close reading, relies unabashedly on secondhand material, and subordinates intellectual energies to the achievement of a 'day of synthesis'."[27] To my mind, it is also to offer a Benjaminian answer to the terrific spectre of the Angel of History: in this case, to achieve global relevance through a synthetic flash of insight. One has to re-posit the famous question by Stanley Fish once more: *Is There a Text in This Class?* More recently, Lawrence Venuti has also attempted to modify the premise of Moretti's theory, the division between centre and periphery by devising textual analytic strategies for working between the original and the work in translation. But for this he focuses on Latin American literature, which became popular in translation in the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. and which influenced writers like John Barth. The choice of centre-example here is significant, for it is also John Barth who has perfected a high-modernist vision of narrative and the power of story by reworking the story of Scheherazad and the narrative strategies of the Arabian Nights. Such experimental narrative strategies align him with Arab authors such as Naguib Mahfouz, Gamal al-Ghitani (who developed and theorised an "Islamic art of narration" or *fann al-qaṣṣ al-Islāmī* out of the narrative styles of the Arabian Nights and Classical Arabic textual

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[26] Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," [First appeared in the *New Left Review* 1 (2000), pp. 54–68.] in: Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Literature* (London: Verso Books, 2004), pp. 148–162, p. 148. See also Franco Moretti's sequel article, "More Conjectures," *New Left Review* 20 (2003), pp. 73–81.

[27] Apter, *The Translation Zone*, p. 43.

traditions), Asia Djebar, Leila Sebbar, Elias Khoury and others—creating a potential nexus of working across English, French and Arabic—and a modality based on nego-tiating narrative arts across languages and traditions.

This leads me to the main question: what does it mean to have first approached world literature as an *object* and then shifted in the field to approaching it as a *problem* that would lead us to a "critical method?" And in this historical chain, and particularly when it comes to questions of method, why the persistence of the divide of form and critical theory on the European side and of realities, made cultural and sociological as objects of investigation on the non-European side? Finally, in reversing these binaries, or even doing away with them altogether, how do we begin to pose questions of agency in the production of knowledge on the non-European side?

To begin with, it has become more apparent that the shift from *object* to *problem* leads us also to an even more crucial shift: from a sociological, ethnographic, culture-based and yet dehistoricised approach to non-European works of literature, to questions of a more aesthetic nature and to the historicising of conceptions of literature and lit-erary practices: not just Which world? Whose world? One world or many worlds? But also: What literature? Whose literature? What aesthetics? Whose aesthetics? As Christopher Prendergast has put it in his Introduction to *Debating World Literature*:

> 'Literature' has for the most part been confined to quarrels about the syllabus (the relative places of canonical 'great' works and 'marginal' works, literary and non-literary texts, and so forth, usually in connection with arguments about representation and identity politics). But without an account of the actual structures and modes of functioning of literary genres, the story of their differential 'world' locations and global journeys will make only limited sense.[28]

Even now, a cursory look at the more recent volume on *Teaching World Literature*[29] reveals a predominance of the anecdotal, of accounts of the different experiments in dif-ferent institutions that produce the differential in "world" locations and examine the global journeys. These more recent accounts offer much better informed decisions, aes-thetically as well as politically, than used to be the practice in the classroom up until the 1990s. But they still confirm what Hoesel-Uhlig, in his contribution to the volume on *Debating World Literature*[30], has sharply articulated as the challenges posed by world literature both to the history of literature as a concept and to comparative literature, which in turn also clarify aspects of world literature as a problem. In literary history, the written records of textual forms of production are all presumably included, and as historical objects they are understood to outlive any particular method or exegesis. But then the conception of the literary is not always aesthetically determined. Historically, the

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[28] Christopher Prendergast, "Introduction," in: Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Lit-erature* (London: Verso Books, 2004), pp. ix–x.

[29] David Damrosch, ed., *Teaching World Literature* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009).

[30] Stefan Hoesel-Uhlig, "Changing Fields: The Directions of Goethe's *Weltliteratur*," in: Prendergast, *Debating World Literature*, pp. 26–53.

distinctively modern concept of Literature "itself combines inclusiveness and institutional resilience with an intellectually undetermined focus, and the failings of 'world literature' directly amplify the general flaws of *literature* [as a concept] in literary studies."[31]

However, Damrosch's most recent call—in *The Canonical Debate Today: Crossing Disciplinary and Cultural Borders*[32]—for the need to include in the debates, to interrogate and to historicise, every national literature's negotiations of other literatures beyond its borders is indeed a welcome methodological suggestion. This is perhaps where the interventionist nature of investigations under approaches to world literature becomes most apparent as a disciplinary mode in which time and space, difference and otherness are negotiated literarily. But are one culture's crossings the same as another's? That is, in what conceptual language are we to begin to articulate such crossings? There has recently been a surge in critical insights suggesting significant analytic, theoretical and methodological links between World Literature, Translation Studies, the New Comparative Literature and Postcolonial Studies: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, through rigorous textual analysis in the original languages; tackling issues of untranslatability philosophically and through the return to philology by Emily Apter; Robert Young's work on forms of knowledge production, or a type of postcolonialism from below; and crucially the recent shift toward a focus on "Literature" and the nature of the literary in World Literature, particularly in relation to other disciplines—in varying methods by Damrosch, Moretti, Francesca Orsini, Nirvana Tanoukhi, Vilashini Cooppan: David Damrosch's practical methods for reading through modes of circulation, Francesca Orsini's mappings of local literary production, and more recently Nirvana Tanoukhi's suggestions toward reconceptualising the problems of distance in terms of a phenomenology of scale and Vilashini Cooppan's proposed method for

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[31] Hoesel-Uhlig, *Changing Fields*, p. 32. On the level of praxis in the classroom, Damrosch, in the Volume (2009) on *Teaching World Literature* ("Major Cultures and Minor Literatures," pp. 193–204), offers four credible strategies, though these have yet to be combined with the rigor of linguistic and cultural competence that Spivak and others have called for and which is still largely the domain of traditional Area Studies—see for example, Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, pp. 6–12. These are:

1. Cultural Connections: ancient texts with modern adaptations: e.g., *Gilgamesh* with thematically related works such as "The Babylonian Theodicy" and later *The Book of Job*…
2. Connections across Time: Homer with the meditative 1931 poem by Georges Seferis on Odysseus, ironically titled, "Upon a Foreign Verse."
3. Connections across Space: e.g., National Bards: e.g., Mughal poet Ghalib, Goethe, Wordsworth, Byron, Whitman, Pushkin, etc.
4. Situating Translations: e.g., the case of *Black Elk Speaks* and the actual ethnographic records out of which the text was compiled by Neihardt in the 1930s.

Damrosch's suggestive strategies come from long experience but they are still dealing ultimately with issues of practice: what to do with world literature as an object of study. However, they do highlight many of the crucial issues: such as the national, non-European literary histories, the need for non-European critical studies, translation as trans-textual and not only transnational and so on.

[32] Damrosch, *Comparative World Literature*, pp. 169–178.

mapping out a field's imaginary through network theory, to mention but a few.[33] Scholars are joining in on the debates from a whole range of other disciplines, though we are still awaiting fuller contributions from the recent transnational gender studies, particularly their work on life writing. Or indeed from Postcolonial Studies, as Subramanyan Shankar has recently argued in the context of problems of translation and the relationship between Postcolonialism and Comparatism.[34]

The question of location still suffers conceptually from the larger issues of globality and the power differentials implied in Pascale Casanova's *World Republic of Letters* propositions. The critical impulse remains beholden to the methodological practices of dependency theory, on the one hand, and to Area Studies on the other. Whatever the valid criticism of Moretti's seminal piece, "Conjectures of World Literature," he was able to identify the "problem" as not the "What" of World Literature but the "How" of it, and the "How" of it has been thematised by Spivak—and I would argue here for the shared provenance of the problematic as outlined in *Death of a Discipline*—simply as the absence of any viable methodology for working across languages and traditions. What we have are still largely modes of analysis inspired by strong politically and culturally sensitive acts of reading.

My argument here, simply put, is that most recent critical debates in the field have tended to focus on questions of borders, national or "languaged" or otherwise, on one world or many worlds, on metropolitan centres and peripheries, on global and local or the global in the local, or the planetary, for obvious historical, cultural and political reasons. The increasing intensity of these debates has led by and large to undermining

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[33] These statements and this whole section draw on arguments outlined in a previous lecture delivered at the Freie Universität Berlin at the kind invitation of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School for Literary Studies (*Approaches to World Literature: Questions of Critical Method and Agency of the Non-European*, 12 May 2011). This reworked version, and in particular the introductory part and the final section, draw on the lecture given by the same title during the Concept Laboratory on *Approaches to World Literature*, 25–27 June 2012, the Dahlem Humanities Center and the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School for Literary Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. Parts of the final section draw on a presentation on "Global *Translatio* and the Sacred: On the Hermeneutics of Voice between the Kerygmatic and the Revelatory," Session 798 "Theory Around the World: Translation and Ideas from the Rest of the World," a Special MLA Session with Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, Emily Apter and Hosam Aboul-Ela, inaugurating the New Palgrave Series *Theory in the World*, co-edited by Spivak and Aboul-Ela, Los Angeles, USA, 9 January 2011. I am grateful to all colleagues for their engaged and insightful comments.

[34] See his recent work, offering the vernacular as a critical category for comparative method: Subramanian Shankar, *Flesh and Fish Blood: Postcolonialism, Translation, and the Vernacular* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), see in particular "The 'Problem' of Translation," pp. 103–142, and the "Conclusion: Postcolonialism and Comparatism," pp. 143–158. As Shankar sums it up, "more nuance is necessary […] [and] renewed attention to the vernacular as a critical category, to translation as a literary and cultural practice as well as a trope, and to comparatism as a methodological imperative is a way to bring such nuance to treatments of the postcolonial world. It will not do to ignore the knowing-as-domination that each one of these terms can often enough enable and/or represent," pp. 157–158.

the question at the origin, the question of the literary, of the second pivotal term: of the "literature" in world literature. That is on the one hand. On the other hand, when we begin to tackle questions of the literary, the problem is reproduced in the ready default to genre studies, to the practical examination of units of texts (though increasingly culturally and literarily sensitive), and to certain problematic approaches in the practices of literary history (for example, the radicalized approaches to whole bodies of texts surrounding culturally sensitive issues, regardless of their positionality within their respective traditions). And yet it is only then, when we begin to tackle the literary beyond historicising/locating, or rather the dominant practice of contextualisation through historical detail, that we finally begin to encounter directly the question of the theoretical. Discussion and debates over non-European literary and intellectual traditions and practices, indeed cultural production in general, readily fall back on the language of Western metaphysics and aesthetics, under the pretext that such traditions have not developed such degrees of abstraction, critical sensibilities and conceptual terminologies. And where these exist, they remain the property of philologists in these traditions, who still follow philological and older literary historical modalities. Literary scholars, especially modernists, and comparative literature scholars, remain for the most part innocent of such knowledge when they engage with critical and theoretical discourses.

Beyond Spatiality: Untranslatability as Comparative Critical Method

My particular approach centres on possibilities of abstracting method from concepts naming specific practices in non-European literary, intellectual and aesthetic traditions. Untranslatability as approached here is not only *that irreducible of difference* in acts of understanding, translation and circulation that allows for the imaginative.[35] It is also theorisable as that which allows to emerge, through critical hermeneutical rigour, the conceptual on the other side of Western metaphysics, beginning with *the danger in the dialogue*.

With this *danger* in mind as the need to bring into dialogue the conceptual language of other traditions, we may perhaps be able to approach the fundamental issues of *global translatio* in light of the philological rigour of *translatio studii*. The promise, as well as the danger, hinges on the boundaries between the default to European hermeneutics in philological studies of non-Western canons, for example the Qurʾānic text, and the renewed promise of a critical humanism.[36] One might do well also to remember that the traditions of European hermeneutical and philological practices, and along with them, conceptions of the literary, have had their beginnings in approaches to scriptures

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[35] Cf. Damrosch's early call in: David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[36] Cf. Apter, *The Translation Zone*.

and other sacred texts. Heidegger's existential hermeneutics, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics are good recent examples, on the philological side. On the literary side, the return to "religious" and foundational texts in the quest for the literary have yielded crucial remit in critical method in the late work of Northrop Frye, who has turned to the Bible as the great code of totalising *mythos*, word order, or Harold Bloom's turn to rabbinical and Midrashic literature, and Robert Alter's work on the literary features of the Bible, or Frank Kermode, Geoffrey Hartman and others.[37] When it comes to hermeneutics and sacred discourse, as Apter has explained:

> The sanctity of the language of Holy Writ is freighted with the oldest questions of Judeo-Christian hermeneutics: In what language did God originally speak? Did Adam speak the same language before and after the Fall? If Latin is the language by which God's word is transmitted, and if it is decreed untranslatable, how was this policy reconciled with the fact that the Latin Bible was known to be a translation of Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Coptic and Greek? Such questions continue to resonate in contemporary debate. Are religious exponents of prayer or religious ceremonies in the original adhering to what Wai Chee Dimock calls 'an orthodox and fetishizing claim about untranslatability,' or are they deferring to faith in untranslatability as the guarantor of […] 'the idea of a sacred language distinct from its secular alternative'[…]? These questions of translation and theology have moved to the center of philosophical translation as it works through problems of messianism, fedeism, orthodoxy, doctrinal fidelity, the bounds of secular law, tolerance, ethical neighboring, the right to offend, literalism, and linguistic monotheism.[38]

The ideal of *translatio* as a renewed critical humanist project, Apter has suggested, can be seen as comparable to a linguistic monotheism. I find this to be a singularly suggestive statement though by no means a transparent one.

To articulate the possibilities of a *global translatio* in the folds of the promise of a linguistic monotheism is also to readmit the classical philological postulate of a unity of origins, even if this time around it is re-posited as the work of a secular, critical humanism, or an exilic humanism.[39] This presupposition is articulated afresh in Apter's more

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[37] Even in the recently renewed debates on secularity, theorists are significantly revising our understanding of the political and social spheres. Recent work by Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Bruce Robbins, Talal Asad and others are good examples, as is the work of Alain Badiou, inspired by the momentous events of the Arab Revolutions. My reference here is to the recent debates between Habermas, Taylor, Butler and West, cf. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, edd., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere: Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor and Cornel West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); see also Alain Badiou's recent work on the Arab Revolutions, effective redefining his earlier communist hypothesis in light of what he perceives to be the radical possibilities revealed in the revolutionary events in the people's collective actions and modes of expression, what he has termed a "movement communism," in: Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* (New York: Verso, 2012).

[38] Apter, *Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability*, p. 58.

[39] Cf. Apter's typology extending from Leo Spitzer, through Auerbach and Benjamin to Said in *The Translation Zone*, cf. chap. 3 "Global *Translatio*: The 'Invention' of Comparative Literature, Istanbul, 1933," pp. 41–64 and chap. 4 "Saidian Humanism," pp. 65–81.

recent work on philosophical translation in two key ways:[40] the circulation of a concept from within European philosophical languages as a "distinct case of fidelity to the original in which the target is same and othered—which is to say, philosophized." This is a case in which "[t]he philosopheme taps into its own foreignness." The second key insight has to do more radically with the move from one untranslatable to another untranslatable.

It is this second insight I wish to tackle here, briefly, also to show how the same hermeneutical act runs the risk of perilous fidelity to the originating untranslatable, and not just the danger of rendering invisible or removing from knowledge production the critical, philosophical and hermeneutical provenances of the non-European. That is, there is an act of conceptual displacement that has the identificatory power of metaphor, though not exactly in the way deconstructive readings have revealed in philosophical discourse, which still transpires as a mode of circulation within the spheres of European thought, and engages particular assumptions about the nature and experience of language (for example, the non-linguistic admitted only rhetorically as an unsettling act of unknowing). The danger which Heidegger has dramatized in approaching *Eastasian aesthetic*[41] practices using the conceptual language of European metaphysics also applies to European aesthetics in so far as it blinkers European thought from understanding the particularities of its own grounding visions (though this is precisely what Heidegger has aimed at by the end of the dialogue). Studies have come out recently on the Asian roots of Heidegger's hermeneutical negotiations of the Way or of Saying or of Gesture.[42] This risk could be immediately explained in terms of why the act is in the first place simultaneously one of *saming* and *othering*: saming here is an act not of translation but of alienation, of the positionality, material or otherwise, of both oneself and the other, a banishing into the unknowable of difference by circulating the singular concept—the metaphor not so much of monotheistic origin as of the classical philological unity of origin. The postulate of a linguistic monotheism as we have it here, as the work of a critical humanism reaching out to the other, is different from the case

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[40] Apter, *Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability*, p. 54.

[41] Margaret Hillenbrand has been recently working on the politics of quoting European and American theorists by Japanese and Chinese scholars on the pages of *Positions*, and she delivered some of her conclusions in a paper on "Philosophy, Pragmatism and East Asian Theory" in the workshop "Approaches to World Literature: Questions of Critical Methods Beyond Eurocentrism," held at The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), in London, organized by the Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies (CCLPS) in June 2011. The main conclusion was to the effect that the theory and theorist quoted are mostly for symbolic capital, another nod to the power differential and to Said's "Travelling Theory" thesis. One of the interesting postulates debated in the Q & A session is the viability of posing East Asia as a comparable civilizational unity to Europe, legitimizing the transferences among the different languages and intellectual traditions, though this is precisely what is being contested by the recent work on philosophical untranslatability. The question of the aesthetic and its surrounding conceptual languages on the East Asian scene is of course in itself rather complex, beginning with the common referencing of Classical Chinese characters in Japanese and Korean traditions of scholarship.

[42] See for example: May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*.

of a *philosopheme* tapping into its own foreignness within European philosophical discourses, "whereby an apparent non-translation translates nonetheless" (Apter on Kamuf on Derrida's *pharmakon*).[43]

In the case of the word of monotheistic revelation, recent European Protestant theological and hermeneutic shifts have centred on two fundamentally connected moves: away from speculative theology to kerygmatic theology and to narrative theology (from Barth to Bultmann to Frye to Ricoeur, as one particularly significant trajectory). This move also leads to the foregrounding of the Word, as the promise of monotheistic traditions and their foundational language experience.[44] While this hermeneutic move promises a theological "unity" for the Word, it still happens within the folds of a distinctly Christian untranslatable, and may run the danger of perilously obscuring the hermeneutic possibilities of understanding the Qurʾānic voice's *Naẓm* of discontinuous temporalities as another untranslatable. The same peril lies in the approach to the Hebrew Bible and the canonical Hebrew texts, especially when it comes to the typological, as Robert Alter has argued against Auerbach, Bultmann, Ricoeur, Frye and others. When it comes to the Hebrew Bible or canonical texts or to the Qurʾānic text, what we have is rather a case of *translatio studii* whereby the hermeneutical transfer is further complicated by its own untranslatability. Here, Venuti and Spivak, for example, may argue for cultural *translatio*, for the contextualizing of difference or for the primacy of each "languaged place"[45]—except as far away from the performance of equivalents on the level of the historico-civilizational content as we can get. And this is where hermeneutical rigour must be called upon, and precisely on the very line of its own possibility, the line of conceptual negotiation of difference in textual traditions and their histories of reception that emanate from the language experience, in a manner perhaps similar to the way Claude Simon has attempted to explain his views of narrative to Mahfouz. The target untranslatable must itself become equally the original, both in textual order and trans-historical, trans-linguistic reception. The hermeneutical transfers between the proclamations of the Torah, New Testament Narrative Kerygma and Qurʾānic Discontinuous *Naẓm* are of course further complicated by the postulate of a single origin on the side of the issuing voice, the theological identity of the speaking

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[43] Apter, *Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability*, p. 53; see also Peggy Kamuf's contribution to the same issue: Peggy Kamuf, "Passing Strange: The Laws of Translation," *MLA Profession* (2010), pp. 64–71.

[44] Where the word outweighs the numinous, as Paul Ricoeur argues, we begin to have a hermeneutics of proclamation that is to be distinguished from a phenomenology of the sacred. Such a hermeneutics exists where the accent is placed on speech and writing and generally on the word of God. This is particularly true of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Furthermore, there is such a concern for hermeneutics where the accent is placed upon the historicity of the transmission of the founding tradition and where this activity of interpretation is incorporated into the very constitution of that tradition. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, ed. Mark I. Wallace, trans. David Pellauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 48.

[45] Spivak, *Translating in a World of Languages*, p. 37.

presence of the Abrahamic religions and their scriptures, which is named and confirmed in the finality of the Qurʾānic revelations.

Kerygma (κήρυγμα) is the Greek term used in theological and hermeneutic discourses to describe the proclamation or message of the New Testament. Variously it has denoted the *content* of proclamation (C. H. Dodd[46]) and the *act* of proclamation (Rudolf Bultmann).[47] The term has gained more currency in philosophical and hermeneutic debates, and indeed has become one of the most controversial terms in theological debates since the publication of Bultmann's first essay on his project of *Entmythologisierung* or "demythologizing" the New Testament Proclamation, "New Testament and Mythology," in 1941. Bultmann's project ultimately offers a kind of existential hermeneutic: the kerygma is rescued from its enshrining language of the first century—its mythifying or objectifying statements—so that we are able to hear the Spoken Word in its subjective nature as God's saving act in Christ and thereby become able to engage with it as subjects in history. Bultmann was strongly inspired by Heidegger in the late 1920s and 1930s.[48] In one of the most rigorous analytic acts, perhaps since Auerbach's studies on typological modes and their literary significance, Northrop Frye set for himself the larger task of exploring the powerful hold of the Bible on the Western imagination and verbal cultures. For Frye, however, the language of metaphor is the very vehicle through which the Kerygma as revelation is manifested, and myth is the order of words that ensures the repeatability of the kerygmatic (as in *Heilsgeschichte*, for example) through typological modes of thought. The kerygma therefore has its narrative basis not only in the Gospels, or even in the paradigm of conversion and Pauline theology as a whole, but is made repeatable in the imaginative necessity of salvation (seen also as the inter-subjective thrust of the experience of the Divine through the Word by Bultmann). Paul Ricoeur too, in his discussion of Auerbach and Alter on the art of biblical narrative, sees the kerygma as inseparable from its own narrative and this "kerygmatized

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[46] See for example C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963).

[47] "It is also [as I have explained,] that which constitutes what is extra literary in the Bible, the prophetic or proclamatory aspect. For the Christian theologian, however, *Kerygma* is the word of revelation, the word of preaching. For the first Christians, the word of preaching was the eschatological event of the Kingdom of Heaven, but then, with the formation of the early churches, the emphasis shifted to the Person of Christ and the events of the Cross and Resurrection. […] *Kerygma* is thus a proclamatory mode of speech that is, as Frye would later draw its boundaries, non-rhetorical, non-metaphorical, and non-ideological speech. While Bultmann insists on the truth-nature of the *Kerygma* [Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961)] Frye emphasizes its metaphorical basis, even as he argues that it is neither poetic nor rhetorical, but somewhere in-between," in: Ayman A. El-Desouky, "*Ego eimi*: *Kerygma* or Existential Metaphor? Frye, Bultmann and the Problem of Demythologizing," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 34. 2 (2007), pp. 131–171; pp. 133–134.

[48] Cf. El-Desouky, *Frye, Bultmann and the Problem of Demythologizing*, pp. 131–171.

narrative or narrativized kerygma" as the only mode for the expression of the identity between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history.[49]

Frye's last major books, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, *Words With Power* and *The Double Vision*,[50] constitute a reworking of the relationship between the poetic and the religious visions, and their embodying *mythoi*, to which he devoted most of his professional career. This reworking seems to be made possible by shifting the emphasis from classification, which is still at work but no longer foregrounded, back to the point of origin, i.e. the identificatory power of the imagination, not just as an imaginative necessity at the core of all that is poetic or literary but also as a conceptual and cognitive function. In the later work, the initial power of the imagination to construct alternative visions (i.e., to posit the possible against the actual) seems to evolve into a distinct poetic and imaginative mode of thinking. This mode of thinking, according to Frye, is, or should be, the proper mode for the new cycle of history, as opposed to the conceptual and dialectic modes of reasoning (developed over the last two phases, i.e. the Metonymic and the Descriptive, as explained in *The Great Code*). It is perhaps interesting to observe at this point how Frye's arguments and statements, though as carefully conceived and stated as ever, begin to acquire a definite enunciatory tone. At this point, one cannot help but wonder whether Frye is going through a *metanoia* stage; that is, a turn in direction (repentance?) to face the idea of language as *logos*. Or, is it the beginning of a completely new cycle of history in which the poetic, the religious and the social merge to form the Human as such? And, if such is the case, is it really the beginning of a new cycle, is it a "recognition," an acceptance of the interfacing of mediated and unmediated vision, the linguistic and the non or extra linguistic, in all modes of thought and life? And if so, how close has he approached other traditions of the sacred word, such as the Qurʾān, of which there are numerous references throughout his works as well as his many notebooks?

The *Notebooks* are filled with germinating ideas and insights into all kinds of sacred and mythological traditions, but also some sharper articulations of his thoughts on the nature of the Kerygma. In fact, there are numerous indications of some radical turns late in his life, which is not surprising given the inclusive, spirally evolving nature of his work ever since the famous book on Blake—some of the earliest notes are revisited later on and in different rhythmic moments. Frye's late turn in the *Late Notebooks* therefore offers us a much more radical insight into what he tentatively refers to as the Discontinuous Kerygma:

> In descriptive writing the *verbal* content (not what we usually think of as content in that connection) is syntactic prose. When this content turns into form, a content of metaphor reveals

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[49] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 183; cf. also pp. 167–180 and pp. 236–248.

[50] Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1982); *Words With Power* (New York: Viking, 1990); *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

itself within. When *that* becomes form, myth (order, narrative, time, quid agas) becomes the content. When myth becomes form, kerygma becomes the content.[51]

A hermeneutical negotiation of the untranslatables of the Word would benefit from a close analysis of the key instances in which kerygma as Discontinuous Kerygma is mentioned in the *Late Notebooks*. Such an analysis will enable us to resolve the key issue here over the "discontinuity" of form that marks more radical possibilities of the kerygma. If what lies on the other side of the poetic is the kerygmatic, perhaps one key lies in the nature of "seeing" in Frye's answer to his own question about what lies on the other side of kerygma: it is the being-seen by the Word that unifies on the other side.[52] Frye's insight into *Discontinuous Kerygma*—significant after more than 20 years of studying the relationship between the biblical texts and literature or Western verbal cultures—is barely thematized but crucially offers his final attempt at articulating the kerygmatic voice in monotheism. It may also serve as a transitional theoretical model from narrative-based modalities to voice modalities and discontinuous temporalities in narrative.[53]

The default to European hermeneutics, while revealing a shared tradition of the Word of God by placing the accent on a hermeneutics of proclamation, has concealed intrinsic differences in acts of interpretation and histories of reception: the default fell easily to narrative theologies and narrative-based typological modalities. In Qurʾānic revelations the metaphysical fact of revelation is most salient as a direct issuing voice, a direct speaking voice revealing itself at the source and placing itself on the continuum of monotheistic revelations, as the origin but also the finality of the Word, the final issuing voice. Origin and finality, from within history, yet opening into sacred history as the reflection of the content of revelation. This claim at once to origin and to finality is peculiar to Qurʾānic voice, in the way it reworks interpretively and selectively not only

[51] Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye's Late Notebooks, 1982–1990: Architecture of the Spiritual World*, ed. Robert D. Denham, *Collected Works of Northrop Frye*, 30 vols., vols. 5–6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), vol. 5, p. 269.

[52] Cf. Frye, *Late Notebooks*, vol. 6.

[53] These are reflections on some of the conceptual language available to a literary critic working on particular European trajectories of interpretive traditions and methods since Goethe's famous remarks. They exclude, for example, certain Catholic traditions, as well as Syriac or Armenian or Ethiopian or Greek or Coptic and Arabic exegetical and hermeneutic traditions. The Egyptian monk, Father Matta el-Meskeen, for example, published in the 1990s a major translation in two volumes of the Gospel of John, directly into Arabic, together with an introductory volume outlining a whole new hermeneutical method in approaching the New Testament Kerygma. The case of Arabic in particular is particularly interesting given the overwhelming Islamic imprint on the traditions of the language. Around the same time that Father Matta was about to come out with his new translation, a most significant interview with him about spiritual metaphors, expressions of the sacred and allegory and hermeneutics in Arabic discourses, was conducted by three major Egyptian literary critics, Hoda Wasfy, Matta al-el-Meskeen, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, and, Gaber Asfour, cf. "Fī al-majāz al-rūḥī: Ḥiwār maʿa Mattā al-Miskīn" ["On Spiritual Tropes: A Dialogue with Matta el-Meskeen"], *Alif: A Journal of Comparative Poetics* 12 (1992), pp. 200–209.

the *content* but also the *form* of earlier monotheistic discourses, and is inseparable from the uniqueness of a first-person voice that always speaks directly, even when it refers to itself in the third person.

The addressee in Qurʾānic revelations is the Prophet as the vehicle of revelation, often directly so but even when the community or other peoples and figures or other prophets are addressed, the issuing voice is at any and all points dialogically drama-tised. This situation is confirmed in the tradition by the first revealed verse, the com-mand *Iqra*ʾ!—"Read!" or "Recite!" The texts of revelation thus at any and all points call for an experience: the experience not only of insights and reflection, in a specific con-text, but ultimately of dialogically standing as an addressee, individual and already dra-matised and exemplified in the figure and experience of the Prophet. And yet this expe-rience has proven historically and traditionally a community-founding experience—not only in the fundamental sense of a community of shared belief, but also ritualistically, liturgically and legislatively cemented through the power of the Word. Still, this drama-tised, direct mode of speech, with its unique syntactic, sound and mixed-genre forms, fundamentally calls for, demands and dramatises an individual response. This situation of voice will have to be clearly in view, I believe, before we can begin to approach the different genres and literary modes of expression in the texts of the revelation, some of which have their precedence, in theme and form, in monotheistic traditions, others in Arabic and surrounding Syriac practices,[54] and others evidently unique to the Qurʾān itself. These latter forms, most evident in the early *sūras* but throughout—and in the many forms of direct address and the particular feature of switching speaker and ad-dresses (*iltifāt*), sound figures, syntactic ellipses (*ḥadhf*), discontinuous temporalities in narrative forms, and so on—have to do in their uniqueness with the particular vision, the claim both to origin and to finality of revelation, and the authority of the issuing voice in the Qurʾān.

Most recent literary studies of the Qurʾān, though offering some of the most crucial and exciting interventions in the history of Qurʾānic Studies, tend on the whole to focus on narrative and narrativistic features, driven by the overriding modern concern with history and historiography, and deriving from differing literary critical, biblical and her-meneutic modalities.[55] There is also a fundamental premise at work, and it is that if we are to study continuities between the Islamic, Christian and Judaic traditions, partic-

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[54] The recent turn to source scholarship, focusing on contextual perspective in the contexts of Late Antique religious milieus, is represented in its wide and up to date range in: Gabriel Said Rey-nolds, ed., *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[55] See for example: Issa J. Boullata, ed., *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurʾān* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), for a good, well-rounded representation of the range of approaches; see also: Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān: A Study of Islāḥī's Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbu-i Qurʾān* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986); and the various studies in: Stefan Wild, ed., *The Qurʾān as Text*. *Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996); and Andrew Rippin, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

ularly as revealed in their scriptures, then we naturally begin with narratives of the prophets, a vision and sphere of continuity which the Qurʾān itself articulates and confirms, though from within the new vision of *al-qaṣaṣ al-ḥaqq* (or the true narrative), when it comes to comparing with other narratives.[56] When the Qurʾān deploys its own pronouncements and accounts of *al-qaṣaṣ al-ḥaqq*, the one immediately noticeable feature is that of discontinuity and of omissions in the running time of narrative sequence and accounts of events. The corollary expression of *aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ* ("the best of narrative," or "the most aesthetically pleasing") has been analysed in the tradition mostly as an aesthetic criterion for the language of the Qurʾān in general. But it is indeed also a selective criterion, offering a principle of selection for what agrees with the vision as the final vision of truth. The narrative approach to scriptures, though, and even to faith, has been the domain of Christian theology and hermeneutics, as opposed to the Jewish Torah, and is rooted in the typological principle which seeks to link Genesis to Revelation in a single ultimate running narrative of salvation. In Jewish scriptures, Prophetic narratives constitute precisely such a rupture in temporality, not in a history of salvation, but in human history, as exemplified in the history of a chosen people. It is more in the Midrashic and Rabbinical commentaries that narrative becomes a significant form for the accounts of personal experience with the Word, much as in the accounts of conversion by the Word in early Islamic sources and traditions. Both traditions centre on the sudden, transformative experience of hearing a single verse or cluster of verses, not of an uninterrupted narrative or story of salvation. As Robert Alter has put it:

> Although the Midrashists did assume the unity of the text, they had little sense of it as a real narrative continuum […] the Midrash provides exegesis of specific phrases or narrated actions but not continuous *readings* of the biblical narratives: small pieces of the text become the foundations of elaborate homiletical structures that have only an intermittent relation to the integral story told by the text.[57]

Muslim exegetes and hermeneuts also assume the unity of the text as a whole, but the experience of the Word remains on the level of the single verse or cluster of verses. Experience of the Parables in the Gospels comes very close to this tradition, as well as the Call to Discipleship in the Synoptic Gospels and in the *ego eimi* of the Johanine Gospel. Narrative begins to take shape only in the meaning fleshed out in the life of the person who hears the word. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, a famous scholar and exegete of the fifteenth-century (c. 1445–1505 AD), for example, decided to arrange his autobiog-

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[56] Cf. Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qurʾān and Muslim Literature* (London: Routledge, 2009), for a good study of the role of the storytellers in the early days of Islam and prophetic narratives in early exegesis and as a distinct genre. Tottoli also discusses the reception of prophetic tales and the status of Biblical prophets in medieval and modern literature.

[57] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), p. 11.

raphy in phases of development, each of which fleshes out the meaning of a single verse from the Qurʾān, which constitutes also the title of the relevant section.[58]

In the unique experience of the Qurʾānic text, narrative is clearly not the defining or driving mode, not in the immediate literary sense we tend to recognise narrative to be and experience it as such. A unifying principle has not yet been discovered by which the first verse is linked to the last, revealing a totalising narrative, a totalising myth or *mythos*, order of words, as Northrop Frye has redefined myth and described the effect which the principle of typology has in producing a running narrative from Genesis to Revelation in the Bible. Temporality is interrupted as a continuum, narrative details are reclaimed, reworked and rearranged through the authority of the origin-and-truth-claiming voice. Such an act, from a textual point of view, does not seek to recast or recover narrative, but rather to articulate a vision of truth at the source, and as it does so, it foregrounds new modes of language and new modes of experience of the sacred through language: the text singles out units of thought, of action and of event, of experience, and even of partial narrative sequences, it arranges them as units of contemplation which draw attention in suspended or, at times, successive moments of signification.

What Emily Apter has interpreted as "The Translational Interdiction" or "the divine right of untranslatability"[59] that originates in an Islamic context, following Moroccan critic Abdelfattah Kilito's insights, must still pertain to what she has called for under a theology of saving difference in philosophical discourse and translation studies (Bloom and Heidegger, and we can add Blanchot here as well). What Kilito has outlined under the injunction "Thou shalt not Translate Me!" ultimately pertains to the language experience, not to the experience of the Word itself as speaking voice (precisely where the return to the philological and the rigour of *translatio studii* are necessitated).[60] When it comes to "meaning," Qurʾānic verses have been received almost always already *translated*, as is attested by the titles of major exegetical works of the variety of "*tarjamat maʾānī al- Qurʾān*" ("Translating the Meanings of the Qurʾān"), and the text itself enjoins the acts of *taʾwīl* or "hermeneutical interpretation," in the sense of "returning to origins" (and these are stated to be in the heart of the knowing believer). The radical separation of *tarjama* ("translation"), *tafsīr* ("exegesis") and *taʾwīl*

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[58] Cf. "*Al-Tahadduth biniʾmat Allah*," in: Elizabeth Sartain, ed., *Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti,* 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), vol. 2; see also the study of the patterns of representation in Suyuti's autobiography by Kristen E. Brustad, "Imposing Order: Reading the Conventions of Representation in al-Suyuti's Autobiography," *Edebiyat* 7. 2 (1997), pp. 327–344, which is also included in the pioneering series of studies of Classical Arabic autobiographical discourses in: *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. Dwight F. Reynolds and co-authored by Kristen E. Brustad (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[59] Apter, *Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability*, p. 55 and pp. 56–58.

[60] The original title is: Abdelfattah Kilito, *Lan tatakallama lughatī* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 2002), cf. the English edition: Abdelfattah Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, trans. Wail S. Hassan (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

("hermeneutics") is a function of the later scholarship, a postulate on the basis of which the late Egyptian critic Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd has generated his major hermeneutical project.[61] Abu Zayd's work is particularly significant in that he points out the fact that modern Arabic literary approaches to the Qurʾān (revived early in the twentieth-century) have forgotten the early distinction in theological debates between the eternal and temporal aspects of the Word of God, which have left the literary critics exposed to attacks, as the approaches suffer from the lack of support of a modern theology and a new hermeneutical method.[62]

As I have briefly explained above, I would also argue that an Islamic hermeneutics of proclamation might benefit from the protests of Hebrew scholars and exegetes against the narrativizing hermeneutical acts of Christian theology in one more significant detail, the question of the unity of the text. This could have had a crucial bearing on the debates over "coherence" in the Qurʾānic text, which have predominated modern, mainly Western, scholarship. We should also consider the following points: the intra-textual Qurʾānic delineation between *qaṣaṣ* ("narration") and *usṭūra* ("myth") in light of the nature and experience of discontinuous temporality that marks the Qurʾānic text and causes it to stand unique among other holy books; and in light of this experience we must consider the modes of reception, particularly of unique individualities, and not just of how the texts speak to a community—beyond the legal aspects and codifications. The historicity of experience remains this way on the side of *tilāwa*, or "recitation of the revealed word," understood as response to the call of the *matluw*, or "the actual fact—a metaphysical one—called the Revelation,"[63] as Levinas would have argued—the trans-historical vision of *anbāʾ al-ghayb* ("stories" or "news of the unknown").

It is perhaps a good idea to conclude with brief examples from modern Arabic literature as to how Qurʾānic *Naẓm* is literarily treated as voice and beyond the hold of textual and narrative traditions, prophetic traditions, as well as of our definitions of the modern novel. Some of the major experiments in modern Arabic narrative discourses, notably in the works of Naguib Mahfouz, Libyan Ibrahim al-Kuni and Egyptian Gamal al-Ghitani, refract the Qurʾānic text and traditions of the Arabic language in strong appropriative modes of voice, vision and register. In al-Ghitani's own words: "A long time ago I realized the necessity of creating new artistic forms for the novel which draw

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[61] See his early work: Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl* ["The Philosophy of Hermeneutics"]. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's work is prolific and has the mark of a well integrated hermeneutical method, see for example his later work: Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Al-khiṭāb wa al-taʾwīl* ["Discourse and Hermeneutics"], (Beirut/Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi, 2000). For a well-rounded view of his critique of the different modern literary approaches to the Qurʾān, cf. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, "The Dilemma of the Literary Approach to the Qurʾān," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 23 (2003), pp. 8–47.

[62] Abu Zayd, *The Dilemma of the Literary Approach to the Qurʾān*, pp. 34–39.

[63] "This fact," Levinas continues, "is also the first and most important content revealed in any revelation," in: *Beyond the Verse*, p. 127.

on the Arabic tradition."[64] Tradition thus encompassed becomes the source of in-spiration for various forms of expression, which al-Ghitani argues should help in "articulating our present powerfully."[65] These forms of expression offer the writer various artistic tools with which the vanishing historical moment can be captured and its essence against extinction preserved. Al-Ghitani appeals to the historical layering em-bedded in the language itself. That is, only through the revelation of identity as a complex world of affinities, each with its own particular history, language and style, does the narrative succeed in crossing the boundaries of genres, thereby transcending the novel as Western form (for example in *Mutūn al-ahrām,* "Pyramid Texts", or *Sifr al-bunyān*, "The Gospel of Structure"). The rich and complex textual traditions also afford al-Ghitani an almost limitless repertoire of narrative styles, literary devices and resonant phrases and expressions, and all to a variety of aesthetic and emotive effects. Such classical genres range in style from classical Arabic historiographies and *Khiṭaṭ* or topographic literature to popular, oral histories and practices. While the effect of these styles and devices, blended and moulded into the narrative, comes to bear, most discernibly, on the construction of the narrative as a whole, such an effect emanates from the peculiarities of the personal destinies of the main characters. He pursues the creative traces of memory in language, only so he could place forces that are active in the present on a credible and suggestive historical continuum. This historical continuum is none other than the narrative of a personal destiny, drawn up architecturally in much the same way an Islamic architectural monument is designed or the Arabian Nights are constructed, as he has argued for their affinities. Acts of mythologizing the sacred word, collective memory, sacred space and sacred time abound in Libyan novelist Ibrahim al-Kuni's vision, and these are ultimately constitutive of his narrative universe, the mythological universe of the desert. Voice here seeks to enunciate individual and collective experience in mirrored metonymic and metaphoric discursive universes, where the speaking voice re-enacts originary sacred, creative and participatory powers. In Mahfouz's work, a historically conceived/received sacred word seeks to appropriate sacred temporality in the name of the people, the second-addressee of monotheistic discourses.

Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*[66], as I have explained elsewhere, presents a unique narrative experiment. It is able to engage with the contradictions of its own historical moment, the crises of post-1952 Revolution Egypt, and to offer an anatomy of the revo-

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[64] Gamal Al-Ghitani, "Baʿḍ Mukawwināt ʿālamī al-Ruwāʾī," *Al-Adāb* 38. 4–6 (1990), p. 113. My translation.

[65] Gamal al-Ghitani has also produced a series of critical studies outlining his narrative project as based on the Arabic narrative and textual traditions: Gamal al-Ghitani, *Muntahā al-ṭalab ilā turāth al-ʿarab: Dirāsāt fī al-turāth* ["The Ultimate Quest for the Traditions of the Arabs: Studies in the Tradition"] (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouq, 1996). The title of the work notably also follows the rhyming style of traditional treatises.

[66] Naguib Mahfouz, *Awlād Ḥāratinā* [1959], First Egyptian edition (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk, 2006); Naguib Mahfouz, *Children of the Alley*, trans. Peter Theroux (New York: Anchor Books, 1996).

lutionary process by *othering* textual traditions of sacred narratives—through the vision he attempted to explain to Claude Simon in the anecdote with which I have framed my reflections here. His creative vision produces something akin to Michel de Certeau's heterologies, and it is able in the process to radically outline the forms of historical knowledge that sacred narratives present for the people.[67] In effect he has created a secular narrative or *Naẓm*, with the speaking voice issuing from a projection of the popular imaginary, a veritable repertoire of histories of reception of the Word. The social realities of the people, their own time and place, are reconceived phenomenologically as manifestations of the collective struggle for social justice. The people's acts of self-consciousness, their expression of themselves as people, always leads to or constitutes a revolutionary action (a clear indictment equally of middle class intellectual discourses and of the state's nationalizing, modernizing discourses). Time, place and social realities are not treated anagogically or typologically in correspondence with religious transcendental visions. There are five discontinuous narrative segments that are connected mainly in the people's collective memory and the stories of the traditional storytellers or café poets. The figures of Gabalawi (God), Adham (Adam), Gabal (Moses), Rifaa (Jesus), Qassem (Mohamed) and Arafa (Science!) are not the deity and prophets or messengers of religious transcendental realities. Rather, they are figures of social reform, revolutionary figures, emerging from within the ranks of the people. The narrative temporality is bifurcated: the continuous temporality of human existence as a veritable history from below and the discontinuous temporality of repeatable "divine" interventions. The narrative experience reveals the division between these two experiences of time as that which underlies and organizes a culture.

In contrast to such Arabic narrative experiments with the word, the narrative-based New Testament "proclamatory voice," or *Kerygma*, is re-enacted through varieties of "the gospel according to the son" in such major works as: José Saramago, *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* (1991); Stephen Mitchell, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (1991); Norman Mailer, *The Gospel According to the Son* (1997); and more recently, Philip Pullman, *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ* (2010). A comparative study of these novels in relation to the New Testament Kerygma and of the works of the Arab authors I mentioned in relation to *Naẓm* would surely serve to illuminate further the possibility of comparative insight into either side of the untranslatable of the Word through the differentials of its narrative emanations. The works of modern Hebrew novelists such as Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888–1970; 1966 Nobel Laureate) would also provide such valuable insight for the purposes of these comparative acts of reading.

For *global translatio* to achieve the promise of a linguistic monotheism, with the philological postulate of a unity of origins, a rigorous theology of "saving difference"[68]

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[67] Ayman A. El-Desouky, "Heterologies of Revolutionary Action: On Historical Consciousness and the Sacred in Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47. 4 (2011), pp. 428–439.

[68] Apter "détourning" Bloom's expression, *Philosophical Translation and Untranslatability*, p. 54.

will have to enter the translational scene. The cases of Kerygma and *Naẓm*, or indeed hermeneutics and *ta'wīl*, are crucial points of departure—no less significant than the case of Borges's Averroes attempting to translate the Greek concepts of tragedy and comedy, or more recently Heidegger attempting to hermeneutically approach Japanese aesthetics—*Iro* (色) and *Ku* (空)—and language experience—*kotoba* (言葉)—in the form of dialogue. Both the origin and target untranslatables—and the translational act as reconceived here is no longer between languages as much as it is between the conceptual language of critical discourses—must first be identified as that which resists, as "the non-bond which disjoins beyond unity" only "to open yet another relation;"[69] and they must then emerge in the full rigour of their originating and differentiating trans-historical articulations, in the mode of a "persistent epistemological preparation."[70]

Untranslatability, as Apter has suggested, should therefore be seen as both problem and paradigm. It does not necessarily name, nor must it constitute, an impasse in the acts and processes of translation. Rather, I believe, it serves to highlight the complexities in the acts of understanding alterity, personal, literary or cultural, and as such it also foregrounds the hermeneutic dimensions in the acts of understanding, translation and interpretation. The question of agency would have to lie not just with the mastery of other languages and traditions for textual analysis, as Spivak has crucially argued, but even more so with the epistemological and hermeneutical negotiation of the conceptual languages and histories of practice of other traditions. For only then can such knowledge produced be activated into genuine dialogue with western disciplinary knowledge and critical methods. Otherwise, even critical traditions of non-European languages are approached ethnographically for knowledge gathered, and then dropped when it comes to the actual knowledge production, the time of discourse, as Johannes Fabian has argued in critique of anthropological method, for which only European conceptual languages are seen to offer the requisite analytic tools and concepts.

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[69] This is Blanchot's response to Levinas' affirmation of religion as that which binds or holds together, facing which Blanchot asks "then what of the non-bond which disjoins beyond unity—which escapes the synchrony of 'holding together,' yet does so without breaking all relations or without ceasing, in this break or in this absence of relation, to open yet another relation?," in: Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 64.

[70] Spivak, *Translating in a World of Languages*, p. 38.

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Global Scripts and the Formation of Literary Traditions

In seeking new approaches to world literature today[1], a prime challenge that we face is to find modes and scales of analysis that can mediate between the plethora of individual linguistic and literary traditions and the "global babble" of an all-encompassing world system, if "system" isn't even now too definite a term to use. The world is not yet nearly as flat as some economic analysts suppose, and even to the extent that we can speak today of "world music" or "the novel" as worldwide phenomena, we must still consider the fact that through most of recorded history, literature has never been written within an integrated global system. "World Literature" has meant different things in different parts of the globe, and only a very few writers have truly had a worldwide audience. At least up through the eighteenth century, literary works have circulated within fairly discrete fields, whether framed in regional terms (the East Asian world), in political terms (the Roman Empire), or in linguistic terms: the Sinophone or Romance traditions. My purpose here is to explore a missing term in most discussions of regional and global literatures: the crucial role of global scripts. Often thought of only in relation to their original language or language family, scripts that achieve a global reach usually extend far beyond their linguistic base, with profound consequences for literature and for culture in general. Alphabets and other scripts continue to this day to serve as key indices of cultural identity, often as battlegrounds of independence or interdependence. As I will argue, a global script forms the fundamental basis of a broader literary system—what we might call the "scriptworld"—in which works that use a common script are composed.

An emblematic modern instance of the cultural-political role of scripts was Kamal Atatürk's wrenching Turkish away from Arabic script to a Roman-derived script in 1928, part of his effort to realign Turkey away from its Ottoman, Middle Eastern past and toward a European future. To dramatize this effort as a patriotic assertion of a newly chosen identity, Atatürk had himself photographed giving instruction in the new alphabet, with Turkish flags prominently displayed behind his open-air blackboard.

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[1] A prior version of this paper was published under the title "Scriptworlds: Writing Systems and the Formation of World Literature," *Modern Language Quarterly* 68. 2 (2007), pp. 195–219.

Struggles over scripts continue today in various borderland regions. Chechnya has changed its script twice during the past century. Long written in Arabic characters, the Chechen language shifted over to Cyrillic during the period of Soviet domination, then went to the Roman alphabet when Chechnya achieved independence in 1997. The Berbers of North Africa, seeking to preserve an identity distinct from Arab culture, but equally reluctant to use the Roman alphabet of French colonial days, have revived an old Punic script, known as "tefinagh," which is now taught in schools in Morocco.

Often important in cultural politics, scripts have had a particularly far-reaching impact on the production and circulation of literature, not only in today's globalizing world but throughout the course of literary history. My starting-point for thinking about the issue of script came when I was working on a book about *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, arguably the first true work of world literature. *Gilgamesh* is the earliest literary text that we know to have had a wide circulation, well beyond its Babylonian origin, and it is also the earliest text for which we have recovered translations into several foreign languages: portions of translations of the Akkadian original have been found in Hittite and in Hurrian, and the Akkadian "original" is itself an expansive adaptation of an earlier Sumerian song cycle. *Gilgamesh* appears, in fact, to have been the most popular literary work ever written in the ancient Near East, with texts recovered so far from no fewer than fourteen sites. These are located not only all over Mesopotamia but as far away as Hattusa, the Hittite capital in what is now Turkey, and Megiddo, near the Mediterranean coast some fifty miles north of Jerusalem.

What is striking to observe is how fully the circulation of this most famous Meso-potamian text was bounded by the spread of cuneiform writing. Every version of *Gilgamesh* that we have, in four different languages and several dialects, is in cuneiform. The fragment found at Megiddo had reached roughly the farthest point of cuneiform's daily use south of the Syrian city-state of Ugarit, a meeting-point of cultures where both Akkadian syllabic cuneiform and a local alphabetic cuneiform script were employed. Despite the epic's immense popularity for more than a thousand years after it was first composed in around 1600 BCE, there is no evidence that *Gilgamesh* was ever translated into any non-cuneiform script. In this the epic is typical of all literary texts written in cuneiform, which vanished when cuneiform fell out of usage. As the Assyriologist Andrew George has said, "the epic that we know died with the cuneiform writing system, along with the large proportion of the traditional scribal literature that was of no practical, scientific, or religious use in a world without cuneiform."[2]

Political and economic affairs could be conducted using cuneiform script even be-yond the regions where cuneiform was at home. A large cache of cuneiform documents found at Amarna in northern Egypt shows that the Egyptian pharaohs had scribes trained to read and write Akkadian, Hittite, and other languages in cuneiform script. Yet no literary texts in cuneiform have been discovered at Amarna. Throughout the ancient

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[2]   A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), vol. 1, p. 70.

Near East, poems and prose narratives seem to have found written form largely within the broader script system in which they were first composed. If this is so, it may be better to speak of *Gilgamesh* as circulating around "the cuneiform world," rather than the smaller unit "the Mesopotamian world" or the overly large unit "the ancient Near East."

The Near East contained three principal literary systems, each based in a different script or family of scripts. Apart from the cuneiform tradition there was the Egyptian hieroglyphic system, and several societies along the eastern Mediterranean coast shared a general West Semitic alphabetic system, comprising Hebrew, Aramaic, alphabetic Ugaritic, and Phoenician. The separations between these groups were not watertight; scribes might often be competent in more than one system, and the alphabetic systems actually derived from a highly simplified alphabetic version of cuneiform. Yet a reader trained only in the two dozen signs of alphabetic cuneiform would have no way at all to read the six hundred signs of syllabic cuneiform, the standard script used for Sumerian and Akkadian literature.

Conversely, though, as *Gilgamesh*'s impressive distribution shows, a widespread writing system could open up boundaries of other sorts, easing a work's entry into a new region and even a new language. A script also has subtle but far-reaching effects on what is written to begin with. Scripts may illustrate the classic Sapir-Whorf hypothesis better than language does: writing systems profoundly shape the thought-world of those who employ them, not for ontological reasons grounded in the particular sign system as such, but because scripts are never learned in a vacuum. Instead, a writing system is often the centerpiece of an extended program of education and employment, and in learning a script one absorbs key elements of a broad literary history—its terms of reference, its habits of style, and its poetics, often transcending those of any one language or country.

Much as a non-native speaker today may learn a minimal "business English" or Japanese for commercial purposes, many scribes would have mastered enough cuneiform to get by with letters or bills of lading, but they would never have the skills needed to enter more deeply into the rich literary world of the more complex cuneiform or hieroglyphic texts. Those who had survived the long apprenticeship, on the other hand, possessed a rare and prestigious knowledge, and these adepts seem to have taken little interest in the literatures of the smaller and poorer societies that employed alphabetic scripts. The very simplicity of the alphabetic scripts, foundation of their eventual victory over cuneiform and hieroglyphics alike, probably seemed to the cultivated Egyptian or Babylonian scribe to be a mark of lesser refinement and weaker expressive power. Cuneiform had more than literary prestige: not unlike Latin and classical Chinese, it had political value as an elite language, only available to people of substantial education and social standing, its complexity shielding messages from commoners' eyes. When a provincial governor wrote to Sargon II of Assyria in 710 BCE, asking if he could use the more convenient Aramaic, Sargon sharply reproved him:

[As to what you wrote]: '[…] if it is acceptable to the king, let me write and send my messages to the king on Aram[aic] parchment sheets'—why would you not write and send me messages in Akkadian? Really, the message which you write in it must be drawn up in this very manner—this is a fixed regulation![3]

Bilingual but monoscriptural, Babylonian scribes in the second millennium freely translated back and forth between Sumerian and Akkadian, and as Akkadian became the lingua franca across the Fertile Crescent, scribes throughout the region developed multilingual abilities based in a single script. The scribal culture that was grounded in cuneiform created a strong bond across societies like the Babylonian, Assyrian, and Hittite empires, whose leaders were often at each others' throats. As a result, even when Mesopotamia and the broader Fertile Crescent were politically fragmented under various competing regimes, it is appropriate to speak in literary terms of a single "cuneiform world."

The early case of cuneiform and its Near Eastern rivals shows a pattern that can be found in the spread of more fully global languages since then: the leading edge of a global language is its globalizing script, and the script can far outrun the spread of the language itself. Once adopted, a global script often functions in two quite different ways at once, both suppressing local traditions and yet often also stimulating them in new ways. The new technology for writing brings in foreign texts and traditions that may override the indigenous tradition, yet it can also become a powerful force for cultural cohesion in its adopted territory, giving a common literacy to groups in a region who formerly had differing scripts or none at all. When they were forced to adopt the Roman alphabet in colonial New Spain, the Mexica, Zapotecs, and Maya gained a common writing system far easier to learn and employ than their incompatible hieroglyphic systems. They could more readily learn and read each others' languages, and over time, literacy could spread far beyond the elite circles that had formerly mastered the old hieroglyphics.

On the other hand, more complex scripts could have advantages of their own. The early cultural and political consolidation of China was fostered by the widespread adoption of the pictographic writing developed by the Shang people along the Yellow River during the second millennium BCE. Nonphonetic at base, the Chinese characters could be used by peoples of widely different languages or mutually incomprehensible dialects, such as the Cantonese to the south and the Muslim Hui in the west, far beyond the system's Mandarin-speaking base. Over many centuries, China had a national script rather than a national language. Conversely, today, the modern political division between Taiwan and the mainland is visually reflected in the present bifurcation of the Chinese script.

Sometimes, local groups have welcomed a powerful foreign script, but from Hellenistic times onward, indigenous peoples have often had good reason to beware of

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[3]   "Letter of Sargon II," in: *The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib*, ed. Manfred Dietrich (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2003), p. 5.

Greeks bearing Greek. Even when the gift was only an offered alphabet and not the full-scale imposition of a foreign language, it came with cultural strings attached. In and of themselves, scripts convey little cultural content, but scripts are never simply learned "in themselves." Often the new script is used first to convey a scripture and then a whole complex of values, assumptions, and traditions. These soon come to include secular as well as religious stories and poetry, and as a result, even writing composed in the indigenous language begins to find itself in dialogue with the religious and literary traditions that follow in the script's wake.

It is insufficient, then, to speak only of language in thinking of "the Latin Middle Ages" or of "global Arabic." These global languages exist within a penumbra of the even more global scripts that come with them and extend beyond them. Often, an imported script's "home" language is learned and written by the same people who will use its script to compose work in their native tongue, as when Akkadian speakers were trained in Sumerian as part of their scribal education, or when medieval Japanese poets would compose Chinese as well as Japanese verse. The vernacular works of such bilingual poets are likely to be infused with values taken over from the foreign language they are also using. But even writers who use the new script only for their native vernacular often show deep awareness of the script's underlying culture, sometimes appropriating its stories, sometimes parodying or contesting them, often doing both at once.

Good examples of this complex relation can be found in medieval Iceland, which produced one of the largest and richest vernacular literatures in medieval Europe. In converting to Christianity and making a parallel shift from runes to the Latin alphabet, the eleventh-century Icelanders set the stage for the explosion of vernacular writing of sagas and skaldic poetry in the ensuing three centuries. Sometimes they wrote in Latin, usually for religious purposes, and sometimes they translated French romances into Icelandic, yet more often they composed their own poems and tales directly in Icelandic, in a version of the Roman alphabet adapted to local speech. The Norse sagas are not part of Latin literature, yet they are very much a part of the Latin scriptworld.

A subtle but far-reaching orientation of local lore toward Christian and classical traditions can be found in Norse texts where one might least expect it, such as in Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* (c. 1240). This is the fullest medieval compendium of pagan Germanic myths, which Snorri has assembled as a resource for poetic allusions and tropes. In his preface, he tells us that he is anxious for young poets to know the stories behind the epithets and metaphors traditionally used in skaldic poetry, lest the old poetic language become obscure and die out. Yet he does much more than present the myths as a poetic repertory; instead, he boldly connects the northern gods to classical history, euhemerizing them as legendary heroes later taken for gods, and he actually offers linguistic analyses to link them to Troy:

> Near the center of the world where what we call Turkey lies, was built the most famous of all palaces and halls—Troy by name. [...] One of the kings was called Múnón or Mennón. He married a daughter of the chief king Priam who was called Tróán, and they had a son named

Trór—we call him Thór. [...] he travelled far and wide exploring all the regions of the world and by himself overcoming all the berserks and giants and an enormous dragon and many wild beasts.[4]

Snorri goes on to relate that Thór's descendant Óðin journeyed north with his family and began to rule in Germany and then Sweden: "There he appointed chieftains after the pattern of Troy [...]." Snorri even claims that the collective name for the Norse gods, the Æsir, derives from their homeland, "Asia."[5]

Iceland provides a fascinating case of free choice to enter a new scriptworld as an independent nation, and the process was well documented even at the time. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Icelandic scholars freely experimented with the alphabet, adapting it to the sounds of Norse, and theorizing the relation of speech to writing. Most of the surviving manuscripts of the *Prose Edda*, in fact, are bound together with one or more grammatical treatises, most fully in the *Codex Wormianus*, which includes no fewer than four appended treatises, inventively known today as the *First, Second, Third*, and *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*. The writer of the *Second Grammatical Treatise* makes a musical analogy for his script, inviting his reader to play the sounds on the chart like a musical instrument: "The mouth and the tongue are the playing-field of words. On that field are raised those letters which make up the whole language, and language plucks some (of them) like [...] harp strings, or (as when) the keys of a [simphonie] are pressed."[6] (Recently imported from France, a simphonie was a kind of fiddle with strings that would be stopped with keys to sound a given note.) The *First Grammatical Treatise* presents his chart of vowels and consonants as a kind of keyboard, an instrument for creative play.

> Earlier still, writing in around 1170, the author of the *First Grammatical Treatise* shows a sovereign freedom in experimenting with the newly imported alphabet. Though it might appear that the Icelanders are simply giving in to foreign ways, he asserts that the Norse alphabet is no mere adaptation but a new creation:

> [...] as languages are all unlike, ever since they parted and branched off from one and the same language, it is now needful to use different letters in writing them, and not the same for all, just as the Greeks do not write Greek with Latin letters, and the Latin writers do not write with Greek letters [...] but each nation writes its language with letters of its own.[7]

The *First Grammatical Treatise* goes on to describe how he has accepted some Latin letters, "rejected" others, and invented new letters as needed, particularly for vowels,

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4   *The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson: Tales from Norse Mythology*, sel. and trans. Jean I. Young (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 25–26.

5   *The Prose Edda*, p. 27.

6   Fabrizio D. Raschellà, *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: An Orthographic Pattern of Late Thirteenth-Century Icelandic* (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1982), p. 55. Translation modified.

7   Einar Haugen, *First Grammatical Treatise*: *The Earliest Germanic Phonology* (Baltimore: Linguistic Society of America, 1950), p. 12.

"[...] since our language has the greatest number of vowel sounds."[8] He also uses small capitals to indicate lengthened consonants—a distinction needed, he notes, as otherwise it is impossible to scan skaldic poetry correctly, and "[t]he skalds are our authorities in all problems touching the art of writing or speaking, just as craftsmen [in their crafts] and lawyers in the laws."[9] Having set out an alphabet of fifty different letters in all (counting diacritics as creating new letters), the *First Grammatical Treatise* ends with a note of encouragement to the reader—or a challenge: "Now any man who wishes to write [...] let him value my efforts and excuse my ignorance, and let him use the alphabet which has already been written here, until he gets one that he likes better."[10]

Snorri Sturluson, then, was writing in a world of sovereign grammatological adaptation, guided by poetry and by analogy to musical instruments imported from France. Snorri's treatment of classical and Christian literary material shows a similar freedom. Though he is a devout Christian and insists that Thór and Óðin were mortal heroes, Snorri opens the body of the *Prose Edda* with a virtual parody of the Christian Trinity. A Swedish king, Gylfi, goes to see the powerful Æsir who have created such a stir in the region, and when he comes to their castle he is admitted by a man juggling knives, keeping seven in the air at once. This ominous juggler leads him to the throne room of the Æsir, where Gylfi finds "three high-seats one above the other, and a man seated in each [...]." Their names are Hár, Jafnhár, and Thriði—"High One," "Just-as-high," and "Third."[11] This parodic Holy Trinity then answers his questions about ancient times, retelling the great Norse myths about creation, the ash tree Yggdrasil that holds the world together despite the dragon gnawing at its root, and the coming end of the world, Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods. Finally, the Æsir tire of all the questions and end the session—not by dismissing Gylfi but by themselves vanishing, with a final word of admonition from High One:

'[…] And now, if you have anything more to ask, I can't think how you can manage it, for I've never heard anyone tell more of the story of the world. Make what use of it you can.'
The next thing was that [...] [Gylfi] heard a tremendous noise on all sides and turned about; and when he had looked all round him [...] he was standing in the open air on a level plain. He saw neither hall nor stronghold. Then he went on his way and coming home to his kingdom related the tidings he had seen and heard, and after him these stories have been handed down from one man to another.[12]

Snorri is well aware that the poetic traditions he cherishes are under attack by the new Christian order. In his prologue, Snorri describes the early growth of the human race in terms of a material gain but also a memory loss:

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[8] Haugen, *First Grammatical Treatise*, p. 13.
[9] Haugen, *First Grammatical Treatise*, p. 20.
[10] Haugen, *First Grammatical Treatise*, pp. 29–30.
[11] Haugen, *First Grammatical Treatise*, pp. 30–31.
[12] *The Prose Edda*, pp. 92–93.

As the population of the world increased [...] the great majority of mankind, loving the pursuit of money and power, left off paying homage to God. This grew to such a pitch that they boycotted any reference to God, and then how could anyone tell their sons about the marvels connected with Him? In the end they lost the very name of God and there was not to be found in all the world a man who knew his Maker.[13]

Snorri is nominally talking about the ancients who forget the true God and fall into paganism, yet his own book is precisely devoted to telling young poets about the marvels performed by the pagan gods whose names are now being boycotted under Christianity. The concern for cultural memory is expressed within the *Edda* by no less a figure than the chief god Óðin:

'Two ravens sit on his shoulders and bring to his ears all the news that they see or hear; they are called Hugin ["Thought"] and Munin ["Memory"]. He sends them out at daybreak to fly over the whole world, and they come back at breakfast-time; by this means he comes to know a great deal about what is going on, and on account of this men call him the god-of-ravens. As it is said:

Over the world
every day
fly Hugin and Munin;
I fear that Hugin
will not come back,
though I'm more concerned about Munin.'[14]

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Snorri Sturluson was writing two and a half centuries after Iceland's conversion in the year 1000, and was making what he could of the pagan myths in a Christian world, so his strategic linking of the old material to the classical tradition could be seen as a fairly late stage in the development of the medieval Latin scriptworld. Yet when we have texts written closer to the time of adoption of the Roman alphabet, we can find equally noteworthy adaptations, even by writers in settings where pagan practices are still very much in use. Particularly intriguing examples come from sixteenth-century Mexico and Guatemala, where Mayan and Mexica writers within a generation of the Conquest began writing down their old stories and poems, using the Roman alphabet to write their native languages. The adoption of the Roman alphabet had an enormous effect on the shaping of the poetry we can now read.

Firstly, the Roman alphabet gave native poets a far easier and more nuanced technology for recording their words. The older hieroglyphic systems of the Maya and the Mexica (the Aztecs and their neighbors) were highly effective for conveying mathematical and astronomical data, a realm in which the Aztecs and particularly the Maya

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[13] *The Prose Edda*, p. 23.
[14] *The Prose Edda*, pp. 63–64.

were world leaders. Beyond their mathematical and financial uses, however, these systems seem to have served mostly as prompts to memory, well suited for noting key facts about historical chronology and events, but not sufficiently developed to record a particular set of words to express those events. Linguists are still engaged in deciphering the surviving hieroglyphic inscriptions and books (many of which were burned by the Conquistadores in any event), and so our knowledge of the pre-Conquest corpus is limited. From what we now know, though, it appears that the old hieroglyphic systems didn't lend themselves to full-scale poetic or narrative expression.

The imported Roman alphabet gave native writers a new opportunity to record their literature in lasting form not dependent on the memory of the users of the text. Yet the Latin/Spanish alphabet was directly imposed on the radically different phonetic systems of Mesoamerican languages, without the extensive additions and modifications that ended up making Cyrillic, for example, almost unrecognizable to readers of Greek. The direct use of the Roman alphabet in Mexico meant that what the native writers could record was pervasively "normalized" toward Spanish and Latin phonetics. As recorded in the sixteenth century, many Nahuatl words sound surprisingly similar to Spanish or Latin words: "god," for example, is *teotl*, a kissing cousin of *deus* (dative: *deo*) or *dios*. There are hundreds of comparable similarities, leading occasional commentators over the years to postulate some direct line of transmission, as though an enterprising Aeneas had crossed the Atlantic, dictionary in hand. Yet the similarity of *teotl* to *deus* is more readily explained by the fact that most of the early colonial Nahuatl texts were written by native informants who had been trained at the seminary of the Holy Cross in Mexico City, established only a decade after the Conquest, where the language of instruction was Latin. The native writers were capable of mixing Nahuatl, Latin and Spanish together in a single sentence, as in a marginal gloss to one Aztec poem: next to a reference to Moyocoyatzin ("the One Who Creates Himself," an epithet of the god Tezcatlipoca), the writer notes, "yehuan ya dios glosa"—"this is to be read as 'God.'"[15]

Even when they treat purely pre-Conquest material, then, the earliest Colonial-era native texts are already profoundly shaped by their writers' entry into the Latin script-world. This shaping extends beyond the lexical level, for few if any of these texts really do present "pure" pre-Conquest material, though commentators have often wished to read them as though they did. The Mayan *Popol Vuh*, for example, has usually been taken as a timeless mythic narrative, but even though it was written only thirty years after the Conquest and focused on ancient myths, it is already in dialogue with the biblical traditions that were being transmitted to the writers along with the alphabet.

From the start, the book's authors openly allude to their present setting. As they say at the beginning of the book:

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[15] *Poesía Náhuatl*, ed. Ángel María Garibay Kintana, 3 vols. (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Historia, Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl, 1964–1968), vol. 1, p. 12.

> Here we shall inscribe, here we shall implant the Ancient Word, the potential and source for everything done in the citadel of Quiché, in the nation of the Quiché people. ... We shall write about this now amid the preaching of God in Christendom now. We shall bring it out because there is no longer a place to see it. ... There is the original book and ancient writing, but he who reads and ponders it hides his face.[16]

The new technology of the Latin alphabet enables the Mayan authors to give a new and probably much fuller version of their hieroglyphic "Council Book," which they claim to have lost (and which has since been lost in fact) but which they appear to be consulting as they retell their stories. From their references to the hieroglyphic version, it seems to have been basically an aid to divination, devoted largely to charting the movement of the sun, moon, and planets, with brief notations of the stories of divine activities that were thought to underlie the astral order. So the alphabetic *Popol Vuh* is a much fuller literary work than its hieroglyphic predecessor would have been. At the same time, it is deeply marked by its authors' fear for the loss of cultural memory threatened by the invasion that has brought the alphabet to them.

The second half of the *Popol Vuh* centers on the migration of the divine or semi-divine Quiché ancestors from Tulan in eastern Yucatán to their new home in Guatemala. As they head westward, they bewail the loss of their homeland, which they describe as first and foremost a linguistic loss:

> 'Alas! We've left our language behind. How did we do it? We're lost! Where were we deceived? We had only one language when we came to Tulan, and we had only one place of emergence and origin. We haven't done well,' said all the tribes beneath the trees and bushes.[17]

A later expedition retrieves their sacred writings, and with these they can establish themselves in their new land.

The ancestral journey isn't only shaped by indigenous cultural memories; it also builds on biblical themes. To give just one example, the Quiché ancestors reach their new homeland by parting the waters of the sea:

> [I]t isn't clear how they crossed over the sea. They crossed over as if there were no sea. They just crossed over on some stones, stones piled up in the sand. And they gave it a name: Rock Rows, Furrowed Sands was their name for the place where they crossed through the midst of the sea. Where the waters divided, they crossed over.[18]

This account combines two distinct modes of crossing the sea, on a rock bridge or by the parting of the waters. Quite likely, the rock bridge was the original means, as reflected in the name "Rock Rows," while the second method has been adapted from the story of Moses parting the Red Sea.

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[16] *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*, ed. and trans. Dennis Tedlock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 71.

[17] *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book*, p. 173.

[18] *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book*, p. 177.

   This identification of a biblical source might seem a little random, even far-fetched, except that we find an explicit reference to this very piece of biblical history in a related text, the *Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*. This work was written in 1554, within a couple of years of the alphabetic *Popol Vuh*, and quite possibly by the same person or people. In this text, the native nobility of Totonicapán are recording their history so as to justify continuing to hold title to their lands, in the face of Spanish efforts to take them over. This is how they describe the crossing of the Caribbean from Tulan, under the guidance of their culture hero Balam-Quitzé: "When they arrived at the edge of the sea, Balam-Qitzé touched it with his staff and at once a path opened, which then closed up again, for thus the great God wished it to be done, because they were sons of Abraham and Jacob."[19] Clearly aware of the Spaniards' speculation that the civilized peoples of Mesoamerica must be the lost tribes of Israel, the lords of Totonicapán turn this belief to their advantage, framing their history in biblical terms to assert that the title to their land was given them by the Spaniards' God himself.

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Comparable struggles over identity and cultural memory occurred in East Asia as the early stirrings of nationalism led first Korea and then Vietnam to shift away from the Sinographic scriptworld. King Sejong's Korean script, created in the mid-fifteenth century, didn't truly displace Sino-Korean for many years. For centuries, Korean writers continued to think of themselves as part of the Sinitic scriptworld—even though they might also seek to assert their equality or even superiority over the Chinese homeland of their writing system. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the ability to read Chinese was becoming a thing of the past in Korea. As some eighty percent of surviving premodern Korean literature is written in Chinese, this change made most earlier texts by Korean writers unreadable to their successor. A vivid expression of the sense of foreignness of earlier Korean writing can be seen in a poem by Pak Tujin (1916–1998), entitled "Book of Poems:"

> A book of poems lay open
> white on the sand before the blue sea.
> Wind turned the pages,
> ruffling them one by one.
> The warm words in the book had etched within them
> a sad and beautiful heart.
> Those printed words became birds, began to fly.
> One, then another;
> a hundred, a thousand,

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[19] *The Annals of the Cakchiquels*, trans. Adrián Recinos, and Delia Goetz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953); *Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*, trans. Dionisio José Chonay, and Delia Goetz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 170.

higher, higher, glimmering, drawn into the sky
white poems of birds, birds of poems.
Flower petals fell trembling from the sky.
Those birds that had recited poems in the sky
forgetting, unable to speak the verse they knew
became flowers falling above the sea.
Then they became stars in the far distant sky.
Those birds that had recited poems in the sky
the world's
sad and beautiful poems,
recited the poems in the book so brightly
they twinkled now, stars in the world of stars.[20]

In another poem, Pak Tujin voices his concern for the loss to cultural memory following the introduction of the new Hangul script:

"Inscription Etched by Water"

One stroke at a time, now and then in spare moments
retracing the strokes with water
during ten times a hundred thousand years
I wrote
one word.
After a time, later again
quietly searching out the place, then
my hand's touch exploring gently,
retracing each of the strokes,
after passing yet again ten times a hundred thousand years,
I wrote one word.
In the etched form of each stroke gleamed
a gorgeous rainbow,
in the sun's rays lighting the water
a rainbow of the currents.
There were the times once when I listened,
inclined my ear to the messages, but
having heard
then afterward, and afterward
recorded the inner sense of those words,
now I find that
after carving a few ancient characters
year upon year, for too long,
I have completely forgotten
what words I wrote.[21]

Yet the shift to a new script need not entail a pure loss of the older tradition, which may become a resource for the creation of a newly independent national literature. A good

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[20] Pak Tujin, "Book of Poems," trans. Edward W. Poitras, in: *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry*, ed. David R. McCann (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 126.

[21] *Modern Korean Poetry*, pp. 127–128.

example of this possibility can be seen in the foundational work of modern Vietnamese literature, Nguye Du's *Truyen Kieu*, or "The Tale of Kieu" (c. 1810), a verse adaptation of a Ming Dynasty novel, *Jin Yun Qiao zhuan* (late 1600s). Nguyen Du made far-reaching changes to the original novel in creating his verse narrative. He wrote *The Tale of Kieu* not in Han Viet (Sino-Vietnamese) but in Chu Nom, the independent Vietnamese script derived from Chinese, and he employed a native poetic form taken from oral poetry, known as the *luc-bat* or "six-eight," with couplets of six syllables in the first line and eight in the second. Nguyen Du's ambitious reframing of his Chinese source text was part of a general movement by the writers of his era to create a literature of their own by refashioning the Chinese literary heritage in which they had been trained. As John Balaban has noted:

> While concurring on the prestige of *Chinese* writing, Vietnamese literati were intent on establishing the independence of Vietnamese writing, even as they accepted models from the full range of Chinese literary forms, especially the "regulated verse" form, or *lüshi*, of the Tang dynasty. [...] The form reached aesthetic heights in Vietnamese hands in the 19th century, with poets such as the concubine Ho Xuan Huong, who composed regulated verse poems that were complete double entendres, filled with tonal puns (*noi lai*). Still others created regulated verse palindromes that would be in Vietnamese from start to finish but then, going backward, ideogram by ideogram, became poems in Chinese, switching languages on the reversal.[22]

As an adaptive transformation of a Chinese novel, *The Tale of Kieu* can rightfully be considered part of the wider Chinese tradition—though it has been little discussed by Chinese literary scholars, who mostly consider it as a mere translation of a minor work of Chinese fiction. Yet Nguyen Du turned the story to dramatically new uses for himself and his culture. In his hands, the tale reflects Vietnam's long struggle for independence from China and also the new reality of the growing influence of the French, who had provided support to overthrow the Le Dynasty in Vietnam not long before Nguyen Du began his poem. Having worked as an official in the older dynasty, Nguyen Du had reluctantly begun working for its successor, the Nguyen Dynasty (no relation to Nguyen Du himself), evidently concluding that lingering loyalty to the deposed dynasty would not help rescue the country from chaos.

In retelling the story of Kieu, Nguyen Du not only adapted a novel from Chinese prose into Vietnamese verse, but he translated his own experiences into hers. Kieu's romantic struggles implicitly reflect his own political turmoil; she has to sell herself into prostitution to redeem her family from gambling debts, then she has a series of mis-adventures and love affairs before finally becoming reunited with her first love. Even as he shapes Kieu's story to reflect his own circumstances, Nguyen Du makes clear his deep connection to the Chinese tradition throughout the novel. It is interesting that as a male poet on the periphery of the Sinophone world, Nguyen Du more than once identified himself with female Chinese artists. Not only is the fictional Kieu an ac-

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[22] John Balaban, "Vietnamese Literature." *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/628557/Vietnamese-literature (retrieved Sept. 7, 2009).

complished poet, calligrapher, and lutenist; Nguyen Du also identified with an actual woman poet, Hsiao-Ching, a seventeenth-century poet who was forced to become a concubine to a man whose jealous primary wife burned almost all of her poems. In a poem called "Reading Hsiao-Ching," Nguyen Du reflects on her fate, and his own:

> West Lake flower garden: a desert, now.
> Alone, at the window, I read through old pages.
> A smudge of rouge, a scent of perfume, but
> I still weep.
> Is there a fate for books?
> Why mourn for a half-burned poem?
> There is nothing, there is no one to question,
> and yet this misery feels like my own.
> Ah, in another three hundred years
> will anyone weep, remembering my fate?[23]

Nguyen Du had a double struggle: for poetic recognition, and for the creation of an independent nation whose poet he could be. *The Tale of Kieu* is also a poem about a woman poet, and in one key scene Kieu's poetic ability saves her before a judge who is about to condemn her. While *The Tale of Kieu* broadly follows the outlines of its Chinese source, Nguyen Du elevates her to be his central character, over her warlord lover who dominates the Chinese novel, and he significantly changed the story's ending, having Kieu finally renounce her still loyal first love, Kim. She persuades him to marry her sister, so that she can live with them as a Buddhist nun, free from romantic attachments—a notable departure from the happy reunion and marriage with which the Chinese novel ends.

Throughout the poem, Nguyen Du emphasizes Kieu's exceptional physical charms along with her artistic ability, often comparing her to a blossoming flower, but these images finally lead up to a Buddhist emphasis on transience and renunciation rather than an erotic fulfillment: flowers bloom but then fade, bees invade their innermost recesses, reeds are flattened by the north wind, bamboos split and tiles slip from roofs. A founder of vernacular Vietnamese poetry, Nguyen Du was also a devotee of the classical Chinese canon that he evokes on every page. Yet in making Kieu an emblem for an oppressed nation, he envisions a nation very different from imperial China—or from Napoleonic France: Vietnam will be a nation that renounces power and security, a nation that doesn't insist on sexual, ethnic, or literary purity. He is at once a proud member of an international Sinitic poetic tradition and an innovator in Vietnamese verse, a poet of passion and of renunciation, political engagement and withdrawal, his creative innovation fuelled by the interfusion of foreign and local traditions.

A century later, during the period of anticolonial struggle against the French, *The Tale of Kieu* was transliterated from Cho Nam into the new, French-derived alphabetic

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[23] Nguyen Du, "Reading Hsiao-Ching," in: *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, 2nd ed., edd. David Damrosch et al. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2009), vol. E, p. 252.

script, Nam Viet. Though this script was developed and promoted by Jesuit missionaries, it was embraced by many Vietnamese intellectuals as helping them to reach the masses and promote political action against the very foreigners who had introduced the alphabet. The activist poets of twentieth-century Vietnam looked back to Nguyen Du as the founder of their literature and an inspiring figure in the struggle for Vietnamese independence. A good expression of this view is a midcentury poem, "Thoughts on Nguyen," by Che Lan Vien, founder of the Vietnamese Writer's Association:

> Born into those foul times of dusk and dust,
> you reached and touched no soul mate by your side.
> Your sorrow matched the fate of humankind:
> Kieu spoke your thoughts and crystallized your life.
>
> Kings rose and fell—the poem still abides.
> You fought and won your feats on waves of words.
> You planted stakes in the Bach-dang of time:
> our language and the moon forever shine.

Proud though he is of his poetic ancestor's accomplishment, Che Lan Vien is not so happy with Nguyen Du's choice of a Chinese source for his work. He goes on to ask:

> Why borrow foreign scenes? Our land flows not
> with one Ch'ien-t'ang but many fateful streams.
> Why split yourself? Nguyen Du, To Nhu, Thanh Hien:
> the tears in Kieu merge all three into one.
>
> Need we one century more to feel for Nguyen?
> Mourning our nightfalls, we soon grieve for his.
> We love kings' calls to arms, yet we shall not
> forget those frost-white reeds along Kieu's road.[24]

As a committed nationalist, Che Lan Vien would have preferred for the foundational work of modern Vietnamese literature to have used local traditions rather than a foreign source at all. Recalling the several pen names that Nguyen Du used (partly to avoid censorship), Che Lan Vien suggests that his predecessor unduly "split himself" between Chinese and Vietnamese traditions through his direct use of a Chinese source. Nguyen Du himself would not likely have experienced his writing as such a "splitting," since Vietnamese literati of his era proudly considered literary Chinese as part of their own heritage and culture. But Che Lan Vien understands the work as an act of resistance to the very culture from which it took its literary model: thus he vividly describes Nguyen Du as planting "stakes in the Bach-dang of time"—recalling the tactics of the Vietnamese general Tran Hung Dao, who planted stakes in 1288 in the tidal Bach-dang

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[24] Che Lan Vien, "Thoughts on Kieu," in: *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, edd. Damrosch et al., vol. E, p. 282.

River in northern Vietnam to impale invading war ships sent from China by Kublai Khan.

<div align="center">*</div>

To conclude. Both in the ancient "cuneiform world" and, later, in expansions and transformations of the Roman alphabet and the Arabic and Sinitic writing systems, literary production has been shaped as much by the spread of scripts as by the spread of particular languages. The explosion of translation over the past two centuries has certainly led to a great increase in movement across different scriptworlds, but even now, as we can see in cases from Turkey and Chechnya to Vietnam and Taiwan, local cultures make important decisions when they position themselves in relation to global scripts, and so this paradigm retains an ongoing relevance today.

An attention to the interplay of language and script in earlier periods can also give us a better understanding of the origins of our modern national literatures. When he was formulating the concept of *Weltliteratur* in the 1820s, during the heyday of European nationalism, it was natural for Goethe to speak of world literature as based in the interactions of established national literatures, treating world literature as a secondary or even future formation: "Nationalliteratur will jetzt nicht viel sagen," he announced to his young disciple Eckermann; "die Epoche der Weltliteratur ist an der Zeit, und jeder muß jetzt dazu wirken, diese Epoche zu beschleunigen."[25] An examination of the spread of scripts in earlier periods shows instead that literatures have often developed in just the opposite direction: in most periods of history, local or national literatures have developed within—and, often, against—an existing regional or global world literature.

It is a rare country that develops its own script and its own literature in sovereign independence from other societies; ancient Egypt is much more the exception than the rule. More typical even among the originators of scripts are the Sumerians and the Phoenicians, whose pioneering scripts were quickly taken up by more powerful groups around them. Most literatures are formed within broad systems grounded in the power of scripts to cross the boundaries of time, space, and language itself. Arising within a transcultural context, a local or national literature must negotiate a double bind: the new script that can give form to a people's traditions also brings with it the threat of the local culture's absorption into a broader milieu.

Works as disparate as the *Prose Edda*, the *Popol Vuh*, and *The Tale of Kieu* show that writers have repeatedly found creative ways to negotiate these tensions. Noah's raven could find nothing to bring back to him in the days after the ending of the Flood that had washed human culture away, but in *The Prose Edda* we learn that Óðin's ravens are more successful: they bring back news from around the world. God of

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[25] Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1982), p. 198.

wisdom, Óðin is blessed—and cursed—with foreknowledge, and he knows he can only use the ravens' reports for a time, until the gods enter their fated twilight and fade from memory: one day Munin will fail to return. Óðin is also the god of poetry, however, and perhaps he foresees the day when poets will adopt the script brought by the new dispensation that will displace him. Resisting the oblivion threatened by the advancing culture, these poets will use the foreign script to celebrate their former patron and his marvelous deeds, and their poems will keep alive the memory of the raven named "Memory."

VILASHINI COOPPAN

Codes for World Literature: Network Theory and the Field Imaginary

In the current moment of what has been called "the network society" the concept of *world* and the practice of *worlding* have undergone a philosophical reorientation, rooted precisely in a shift away from roots and all that they imply.[1] In *A Thousand Plateaus* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari contrast roots to rhizomes, an organic figure for a branching structure that has no center and no periphery, no top and no bottom. The rhizome is a topology structured instead by depth, by points of density or saturation, and by lines of connection or departure. Where "root-thinking" espouses the fixing and binarizing logics of essentially territorial thought, map-making in its most imperial form, rhizomatic thinking urges us to "connect the roots or trees back up with a rhizome." "One will often be forced to take dead ends" and "to find a foothold in […] rigidified territorialities" yet in other cases it will be possible to "bolster oneself directly on a line of flight enabling one to blow apart strata, cut roots, and make new connections." If this is a map, it is one whose "coordinates are determined not by theoretical analyses implying universals but by a pragmatics composing multiplicities or aggregates of intensities."[2] The branching rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari explain, is "reducible neither to the One nor the multiple […] [and] has neither beginning nor end […] [it is] a system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states."[3]

In different language but with similar import, media theorists such as Jan van Dijk and Armand Mattelart describe network society as a linked system of nodes in which circulation and connection trump separation and distinction. Networks are not hierarchical, meaning a vertical ordering in which lower level elements are subsumed into higher level elements, as in the great chain of being. Rather, networks are heterarchical, meaning that units overlap, intersect, coexist, and communicate. As an essentially com-

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[1] Jan A. G. M. van Dijk, *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 22.

[2] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 15.

[3] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 21.

municative structure, Mattelart argues, the network society inherits the linked world of international communication that emerged with late nineteenth-century nationalist-imperialist projects of sovereign control, including railways, telegraph cables, phone lines, and, in the last two decades, digital pathways of Euro-American provenance but global reach.[4] For Mattelart, these infrastructures for informational flow are an epiphenomenon of territorial sovereignty and Enlightenment universalism, grounded in the twin fantasms of an ideal human nature and a unified, standardizing language, of which binary code might be the apotheosis. At the same time, however, communication technologies can and do "free[...] the flow[s]."[5] This turn of phrase echoes Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a networked assemblage in which flows of energy, signification and meaning are regularly captured and released. Networks themselves capture a dynamic process and invite a layered analysis. As a working model for world literature, they offer a pathway to some longstanding questions and quibbles in the field.

In a network certain things disappear: centers and the discourse of origin and copy associated with them; teleologies and the narratives of progress embedded in them; the all-knowing, centered and central subject before whose gaze the entirety of the world is laid out, ready to be known. The arrogance of such a subject has figured in critiques of world literature's "scopic vision," to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's term.[6] Spivak's dismissal of the new "Moretti-style comparativist" depends on an understanding of the map as necessarily hegemonic, a version of analytic imperialism, to borrow the term that Deleuze and Guattari use in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*[7] to condemn psychoanalysis's literal triangulation of the world—Mommy, Daddy, Me, *everywhere*. To those of us engaged in mapping world literature, the network, with its horizontal rather than hierarchical, pluralizing rather than totalizing energies, offers an alternative model of potentially decolonizing force. Pace Spivak, world literature does not necessarily or constitutively flatten the globe, especially if it turns out that it is not a map to fill in but a network accessed intermittently, at shifting locales and at various nodal points across the vast swath of literary history.

World literature has often been defined as a problem of mapping, whether of perspectival orientation (as in Franco Moretti's and David Damrosch's claiming of it as a problem, not an object, and their espousal of "distant" and "elliptical" reading) or of interscalar jumping, as in Wai-Chee Dimock's model of a literary "deep time" in which that old thing, "American literature," becomes "a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-

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[4]   Armand Mattelart, *Networking the World, 1794-2000*, trans. Liz Carey-Libbrecht and James A. Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[5]   Mattelart, *Networking the World*, p. 2.

[6]   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 108, fn. 1.

[7]   Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 51–56.

ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures […] [connected by] input channels, kinship networks, routes of transit, and forms of attachment."[8] Such scalar, networked structures elaborate a sense of world literature's geographical and temporal breadth—a breadth that implodes into densities, nodal points where the far (historically old, geographically far) and the near (the now, the here) collide to unleash new patterns of literary history and new protocols of reading. These nodal densities, the stars in world literature's constelled literary history, invite us to explore their intensities, the saturated energies and affective clusterings where history makes its mark. Nodes, explains David Ciccoricco, are a structuring element of any network economy, including a literary one. Nodes mark the points where textual pathways "loop," to introduce another key term in cybernetic narrative theory. The interrelated system of nodes and loops describes "network fiction," fiction that takes postmodern information network culture as its matter *and* method in forms that include the hypertext, with its multiple embedded pathways and plotlines, and its invitation to the reader to follow along through recursion, rereading and flashback.[9] Going back becomes a way of moving forward, with consequences for how we cast the very spatiotemporal fabric of narrative textuality. Network fiction theory's emphasis on the work of repetition, return and recombination figured in the structures of nodes and loops offers a series of concepts to theorize literature beyond that of the contemporary information age.

To bring network theory to the temporally vast domain of world literature is in this sense far more than mere presentism, the application of the dominant narratives of this moment to the understanding of previous ones. Although networks are the favored figure of the now, they are furthermore as old as human history. Borrowing from *The Human Web* by historians J. R. and W. McNeil, Van Dijk describes five "worldwide webs," beginning with the earliest spread of humans in hunter-gatherer tribes and the resulting exchange of genes, technologies, and ideas, through the rise of local settlements and metropolitan city-webs around 4000 BCE, on to the ancient empires of India, China, the Mediterranean, Mexico and the Andes, the cosmopolitan webs of 15th to 19th century European colonial modernity, and finally, the global informational web of the last century. These five worldwide webs of human history have in common the flow and exchange of various materials, whether organic, genetic, energetic, technological or informational. In a similar argument, inspired by the rhizomatic model of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Manuel De Landa's *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* casts networked *flows* (whether "of lava, […] genes, [linguistic] memes, […] money, [information] […] or other 'stuff'") as the very substance of history.[10] In De Landa's thermodynamic model, the flow of energy into and out of a system means that the system is not in equi-

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8   Wai-Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 3.
9   David Ciccoricco, *Reading Network Fiction* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), p. 31.
10   Manuel De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 1997), p. 260.

librium but is rather dynamic, changing, interacting and subject to *feedback loops*, the external inputs that then change an internal operation. Language, for example, is recast in nonlinear terms as "a variable soup of linguistic (replicating and catalyzing) materials [which] was constantly intermingling with all the other material and energetic flows."[11] Linguistic materials are "combinatric," that is, composed of semantic units that interact with one another and new units, often brought into the picture through other flows of people, culture, and words in a context of migration, urbanization, vernacularization, standardization, nationalization, colonization, and so on. Language, then, is not only a world suffused with the politics of identity and the affective attachments of belonging, but a Deleuzean machinic assemblage in which identity is itself flowing, changing, and perpetually becoming.

So, in another influential argument, N. Katherine Hayles describes the emergence of "post/human" identity, in which the catalytic binary of presence/absence as the ground of being gives way to pattern/randomness, the latter "bound together in a complex dialectic that makes them not so much opposites as complements or supplements to one another. Each helps to define the other; each contributes to the flow of information through the system."[12] Enmeshment then is also a network notion and one that recasts the most basic units of identity and being. As one consequence of *informatics*—the network within which biological, technological, cultural, and social information flows—human bodies *and* the bodies of books (both "form[s] of information transmission and storage," [p. 28]) undergo a transformation at the level of materiality. As *information* comes to virtual life in a circuit of endless replicability (p. 39), and as the cyborg, a human/machine hybrid, comes ever closer to the horizon of virtual reality technologies, there emerges a new order of being that does not banish materiality so much as loop materiality into, and out of, being. In other words, not everything is presence. This is far from a claim for complete disembodiment as a consequence of network reading. As Hayles puts it:

> Because they have bodies, books and humans have something to lose if they are regarded solely as informational patterns, namely the resistant materiality that has traditionally marked the durable inscription of books no less than it has marked our experiences of living as embodied creatures (p. 29).

To keep hold of both the informational patterns and the material body, the reader and critic must herself enter a feedback loop in which literature, technology and those who produce and consume them both are understood in dynamic relation. Reading in this fashion further entails, as Hayles explains, a new concept of the technology of signification, based not on the one-to-one correspondence of signifier to signified or, as in a

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[11] De Landa, *Nonlinear History*, p. 211.

[12] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 25. In what follows I cite Hayles indicating the page number parenthetically in the text.

typewriter, keystroke to letter, but rather on a substratum in which signification is also subject to *flow*, change, shifting. Glossing Jacques Lacan's concept of "floating signifiers," in which signifieds become "an ungraspable flow floating beneath a network of signifiers, a network that itself is constituted through continual slippages and displacements," (p. 30) Hayles links informatics to what she calls "flickering signifiers". Flickering signifiers are "characterized by their tendency toward unexpected metamorphoses, attenuations, and dispersions" (p. 30). As one product of information technologies and the network imaginary catalyzed by them, Hayles's flickering signifiers suggest another way to cast the "world" in "world literature." If "world" has often seemed, or threatened, to carry standardizing universalism as its cognate, it can equally entail a perpetual encounter with localized, particularized, pluralized differences. "World," I contend, is a network nodal notion: both a way to name a totality (the network) and a point of location, a placing or emplotment within the totality. To world literature (I find more possibility in the term's work as verb than as noun) is to occupy two places simultaneously, seeing both from afar and close up, zooming in and zooming out, looping in and looping out. If, in addition to world, literature, language and identity, other central categories of world literature such as history and genre are rethought in networked and nodal ways the terrain of world literature begins to assemble itself as a distinctly *posthumanist* project.

De Landa characterizes *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* as "not […] a chronicle of 'man' and 'his' historical achievements, but a philosophical meditation on the history of matter-energy in its different forms and of the multiple coexistences and interactions of these forms."[13] Substituting "literature" for "man" and "literary form" for "matter-energy," in the rest of this essay I explore the possibility of a nonlinear history of world literature. Lest this be construed as a thoroughly disembodied project in which the rhizomatic matrix renders *everything* into structure and dismisses content, aesthetics, artfulness, affectivity and more to the peripheries of criticism, I repeat that to put the human/the literary into question is not to negate their existence but merely to construe them as something less than absolute, universal (or universalizing), and essential. A networked world literature thus does more than simply orient us away from national lines and toward global linkages (the simplest visual shorthand for the map of world literature but also only the surface of its critical method). Network thinking can reanimate even the most basic categories of literary criticism. Put differently, there is more than one way to skin world literature's map. In recognition of the charge of chilly, mechanized disembodiment often leveled at network theory and posthumanist philosophy, I propose to fleshify world literature's map, taking flesh as a tactile figure for both the materiality of inscription and the affective sensorium that pulses through the written.

This work requires not just theorizing of the network but something tantamount to entry *into* it; the critic's own inscription into the system she describes in the form of

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[13] De Landa, *Nonlinear History*, pp. 21–22.

network reading. Describing the phenomenon I call networked connection and that De Landa terms "interactions between parts," he explains that because each interaction is "more than the sum of its individual parts," a "top-down analytical approach"[14] that goes from whole to part will miss the force of the phenomenon, just as a model that tries merely to add up the individual components in a bottom-up manner will also miss its target. Top-down, bottom-up methods alone don't work in reading a network because the phenomenon itself is multiple. Extrapolated to world literature, the top-down approach could describe Spivak's biting diagnostic of world literature as a field seen from the metropolitan critic's heights, while the bottom-up method conjures Moretti's structuralist histories of the evolution and spread of literary forms. Perhaps a networked reading of world literature can bring these two together, addressing the dangers of a critical discourse that universalizes in the name of "worlding" even as it dares to generate large-scale or "systematic" models of such notions as literature, language, form, and structure. World literature thus becomes an exercise not in critical nomination (it is this, it is that, it includes this, it excludes that) but rather in critical doing, a performative that begins and ends with the work of reading.

I turn now to a miniature compass in the form of a network reading of a text network that tracks from the ancient Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* to the 1992 posthumanist cyberpunk novel *Snow Crash* by science fiction cult hero Neal Stephenson to the Australian Joan London's 2001 *Gilgamesh: A Novel*.[15] These texts *are* each other and are not, linked yet distinct, connected but non-equivalent. Add to their temporal, geo-graphical, linguistic, cultural and generic separations their distinct event horizons—the foundation of the earliest city-state in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, global capitalist hege-mony in *Snow Crash*, and the layered histories of settler colonialism, Europe's Great War and the Armenian massacre of 1915 in *Gilgamesh: A Novel*, and we have an ideal case study for the practice of network reading. *Snow Crash* most literally captures the network aesthetic in its depiction of a world thoroughly connected, whether in the "real" world where the circuits of global finance capital link Japanese robber barons turned *yakuza*, U.S. Mafia bosses and old-style Texas capitalists, or in the virtual world known as the Metaverse to which the novel's priestly caste, computer programmers and hackers, retreat in order to live a "second life." Penetrating at one point to the very heart of the Metaverse in order to recode it, the hero of the novel, a hacker named Hiro Protagonist, sees the network in its most multiplicitous state:

> This system, he realizes, really consists of several separate networks all tangled together in the same space. There's an extremely complicated tangle of fine red lines, millions of them, running back and forth between thousands of small red balls […] big blue cubes […] are connected to each other, but to nothing else, by massive blue tubes […] they are all surrounded by little red balls and other small nodes, like trees being overwhelmed with kudzu. It appears to be an older,

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14 De Landa, *Nonlinear History*, p. 17.
15 Joan London, *Gilgamesh: A Novel* (New York: Grove Press, 2001).

preexisting network of some kind, with its own internal channels, mostly primitive ones like voice phone.[16]

This visualization of the net is a staple of the genre, made most famous by William Gibson's vision in his 1984 *Neuromancer* of "the dance of biz, information interacting, data made flesh in the mazes of the black market."[17] In Gibson's and Stephenson's images, as throughout cyberpunk, the registers of the machine and the nature, the old and the new, the nodal and the linked are all interconnected and intersected in a cyborg aesthetic. In these worlds, as Hayles points out, bodies don't end at the skin but are instead extended, "jacked in" in Gibson's phrase to the matrix that connects the body, the brain, and the computer in order to produce the cyberprotagonist, a data cowboy roaming the internet, corralling code and chasing down rogues and runaways. This world breeds a particular species of anxiety in what Hayles describes as a palpable sense of the fragility of the textual corpus, surfacing in concerns about randomness overtaking pattern, rendering a world structured by code ultimately incapable of being decoded; becoming *unreadable*.[18] This, indeed, is the animating story of *Snow Crash*, in which a computer virus threatens not only the virtual world of the Metaverse but the real world too.

If Stephenson's image of the network seems a direct reflection of modern informatics, it is equally a looping repetition of something much older. *Snow Crash*'s raw material draws from a much earlier human network, namely the culture of ancient Sumeria and the epochal rise of the built city, the written text and the network imaginary. The opening lines of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, here in Benjamin Foster's translation, situate us squarely in the material domain of informatics despite their provenance some three and three-quarters millennia ago.

> He saw what was secret and revealed what was hidden,
> He brought back tidings from before the flood,
> From a distant journey came home, weary, at peace,
> Engraved all his hardships on a monument of stone,
> He built the walls of ramparted Uruk …
> Go up, pace out the walls of Uruk …
> One square mile of city, one square mile of gardens,
> One square mile of clay pits, a half square mile of Ishtar's dwelling.
> Three and a half square miles is the measure of Uruk!
> [Search out] the foundation box of copper,
> [Release] its lock of bronze,
> Raise the lid upon its hidden contents,
> Take up and read from the lapis tablet
> Of him, Gilgamesh, who underwent many hardships.[19]

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16 Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (New York: Bantam, 1992), pp. 436–437.

17 William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Ace Books, 1984), p. 16.

18 Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, p. 43.

19 Benjamin R. Foster, Douglas Frayne, and Gary M. Beckman, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation, Analogues, Criticism* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 3.

Here is the miniature plot and function of the epic, from the story of a journey and a return, to the retrospective legitimation of a ruler or dynasty, to the requisite preoccupation with culture, nature, death, and fate, to such aspects of narration as the self-conscious representation of the epic's own mode of production and the evocation of literary figuration, which emerges here against the insistent enumeration (one square mile, three and a half square miles) that marked this earliest of network economies, as the ancient city of Uruk processed grain and oxen from outlying settlements.[20] Writing mediates both the lines of the epic and its history, a tale of many journeys, beginning with the rule of King Gilgamesh at Uruk around 2700 BCE, and proceeding through several centuries of oral versions of the poem, leading to a version written around 2100 BCE for the court of kings of Ur, to legitimate their rule. 1700 BCE saw the most complete "standard" version, compiled by a Babylonian priest in Akkadian, and for the next millennium a range of middle versions spread over Mesopotamia, Syria, the Levant, and Anatolia, culminating in a "late" version, the longest, around 700 BCE. The epic was rediscovered in 1845, among 25,000 clay tablets found at the library of Ashurbanipal in the ancient city of Nineveh.

Walter Ong reminds us that the Mesopotamian invention of writing around 3500 BCE emerged from previous systems for recording economic transactions, such as the encasing of small clay tokens of goods such as oxen, in clay containers marked with indentations denoting the contents. In the clay walls of Gilgamesh's city and the clay tablets on which his epic journey is recorded, writing moves beyond the level of literal signification (say a clay token or a picture of an ox to denote an ox). There is in these ancient lines a palpable magic to writing: writing conjures things into being. So it is that the divine companion Enkidu created by the gods to tame the wild king Gilgamesh from raping and pillaging his own subjects is also made of clay. Writing's medium, clay, is live, in the sense that a wire is live: it sparks a connection, a circuit of exchange, an encounter across some gap or chasm. This is one way to think about primary oral epic's connection to the past, that realm which Ong says "is not felt as an itemized terrain, peppered with verifiable and disputed 'facts' or bits of information" but is rather "the domain of the ancestors, a resonant source for renewing awareness of present existence […]."[21] It is not just orality that speaks with the ancestral dead but writing too, perhaps even more so, as Friedrich Kittler has argued. Kittler in fact dismisses Ong for romanticizing orality over writing: "only the Jesuit priest Walter J. Ong, who must have

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[20] Cf. Chistopher Chase-Dunn, "The Changing Role of Cities in World-Systems," in: Volker Bornschier and Peter Lengyel, edd., *Waves, Formations, and Values in the World System* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), pp. 51−88.

[21] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London/New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 98.

been concerned with the spirit of the Pentecostal mystery, could celebrate a primary orality of tribal cultures as opposed to the secondary orality of our media acoustics."[22]

Kittler is well-known for his exploration, in *Discourse Networks*, of "the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data."[23] Kittler's imaginative archiving of a vast cultural realm of data storage and transmission technologies is animated by the insistence that literary criticism has something to learn from information systems theory. Some two decades later, in the 2004 American Comparative Literature Association's *Report on the State of the Discipline*, Haun Saussy demurred, defending "literariness" as what secures literature as "a kind of resistance to information's charm"[24] and criticizing world literature for its abandonment of literariness and all it entails: close reading in the original, specialized knowledge and a conviction of the spirit that literature is more than mere data. The specter of data-fication haunts world literature, inspiring the charge that world literature essentially *forgets* how to read. As Spivak puts it in *Death of a Discipline*'s dismissal of the "Moretti-style comparativist" who convert the rest of the world to mere data for an imperialist critic-subject, "literature is what escapes the system."[25] Kittler's counter-argument that literature is part and parcel of the larger flows of information lays some of the foundation stones (the new network theory of scholars such as Hayles and Ciccoricco lays others) for another structuring of what the literary is. Understood as a networked flow, world literature (and here I speak not so much of an identifiable object, the world text, so much as of a particular style of cognition) is literature that operates *within* the system and that is *readable* precisely in the terms the system produces: node, network, loop, life.

The notion of life at stake in my emerging account of world literature is enmeshed with, looped into, death. Kittler explores the network technologies of life, death, and writing in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, a book dedicated to the thesis that "the realm of the dead is as extensive as the storage and transmission capabilities of a given culture."[26] Insofar as writing "celebrates the storage monopoly of the God who invented it," Kittler argues, "all books are books of the dead, like the Egyptian ones with which literature began" (p. 7–8). In a digital age, Kittler continues, "our realm of the dead has withdrawn from the books in which it resided for so long"(p. 10) and now inheres in the

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[22] Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 6.

[23] Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800 / 1900*, trans. Michael Metteer, with Chris Cullens (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 369.

[24] Haun Saussy, "Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares: Of Memes, Hives, and Selfish Genes," in: Haun Saussy, ed., *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 3–42, p. 33.

[25] Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, p. 52.

[26] Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, p 13. In what follows I cite Kittler indicating the page number parenthetically in the text.

sphere that Jeffrey Sconce evocatively calls *Haunted Media*.[27] Kittler's history of the ghostly dimensions of modern media traces the parallel evolution of Morse code and the Victorian séance, or of the typewriter and the feminized imprint of a recording hand, made famous in Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*, a tale about the vampiric transmission not just of blood but of information too.

Stephenson's *Snow Crash* is a latter day *Dracula*, a dystopian fable about the viral patterns of information contamination. Just as Stoker's Dracula turns those whom he bites into doubles of himself, who unconsciously feed on their fellow humans, so the eponymous virus of *Snow Crash* alters its subjects into monstrous automatons, drugged by a modern day opiate, the heroin-like "snow" which can be ingested or uploaded directly into the mind from visual contact with an infected computer screen. In *Snow Crash*, the worlds of Ong and Kittler coexist as the informatics of coding, hacker culture and virtual reality betray their deep structural affinities with such "Pentecostal" phenomena as a virus, spread by computer code, that causes its human victims to speak in a tongue that will be revealed as ancient Sumerian *me* (ritualized codes for religious behavior, "the operating system of society,"[28]) all animated by a talismanic incantation or *nam-shub* that brings life into being through the word. The ghostly dimensions of cyberspace are less crucial to *Snow Crash* than say to *Neuromancer*, with its museum sensibility of old art mixed with new net circuitry, a generic mutation of Balzacian description and science fiction conjecture. But if mutation, as Hayles argues, is a central offshoot of informatics networking, then *Snow Crash*'s pastiche of cyberculture and sacred texts, impressionistically rendered Sumerian linguistics and a gonzo tale of code-making and code-cracking hacker heroes, evinces the ghostly work of *generic* recombination cutting across media, moments, and metaphors.

The novel thrives on analogies. Not only can the virtual reality world known as the Metaverse itself "be considered a single vast nam-shub, enacting itself on L. Bob Rife's fiber-optic network" (pp. 211–212), but "Christ's gospel is a new nam-shub," (p. 401) in its era. The early Christians who spoke in tongues were suffering from a "viral outbreak" of a much earlier Sumerian goddess cult, a "glossolalic cult." The virus known as Snow Crash is an uncanny return of that earlier history in the form of a computer virus and biological variant that use the uniquely powerful Sumerian language as their "deep structure" (p. 126). The virus is unleashed by L. Bob Rife, a corporate giant, military man, funder of a Bible College and originator of "a string of self-supporting religious franchises all over the world" (p. 404). Because "a monopolist's work is never done" (p. 114), Rife's aim is to produce a modern-day "glossolalic cult" whose members, Third World stateless workers known as "Refus," will mindlessly serve his quest for global hegemony. Fighting Rife are two indomitable hackers, the

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[27] Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[28] Stephenson, *Snow Crash*, p. 257. In what follows I cite from *Snow Crash* indicating the page number parenthetically in the text.

requisite heroes of cyberpunk, one called Hiro Protagonist and the other a feisty young Asian American woman nicknamed Y. T., aided by a Borgesian virtual librarian, an Asian American Vietnam veteran who lives plugged into a virtual network from his wheelchair, and an avuncular Mafia boss who controls one of the corporate fiefdoms that have supplanted nation-states in the novel. Together they manage to stop the virus' total spread by finding and disseminating a very special nam-shub created by the Sumerian "hacker god" Enki and dug up in a clay envelope by Rife's archaeologists in the Sumerian city of Eridu. Clay, in *Snow Crash* as in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, is the stuff of cities, writing, and divine incarnation: as the virtual librarian tells Hiro, "the ancient Sumerians wrote on everything. When they built a building, they would write in cuneiform on every brick" (p. 216). The persistence of Enki's nam-shub over several millennia is thanks to what the librarian describes as a "promiscuous dispersal of information, written on a medium that lasts forever" (p. 216). The infinite circulation of information links the ancient Sumerian world to future infoworlds, just as the metaphorical link between the god Enki and the hacker heroes establishes another circuit of exchange. Myths and stories are similarly looped into one another. Enki's nam-shub is both an incantation and a recognizable story concerning a universe to whose inhabitants the god Enlil gave "one tongue" but whose peace Enki destroyed when he "changed the speech in their mouths, put contention into it" (p. 217).

Enki's nam-shub was originally created as a "countervirus," disseminated by the god along the same brain circuits as the viral *me* ("little programs for humans") but designed to cut off those who contracted it from the "common deep structure" of Sumerian language and the religious and cultural orthodoxies it built (pp. 397–398). Laws, such as the Code of Hammurabi, replaced the system of *me* or codes written into the brain, but with less totalizing reach, while religion also carried on the effort to penetrate deep structures. As Hiro explains to his anti-monopolist crew in an encomium to the force of Babel/Infocalypse that happily mixes Sumerian and Biblical mythology, neurolinguistics and hacker semiotics: "Literally it means 'Gate of God.' It was the gate that allowed God to reach the human race. Babel is a gateway in our minds, a gateway that was opened by the nam-shub of Enki that broke us free from the metavi[ru]s and gave us the ability to think" (p. 398). The re-release of Enki's nam-shub or divine countervirus will "jam their [the Refus] mother-tongue neurons and prevent Rife from programing them with new *me*" (p. 407). Those Refus, from "the wretched parts of Asia," were meant to be workers, housed on a giant Raft somewhere on the Pacific Ocean. "The media image of the Raft is that it is a place of utter chaos, where thousands of different languages are spoken and there is no central authority. But it's not like that at all. It's highly organized and tightly controlled. These people are all talking to each other in tongues" (p. 404). Rife grafts radio receivers into a percentage of cult members' skulls, broadcasting his instructional *me* "directly into their brainstems" (p. 405) so that they may then transmit to the rest, with the ultimate goal of producing "a unified army with coordinated marching orders" (p. 408). Rife's project capitalizes on an old

dream, that of a common language, known in Kabbalistic terms as "the tongue of Eden, the language of Adam [which] enabled all men to understand each other" (p. 278). The "meaningless babble" (p. 178) of those infected by the Sumerian virus is thus a linguistic expression of the world before Babel, a state of linguistic utopia that the novel represents as dystopia. Insofar as binary code is also named by the novel as "the tongue of Eden" (as opposed to the "whole Babel of computer languages [that] has been created for progammers: FORTRAN, BASIC, COBOL, LISP, Pascal, C, PROLOG, FORTH," [p. 278]), the reduction of master hackers like Da5id to a hospitalized inmate murmuring the faux Sumerian "e ne em dam gal nun na a gi agi e ne em u mu un abzu ka a gi a agi" (p. 189) represents the triumph of linguistic monopoly (the singularizing universe of the Sumerian *me*) over hacker heteroglossia. Babel, understood as the erection of "walls of mutual incomprehension that compartmentalize the human race and stop the spread of viruses" (p. 400) may indeed be "the best thing that ever happened to us" (p. 279), but the diegetic story of language's re-enshrining as a force of difference is not where the novel's own mutational, recombinant, viral energies lie. Nor do they reside in the linguistic strategies used by Stephenson, which are relatively straightforward, despite a sprinkling of cyberpunk attributes like neologisms that uncannily simulate a known world of late capitalism yet push it just a bit into the future (a "Burbclave" is a gated community in this future world). *Snow Crash*'s admittedly fanciful rendering of ancient Sumerian linguistic and religious culture, a pastiche or mashup of "real" facts (Sumer, the birth of writing, goddess cults, etc.) and fictive renderings, offers another version of recombinant energy. In this formal feedback loop bits of the historical real are integrated into the established generic codes of cyberpunk in order to create a version of Sumerian civilization that is both a virtual projection and an alteration: an uncanny encounter with the structure of history, including literary history.

   These recombinant energies of *Snow Crash* return us to the work of networking the very categories of literary analysis. Literary "stuff" (to recall De Landa's terminology for everything that flows) lends itself to the network model, whether the intersecting lines that link individual national works to one another in patterns of what used to be called literary influence, or the recent world-scale models of circulation and interaction that go beyond the author-text system to reflect on various currencies of flow, including the material histories of publication, translation, adaptation and other instances of literary uptake, as well as the ghostly histories of textual resonance and interconnection that comprise what I call "text networks." *Gilgamesh* and *Snow Crash* are two units in just such a network. To grasp the pattern of their connections will require some speculation on their distinct yet yoked status as particular literary forms, specifically epic and novel.

Literary genres, holds Tzvetan Todorov, are "systems in constant transformation."[29] Taking this dynamic metaphor at its most literal, we can cast genre as a networkable unit. Genre would at first glance appear to teleologize literary history by codifying the vagaries of literary movement (the short starts, the dead-ends) into something like literary *progress*. But genres actually operate as well through nonlinear processes of interaction, selection and combination, revealing an essentially recombinant structure. In Wai-Chee Dimock's description in her opening essay to *PMLA*'s special issue "Remapping Genre," genre is *virtual*, "a runaway reproductive process: offbeat, off-center, and wildly exogenous."[30] She goes on to figure genre not as a thing but a process, something she evocatively terms "*regenreing*: […] [or] cumulative reuse, an alluvial process, sedimentary as well as migratory."[31] Genre is not a point of origin, still less a law of reproduction, but something always running from, yet routing back through, itself. In this formal feedback loop, each successive iteration or, as Jacques Derrida says, "contamination" of genre becomes part of the system. In addition to the "stackability, switchability, and scalability" that Dimock deems "the key attributes of genres when they are seen as virtual,"[32] I would add the image of genre as a nodal point of historical condensation. In genre, certain experiences—the feeling of an age, as criticism used to say, or the affective experience of an event-horizon, as our post-Derridean, post-Deleuzean, post-Badouian moment might venture, are set into particular representational codes and forms, but not set in stone (or clay). Genre embeds a past, a formal set of codes and/or the historical and social circumstances that accompanied them, effectively "sedimenting," as Fredric Jameson claims, historicity into form.[33] As both a formalization of history and a practice of memory, not to mention as an eminently networkable category understood in nodal terms, genre carries particular weight in an exploration of world literature. So the coexistence of Sumerian epic and cyberpunk novel, the worlds of clay and of code, comprise a distinctly world literature iteration of nonlinear history. Ancient Sumeria and cyberpunk dystopia are not rendered as opposite ends of a temporal spectrum or information highway but rather coexist, intersect and palimpsestically overlap in a figure resonant with network theory's distinctive understanding of time and history.

The actual *Epic of Gilgamesh* is mentioned only once in *Snow Crash*, as an example of the ways in which "Akkadian redactors went through the Sumerian myths, edited out the (to us) bizarre and incomprehensible parts, and strung them together into longer

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[29] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 15.

[30] Wai-Chee Dimock, "Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge," *PMLA* 122. 5 (2007), pp. 1377−1388, p. 1379.

[31] Dimock, *Genres as Fields of Knowledge*, p. 1380.

[32] Dimock, *Genres as Fields of Knowledge*, p. 1379.

[33] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 141.

works, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*."[34] The Akkadians, "cousins of the Hebrews," represent codification of the sort that delimits, fixes, cleans up; the equivalent of the later work of the Deutoronomists, those "Nationalists. Monarchists. Centralists […] who embodied those attitudes in scripture by rewriting and reorganizing the old tales," with the ultimate goal of making Judaism into "an organized, self-propagating entity" (p. 228) virally circulated through the Torah itself. Situated in this history, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* does not stand immured in its age-old status as "the first" of its kind but rather emerges as the momentary product of a series of practices, from "informational hygiene" to the more viral patternings of intertextual webs (p. 230). *Snow Crash* does not invite an account of intertextuality in some literal sense, measured by the extent to which one text finds itself reanimated in another's plots, personages, figures, and phrases. Rather, the novel figures the materiality of textuality, understood as the management of information, as the substratum linking everything, from epic to novel, from brain to book, from code to story. In this promiscuity of interconnection lies one model for the kind of reading world literature in the network mode might attempt.

In David Damrosch's careful excavation of the 19th century rediscovery of the *Gilgamesh* epic and imaginative reconstruction of the epic's original sense of the deathworld, a reading situated across a span of some four and a half millennia, the epic emerges as "a document of a genuinely *ancient* humanism, [a] humanism [that] extends beyond humanity to include the gods as well."[35] The epic cannot be read without its ancient context but it cannot be separated from its textual life, whether the ancient invention of writing and literature that coincided with its birth or the series of recensions, inscriptions, translations, and eventually, rewritings that constitute its textual afterlife. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* in this sense is also a recombinant text, a compilation of earlier versions that in turn seeds a series of mutations like *Snow Crash*, London's *Gilgamesh: A Novel*, an episode of the science fiction television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and others. Dimock also speaks to the notion of *Gilgamesh*'s afterlife in her discussion (based on Benjamin Foster's translation and explanation) of the linguistic "archaicisms" and old-fashioned colloquialisms in the original Akkadian as "testimonies to a receding but still active, still shadowing past."[36] In Dimock's phrasing, "the lexical map of the epic is a map not only of space, but also of time. The cumulative life of humankind is captured here as a looping bulging, swirling net, featuring both the linguistic norm and its nonstandard variant."[37]

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[34] Stephenson, *Snow Crash*, p. 252. In what follows I cite from Snow Crash indicating the page number parenthetically in the text.

[35] David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 72. For a critique, see Gregory Jusdanis, "World Literature: The Unbearable Lightness of Thinking Globally," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 12. 1 (2003), pp. 103−130.

[36] Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, p. 84.

[37] Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, p. 84.

Thomas Greene's classic reading of *Gilgamesh* offers another account of the epic's human scale, lingering on the final, tearful, frustration of the hero's quest to find the plant of immortality in the wake of his grief over the divinely-decreed death of his once wild, now civilized companion Enkidu. Gilgamesh's grief at Enkidu's death is evidence for Greene of epic's "telos of tears" and more generally, of the function of "primary epic as a genre [that] is not so much concerned with heroic achievement in itself as with the affective cost of achievement."[38] By localizing epic's tears, the pain they signify, and, eventually, the "intuition of vulnerability and loss that can make communion in sorrow conceivable" and finally the "ritual of reconciliation,"[39] Greene identifies not just a locus *in* epic but an entire narrative mechanism (what later trauma theory configures as melancholic repetition or mourning's working-through), and, not least of all, a saturated unit of comparison: "the natural tears of epic." Wedding affect, genre and the historical horizon of primary epic, situated at the already mournful moment evoked in Walter Benjamin's vision of the primordial community of storytelling lost to the world of novel reading,[40] Greene's model gives us a model for comparison. However, the individual terms of affect, genre and history are in too stable a formation, too steady a state, to capture the kind of tectonic shifts that I have earlier evoked and that return again in the *Gilgamesh* text network's constellation of primordial violence by the hands of gods and kings, states and capitalist corporations. Some of this violence is epic, some is novelistic, some occasions tears, some postcolonial melancholia, some the mannered movements of postmodern metafiction.

Stephenson's *Snow Crash* transposes ancient Sumeria into late capitalist post-modernity, positing an ancient tongue as the agent of a contemporary brainwashing virus, spread through computer code where it is uploaded directly into hacker's minds, ingested in the form of drugs, and generally analogized to religious myth itself: the story that starts everything and ends everything: *infocalypse* (apocalypse prefaced by information). This is atrocity of a kind, the end of the world, but rendered in the peculiarly bloodless style of cyberpunk in which it is not bodies we see but viral patterns of information contamination; a plague of words, memes, genes whose internal heterogeneity turns hegemonic in the hands of corporate capitalist rule. These are not at all natural affects, in Greene's sense of natural tears, but in fact their opposite. The horizon of the human is very far in this cyberpunk, cybernetic, cyborg focused text, as rhizomatic in its energies as Borges' library or Eco's labyrinth or Deleuze's maps. And yet, there is an affect to this text, and not just the deadpan, worldweary ennui or punk resistance associated with the mode. There is something of loss and longing too that

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[38] Thomas Greene, "The Natural Tears of Epic," in: Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford, edd., *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 189–202, pp. 192–193.

[39] Greene, *Tears of Epic*, p. 196.

[40] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in: *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 83–109.

emerges, not in a character's feeling or a plot line or a narrative mechanism of melancholia or mourning, but rather in the networked relation of one text to another, seeking the impossible yet actually happening connection of communication, translation and transmission, if only partially, across some gap.

In yet another node in the *Gilgamesh* text network, Joan London's *Gilgamesh: A Novel*, a group of itinerants find their way to one another and from Australia to England to Armenia and back home again, via *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. For the characters, Armenian refugees in rural Australia and white Australians trapped in a colonial Manichean world not of their making, the reading of the epic constitutes both a love story and a lesson. It serves as a conduit between inheritors and an affective blueprint not so much for how to feel in grief, as if Gilgamesh's tears could find their inheritor or parallel in another epic hero, but rather for the always displaced experience of grief, which never has (or had) its object. Turning its epic hero into a heroine, who wanders the world in search of her lost love, child in tow, absent divine aids and engulfed in a longing and disappointment so palpable in the prose that it sears, *Gilgamesh: A Novel* is far more than an instance of the novelization of epic, a fall from belief into the nihilism enjoined by modernity (recall Lukacs's definition of the novel as the epic of a world abandoned by God). I prefer to read it as an instance of the recombinant, mutational practices of both genre and affect, in which both categories play off one another's enfolding and embedding of traces and held sensations. The reading of the novel turns less on finding direct correlatives to the epic's characters, plot turns and even textual fragments (the latter directly quoted in the novel), than on understanding *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as an intermittent, spectral or flickering presence within the networked narrative of *Gilgamesh: A Novel*. This version of textual resonance exceeds the categories of one-to-one correspondence, like the flickering signifier Hayles takes as the hallmark of informatics, and urges us instead to consider the world-making work of processes of displacement, mutation and recombination. To read *this* epic in relation to *this* novel is not to search for equivalences but to access, perhaps through the very categories of genre and affect, the spaces of difference.

Finally, let me return to the original *Epic of Gilgamesh* in which the emergence of epic voices itself is already haunted by the past, looking back to the prior emergence of writing and built culture as parallel forms of cultural inscription. Measure out the walls of the city and read the clay tablet on which the hero Gilgamesh engraved his story, the opening and closing lines repeatedly enjoin, as if to circumscribe the human in these linked technologies. I have tried to suggest how this same text opens to a thinking of posthuman history too, both the nonlinear patterns of a history that traces connections and recombinations and accumulations of stuff, including literary stuff, and an inhuman history, the story of foundational violence, death and grief. Thinking about connectivity and networks brings us to inhuman histories. Consider the status of ancient Uruk as a central node in one of the earliest network systems, or the network system of its many recensions, translations and discoveries, all the way to a performance on the banks of

the Tigris during the last war on Iraq and the destruction of many cuneiform tablets in the bombing of the library of Baghdad in the second war.

Networks argue for a new mapping of world literature that is both structural in the sense of the technologies of communication (writing, genre, print, virtuality, haptic media) that make up world literary forms and practices, and in the sense of the affective experiences of these media, a world literature sensorium. As with any rhizomatic space, the model is not one of an undifferentiated, free-flowing, indeterminate affect. "Affect itself" is a term I would expect the new world literature theory to have as little time for as literature itself. Instead affect begs to be read, like genre, as a networkable category. The recombinant nature of genre and affect, those networked categories of preserved traces and spectral presences that *remain* even as they are recombined, coupled with what we might cast as a kind of networked memory subject to repetitive returns and reiterations, are concepts that help to map world literature differently. Specifically, they bring us closer not merely to explaining but indeed to sensing the tectonic shifts of displacement that create surprising closeness between historical event-horizons distant in space and/or time. The later histories of London's World War I-torn Europe and Stephenson's dystoptian-apocalyptic cyberpunk U.S. are simultaneously nodally dense and networked or dispersed, at once saturated with their "own" time yet slipping, with allegorical ease, into other times (like that of ancient Sumeria, the time of *Gilgamesh*). What's called for in response to this slippery, shifting terrain is a reading method whose very *categories* are networked or entangled, each category entailing a distinctive modality of space and time that tracks, like stars across a distant sky, a set of independent movements alongside a larger interconnectivity. If this vision conjures the universe, it also threatens the universal: the danger of crafting a point of view from which all of event horizons or indeed all literatures look the same. In thinking about how to compare my three texts, I have been conscious of the dangers of evening out my terrain and of navigating its divergences solely by the light of some critical North Star, say the concept-metaphor of the network. My hope, in the path I have charted here, is to keep finding categories for world literature comparison that are not ever-fixed points, as Shakespeare termed the stars, but spheres (and lines) in motion.

C. RAJENDRAN

The Actual and the Imagined: Perspectives and Approaches in Indian Classical Poetics

It is well known that modern literary discourses base their various classifications of the literary genre largely on fact and fiction. It also goes without saying that these two categories are often used in diametrically opposite senses. Thus M. H. Abrams defines fiction in its inclusive sense as "any narrative which is feigned or invented rather than historically or factually true."[1] In a narrower sense it denotes prose narratives including the novel and the short story, as any norm in library classification will make it clear to us, but epistemologically, we are here concerned with the broader sense. On the other hand, non-fiction is the form of any discourse or other communicative work "whose assertions and descriptions are understood to be factual," rather than imaginary.[2] It may include anything from news reports of actual events to scientific discourses following vigorous methodology. It is another matter that there is no guarantee that such presentation in non-fiction is accurate. It can give either a true or a false account of the subject in question. However, the labeling of non-fiction itself seems to warrant that the authorial voice of such accounts believe them to be truthful at the time of their composition or, at least, assume to their purported audience the narratives as historically or empirically true. We tend to assume that the distinction between fiction and non-fiction is universal; but before that, it will be tempting to ask if such a dichotomy exists in unchartered literary cultures, especially in the literary practices of pre-modern traditions, which do not come under the purview of enlightenment rationality. In fact, such an inquiry will be extremely interesting in the present post-modern climate, which offers challenges to the assumptions characterizing modernity and its world view. It is hoped that such an exercise may be helpful in understanding the basic epistemological assumptions and the cultural specificity of the notion itself.

The present paper, accordingly, is an attempt to explore how the distinction between fiction and non-fiction surfaces in the Indian literary tradition in its precepts and practices. At the outset, a clarification may be necessary for the use of the word "actual" occurring in the title. It seems to suggest the assumption of a discourse capturing reality as contrasted with products of imagination, which is extremely problematic in the contemporary post-modernist scenario. As is well known, no such claim of reality can be

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[1]   M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Madras: Macmillan, 1988), p. 59.
[2]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-fiction (retrieved June 21, 2013).

entertained of any text, as inevitably texts are caught in the web of their own textuality. Without contesting this perspective, it has to be pointed out that such provisional distinctions are made and have to be made to comprehend the multitude of literary discourses and to articulate about them. One is reminded of the rather unenviable predicament of the absolutist philosophy of Sankara, who even when asserting the provisionality of the perceived world nevertheless continues to treat it as real for all practical purposes.[3] Be it as it may, when we concede that there are degrees of feigned approximation to objective reality in the world of letters, the distinction between fact and fiction assumes some importance. Plato, in *The Republic* refers to "an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy"[4] and favored the latter for its alleged truth claims. This enthusiastic enthronement of philosophy as the pinnacle of glory in the world of knowledge resulted in his projection of the philosopher king as the ideal ruler of the world and even now persists in academic conventions like the nomenclature of the highest degree of learning as doctorate of philosophy, even in subjects like the arts and the sciences. Literary art is not supposed to make any truth claim in the manner of scientific and philosophical discourses. Kenneth K. Ruthven points out that the literary activities of imaginative writers were sanctioned under what came to be known as "'poetic license,'" "a carte blanche which disemburdens the professional tale-teller of that fidelity to the way things are (or were) which characterises the historian."[5]

Classical India had a very rich literary heritage, comprising epic, court and lyrical poetry, historical poetry, drama, prose romance, historical romance, prose-poetry hybrid narratives called *campu* literature, stray verses, scientific discourses and religious poetry. Indian tradition uses the generic term *kavya* to designate literature, whether metrical or prose. *Kavya* is distinguished from the *vedas* (scriptural literature), *itihasas* (epics consisting of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*) and *puranas* (metrical narratives of theological legends). In some reckonings, epics are also regarded as *kavya* and *Ramayana*, the smaller epic is in fact lauded as *adikavya*, the first poem. Indian poeticians use the word *kavya*, which means poetry to designate both metrical and non-metrical compositions encompassing creative literature. Metre as such has never been regarded as a hallmark of *kavya* since prose compositions are also regarded as *kavya* and metrical compositions are not uncommon in *shastra* tradition.

At the outset, it may be pointed out that poeticians have not made any serious attempt to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction. Their attempt has been to take stock of this multitudinous literary output by suggesting various norms to classify them into literary genre. There is no lack of attempts to define each category, sometimes very rigidly. Thus, there has been a consistent attempt to distinguish between *kavya* and discourses related to science or knowledge systems (*shastra*). Bhamaha, (7th century), one of the early poeticians, contrasts the spontaneity of the creative process, which is

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[3] Sheldon Pollock refers to the argument that anything can be literature and calls such claims "unhistorical essentialisations." Cf. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 6–7.

[4] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2004), Book X, p. 311.

[5] Kenneth K. Ruthven, *Critical Assumptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 165.

the mainspring of poetry, with the rather uninspiring plain nature of knowledge systems, which could be mastered even by a dull-witted person. Here, he is actually contrasting a poet with a scholar on the basis of the unexpected spontaneity of the creative process, which is the hallmark of the former, which is absent in the latter. But Bhamaha here speaks only about the mastering of scientific discourses and not about the creation of them as such. Had he imagined that composition of a *shastra* is a handiwork of a dull-witted person, he would have found it difficult to explain the stories of the genesis of various *shastras*, which are as inspiring as the stories of the origin of *kavya* literature. To cite a few, we can take the story related to the discourse on theatrical art (*natya*) and grammar (*vyakarana*). It is maintained in *Natyashastra*, the first authentic work on theatrical art, that the art was created by Lord Brahman through a meditative process in which he combined elements from all the four *Vedas* and fashioned the fifth one called *natya*. There is also a story mentioned in the *Kathasaritsagara of Somadeva* that the nearly four thousand rules on Sanskrit drama were composed by Panini, the great grammarian of India, when blessed by Lord Siva, who sounded his drum fourteen times to create the aphorisms describing the alphabet of Sanskrit.[6]

While asserting the necessity of creative literature, later poeticians like Rudrata single out the relative lack of aesthetic appeal of scientific discourses, which are, according to him, unattractive to people of refined sensibilities. Bhattanayaka, a medieval aesthetician differentiates *kavya* from other discourses on the basis of the relative importance of the constituent elements of each discourse. Thus, *shastra* has an unalterable sequence of words in it and is hence word-oriented (*sabdapradhana*). He had in mind the scriptural literature consisting of *Vedas*, which were supposed to possess mystic powers in their word structure and were therefore to be preserved exactly in the same manner as the original seers had visualized them. On the other hand, in epics and similar discourses (*akhyana*), the meaning rather than the words are more important. Bhattanayaka seems to have believed that in the vast bulk of epic/puranic narratives, the formal beauty and literary merit were largely sidelined and the content was regarded as the important element. Bhattanayaka had a peculiar notion of literature: the process is here more important than the product. Thus in poetry, both the word and meaning are subordinate to the process (*vyapara*), which culminates in the aesthetic experience, constituting the dominant element of the whole discourse.

The aesthetic quality of *kavya* is often projected by poeticians in their attempt to distinguish creative literature from scientific discourses. Kuntaka, for example, maintains that mastering knowledge systems is a tedious task. Most of the *shastras*, according to him, are characterized by an unattractive style, which is neither pleasing to the ear, nor easy to utter, nor easy to comprehend and hence they provide great pain at the time of their study.[7] On the other hand, *kavya* is characterized by an essentially delightful design (*paripativinyasa*) and in a sense, superior to other discourses.

Yet some other poeticians try to differentiate the fictive world of literature from other discourses on the basis of the faculty involved in its production. Accordingly, Bhatta

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[6] Saroja Bhate, *Panini* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002), p. 1.

[7] Rajanaka Kuntaka, *Vakroktijivita* [ca. 11th century], crit. ed. with variants, introd. and Engl. trans. K. Krishnamoorthy (Dharwad: Karnatak University, 1977), p. 15.

Tauta regards *kavya* and *shastra* as two different paths of the goddess of speech. While the former is based on the creative intuition called *pratibha*, the latter is based on intellect called *prajna*. He defines *pratibha* as the faculty which creates ever new forms (*prajna navanavonmesasalini pratibha mata*).[8] Abhinavagupta defines *pratibha* as that faculty of the mind which is capable of original creation (*apurvavastunirmanaksama prajna*).[9] Anandavardhana also differentiates between intellect and imagination, which are the respective faculties of the philosopher/scientist and the poet. He states that in the world of poetry, the poet is the sole creator and the world is transformed according to his wishes.[10] Mammata maintains that this world of poesy is not bound by the rules of the destiny and independent.[11] This reminds one of the heterocosmic ideals as propounded by aestheticians like Baumgarten, who speaks about the inner world of books which is a sort of universe by itself. However, Sanskrit poeticians differ from Western promulgators of heterocosmic ideals in that they are not prepared to go to the extent of insulating the poetic world from the real world. Even while they assert the validity and autonomy of the world of fiction, they have taken great pains to show that it is the material taken from the real life from which the art world is fashioned. Bharata asserts that the play is an imitation of the ways of the world (*lokavrttanukarana*)[12] and rules of the world are absolute guidelines for the playwright. Anandavardhana, in his *Dhvanyaloka*, points out that propriety (*aucitya*) is the most important consideration to be adhered to by the poet.[13] Propriety, in his concept is not mere inner coherence, but also the conformity with the accepted norms of the world. Credibility is an important criterion to be followed in the descriptions. Anandavardhana points out that description of supernatural feats like the crossing of the ocean in respect of ordinary human beings will be tasteless. The question of the credibility of the imagined universe is taken up by aestheticians like Abhinavagupta when discussing the aesthetic response and its obstacles. How, for example, can we "believe" in the things depicted in a play? According to Abhinavagupta, "if one considers the things presented [on stage] as lacking in verisimilitude, he cannot obviously immerse (*vinivis*) his consciousness in them, so that no rest—no rest, I say, in them—can take place."[14] In the case of ordinary objects, there is no problem in countering this "obstacle," as the spectator's heart is drawn to the

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[8] Quoted by T. N. Sreekantaiya, "Imagination in Indian Poetics," in: Raghavan and Nagendra, ed., *An Introduction to Indian Poetics* (Bombay: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 61–74, p. 60.

[9] Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyaloka, with Locana and Balapriya Commentaries*, ed. Pattabhirama Sastri (Benares: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1940)*,* p. 29.

[10] Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyaloka*, ed. with Engl. trans. K. Krishnamoorthy (Delhi: Motilal Bamarsidass, 1982), p. 498. Cf. J. L. Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, *Santarasa and Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969), p. 12.

[11] Mammata, *Kavyaprakasa*, ed. R. Harihara Sastri (Trivandrum: Superintendent Gov. Press, 1926), chap. I, v. 1.

[12] Bharata, *Natyashastra. With the Commentary Abhinavabharati by Abhinava Guptacharya*, ed. with introd. and comm. *Madhusudani* and *Balakreeda* by Madhusudan Shastri. 3 vols. (Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University, 1971–1981), vol. 1, chap. I, v. 112

[13] Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyaloka*, p. 330.

[14] Raniero Gnoli, ed., *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinvagupta* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1985), p. 63.

described objects to spur imaginative identification with it, but in the case of supernatural events, "it is necessary to choose personages whose names are famous, like Rama etc., who make us give belief to their undertakings." He further maintains that this belief is deeply rooted in ourselves on the basis of the uninterrupted fame such characters have enjoyed "since antiquity."[15]

Agreeing that the poets do take liberty with "reality," poeticians have graciously given them license to do so. The romantics of the West have seldom hidden their disdain for the real things of the world, and the dull brain chains one's imaginative faculty from soaring high in the romantic firmament. Often, a counter reality is projected as a resistance to the one-sidedness of the real world. The role of the poet's imagination to alter reality has long been recognized in Indian poetics also, as in the romantic concept. Lucian maintained that poetry, in contrast with history, enjoys unqualified freedom because "'its sole law is the poet's will.'"[16] In a similar vein, Anandavardhana declares that in the world of poesy, the poet is the paramount lord and the world is transformed according to his likes. He points out that "a good poet will freely design even insentient objects to act as sentient and sentient objects as insentient ones."[17] Creepers and rivers and mountains and trees all assume sentient nature in Sanskrit literature and act like human beings. To cite an example, all the rivers described in Kalidasa's *Meghasandesa* cease to be insentient streams of water and become beautiful women eager to enjoy amorous sports with their lover in the form of the cloud. Anandavardhana also gives freedom to poets to imaginatively make any modification to a well known plot to suit their aesthetic requirements. This perspective is reflected in Mammata, who avers that the artifact of poet is devoid of any restrictions of the natural world order. Kuntaka, who maintains that a certain obliquity of expression at different levels is the hallmark of all literature, insists that literature always contains something more than mere factual descriptions. There are two methods available to the poet: one is to follow nature and describe things exactly as they are; the other is to throw caution to the winds and create a world of one's own. The former is aesthetically unappealing. The latter will be far removed from truth. Therefore he professes a judicious blending of the two.[18]

Despite all this, the difference between fiction and non-fiction does not prominently surface in such attempts for differentiation of *kavya* and *shastra*. We cannot thus assert that *kavya* is pure fiction or *shastra* non-fiction. The reasons are not far to seek. It is very difficult to separate fact from fiction in Sanskrit literature, which revels in a discourse stretching from the supernatural realm to the real world, the boundaries of which are not demarcated. We do not know, for example, whether the characters in epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were real historical figures or products of imagination. The epics depict uninhibitedly purely fictitious events like going to heaven and crossing the ocean with the same degree of seriousness with which they depict facts of actual history. But Indian traditional reading seems to take them not as invented or imagined stories. Imagined stories are regarded as a different species altogether. In their

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[15] Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience*, p. 63.

[16] Quoted by Ruthven, *Critical Assumptions*, p. 165.

[17] Krishnamoorthy, *Dhvanyaloka*, p. 251.

[18] Cf. C. Rajendran, *Kuntaka* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academi, 2011), pp. 4–5.

case, consisting of fairy tales and fables like the *Pancatantra* and *Kathasaritsagara*, their fictionality is taken for granted. But the epic characters have lived in the collective memory of Indians as real human, semi-divine and divine beings. However, even the epics do not take us to a fantastic realm totally cut off from reality, since they have a lot of realistic elements in them. For example, the descriptions of most of the locations of the stories are geographically verifiable. Many pilgrim centers of later times are in fact the locations of events described in epics. Even archeological excavations have been conducted to verify their geographical background, sometimes with remarkable success, even though folklore related to almost every part of the vast Indian subcontinent makes locational claims with regard to events depicted in epics.

Probably this pluralistic nature of mixing fancy with facts may be the reason for the ambivalence in the attitude of poeticians towards the epics. Especially in the case of the *Mahabharata*, it has been treated as a *shastra* rather than a *kavya*. The *Mahabharata* contains a lot of material related to ethical and religious teaching and hence has the status of a moral scripture. It is even regarded as an authority in settling ethical and moral issues. Its significance as a manual of social, moral and legal conduct has been honoured till date even by legal courts, not to speak of the law givers of the contemporary society addressed by it. The *Bhagavadgita*, which constitutes a part of the *Mahabharata*, has acquired the status of even a philosophical poem, and commentators who have tried to explicate its meaning rarely approach it as a poem. It is not accidental that during India's national struggle for independence, many leaders, including Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi, found it spiritually invigorating to write commentaries on *Gita*. It is doubtful whether they entertained the possibility that the works commented on by them is a part of a fictive story stemming from imagination. Probably accommodating this multi-layer significance of the text, Anandavardhana, who discusses the deeper significance of the epic, avers that it has the image of both a poem and a scientific discourse and he does not apparently find any contradiction in this. He maintains that it can be read both as a poem and an ethical treatise. As a poem, it is designed in such a way as to suggest the meaninglessness of the mundane existence and arouse the aesthetic state of serenity (*santarasa*). While when one reads it as a treatise, it leads one to the final emancipation. Here it is important to note that the down to earth facts and supernatural and fictive elements are treated with the same degree of seriousness and no hierarchy is suggested by the critics in their comparative evaluation.

It is all the more difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction in the classical poetry of later times. We know that when Dan Brown claims that all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in *The Da Vinci Code* are accurate, the Church authorities at St. Sulpice have to put on a disclaimer since it becomes extremely difficult for an ordinary reader to reconcile to the fact that the whole stuff, despite its reassuringly definite geographical background, is just fiction. Aestheticians have pointed out that the verification of validity of the things described in the aesthetic world is ridiculous.[19] In *Meghasandesa*, the message poem of Kalidasa, which depicts the flight of imagination of the mythical hero, called Yaksa, most of the places supposed to

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[19] Cf. Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyaloka*, p. 455; cf. Mahimabhatta, *Vyaktiviveka*, ed. Rewaprasada Dwivedi (Varanasi: Chowkhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 1982), p. 78.

be covered by the cloud in its journey, undertaken to deliver the message of the hapless hero to the heroine, are real and their descriptions accurate. The *Meghasandesa* and much of the "message poetry" of early and medieval times can in fact be read as tourist guides also, as they are replete with accurate descriptions of cities, temples, mountains, pathways, rivers, pilgrim centers and flora and fauna characteristic of the locations. But at least in some poems like the *Meghasandesa*, geography gradually merges into the realm of fantasy as the narration progresses, leaving no clue to the reader as to when the fact is replaced by fiction.

Conversely, in historical poems like the *Rajatarangini* and *Musakavamsa* and historical romances like Banabhatta's *Harshacarita*, the story depicted of the genesis of the lineage of kings is supernatural, but the descriptions of contemporary events seem to be historically true. It is of course true that if we examine a historical romance like the *Harshacarita of Banabhatta*, we can see that the fictive and the factual levels of the narrative are actually separated by the poet. Thus, the purely fictitious part of the narration, which traces the origin of the author's family from the heavenly abode, is prefaced with the words: "It is heard thus" (*evamanusruyate*).[20] But the actual exploits of King Harsa, who was a contemporary of the author, are later narrated by the author himself, and not much supernatural element is included in the narration. The same perspective occurs in other historical works also, as in *Musakavamsa* and *Rajatarangini* wherein the descriptions related to the more contemporary historical figures are more realistic than those related to the distant past, which are shrouded in myths and hearsay.[21] *Musakavamsa* of poet Atula begins with the account of a pregnant queen, guarded by her family priest, escaping the wrath of Sage Jamadagnya Rama, reaching a mountain in North Kerala. She is attacked by a huge rat, which is consumed to flames, emitted from her eyes and transformed into the form of the King of the mountain. It is from the child delivered by the queen that a new royal lineage begins in the northern part of Kerala called *Musakavamsa*. In *Rajatarangini*, of Kalhana, which is one of the most trustworthy historical poems produced in India, facts are intermingled with supernatural stories like the intervention of gods in the affairs of the mundane world.

It is interesting that Mahimabhatta, the literary theoretician of the twelfth century suggests that even imaginative literature can be regarded as a *shastra*. He does not care to define a *shastra*, but it appears that he gives any discourse the status of a *shastra* if it is capable of moral instruction.[22] *Kavya* also, like *shastras*, convince people of the necessity of doing proper things and avoiding improper things. While *shastras* do the instruction directly, *kavya* generates aesthetic experience and thus attracts people to it who are averse to tedious studies and, like a sugar coated medicine, effects a moral transformation in the reader. For poetry projects the story of ideal heroes and evil characters and thus convinces the readers of the moral superiority of the former over the

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[20] *Harshacarita of Banabhatta*, ed. with an introd. and notes by Mahamahopadhyaya P. V. Kane (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997), p. 2.

[21] E. Sreedharan, *A Textbook of Historiography, 500 B.C. to A.D. 2000* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004), pp. 325–337.

[22] C. Rajendran, "Mahimabhatta's Concept of Poetry as a Sastra," in: C. Rajendran, *Sign and Structure: Indological Essays* (Kerala: University of Calicut, 2001), pp. 46–52.

latter. The erudition *kavya* provides at a purely factual level is in no way inferior to that gained through the mastery of *shastras*. Mahimabhatta's explanation becomes all the more significant in light of the prestige classical poetry enjoyed in Indian tradition. Most of the *kavya* literature shows how erudite their authors are in various disciplines like grammar, logic, medicine, philosophy, legal literature, polity and scientific discourses. In fact, Sanskrit *kavya* literature is the source of accurate knowledge concerning the disciplines, which they have to deal with, and any lapse on the part of the poet in erudition was censured severely. In works like the *Pancatantra*, there is even the explicit claim that the stories told by Visnusarman, the Brahmin preceptor are meant to teach the young stupid princes of the city of Pataliputra lessons in polity and worldly wisdom.

It is, therefore, not surprising that ancient Indian poeticians gave utmost importance to erudition in the making of a poet. The Mahabharata makes an oft quoted encyclo-pedic claim that whatever is related to the ultimate aims of life, available elsewhere viz ethics (*dharma*), power (*artha*), sensuous pleasure (*kama*) and spiritual release (*moksa*) are contained in the work, and that whatever is not found in the text is not found else-where. According to *Natyashastra*, as interpreted by Abhinavagupta, there is no philo-sophical knowledge (*jnana*), no craft (*silpa*), no branch of knowledge (*vidya*), no art (*kala*), no combination (*yoga*) and no activity (*karma*), which is not present in the theatrical art.[23] The same idea recurs even in Bhamaha, who values poetry over and above knowledge systems.[24] Vamana lists a number of disciplines in which a poet is supposed to be a scholar which include grammar, lexicon, metrical science, fine arts, erotics and the administration of force (*dandaniti*). It may be recalled that a similar con-cept recurs in Western literary tradition also, which makes erudition the "'hall mark of excellence.'" According to Gabriel Harvey, poets should be, apart from being exquisite artists, "'curious, universal scholars too.'"[25] Dryden says: "A man should be learned in several sciences, and should have a reasonable, philosophical, and in some measures a mathematical head, to be a complete and excellent poet."[26] Coleridge, listing the prerequisites of an epic poet, maintains that he should be "a tolerable Mathematician, [and] thoroughly know Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Optics and Astronomy, Botany, Met-allurgy, Fossilism, Chemistry, Geology, Anatomy, Medicine […]—then *the minds of men*—in all Travels, Voyages and Histories."[27]

Conversely, it is significant that the same blurring of distinction between facts and fiction occurs in the *shastra* discourses also. While some down to earth treatises like the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya retain a very rational perspective, the same cannot be said of many other treatises. Works like the *Natyashastra* or *Kavyamimamsa*, works respec-

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[23] Bharata, *Natyashastra*, vol. 1, chap. I., v. 116.

[24] Bhamaha, *Kavyalankara*, ed. and trans. P. V. Naganatha Sastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), chap. V, v. 4.

[25] Quoted by Ruthven, *Critical Assumptions*, p. 35.

[26] John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden: Now First Collected in Eighteen Volumes*, illust. with notes, hist., crit., and expl., and a life of the author by Walter Scott. 18 vols. (London: Miller, 1808), vol. 15, p. 411.

[27] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 320–321.

tively on dramaturgy and poetics, can be cited as examples. *Natyashastra*, as a scientific treatise gives cogent instructions in everything related to the performance of drama. But it begins with a mythical account of the origin of the theatrical art (*natya*) which it traces to Lord Brahma. *Kavyamimamsa*, similarly is a mine of valuable information for any aspiring poet and its historical value also is great. But it also has a mythical account to narrate with regard to the origin of poetry, as symbolized by the *Kavyapurusa*, the poetic being.[28] Such instances can be multiplied, citing works in other discourses as well, which also freely mix facts with fiction. But this does not belittle the empirical value or the scientific background of the prescriptions in the texts, which seem to have been put to practice in the actual world.[29]

When we analyze the phenomenon deeper, we can see that Indian tradition makes a distinction between myths accepted by the collective psyche of the society and the fictive elements invented by an individual poet. While the former is accepted as factual and treated at par with the historical facts, the latter has existence only in an imaginative realm. This would become clear to us when we go through some prescriptions contained in Sanskrit texts on dramaturgy. Thus, dramaturgists like Bharata and Dhananjaya speak of the plot of some plays like *nataka* and *prakarana* and refer to two categories, viz, the well-known (*prakhyata*) and the invented (*utpadya*). It goes without saying that the invented plot is imaginary and *prakaranas* like *Mrcchakatika*, which have an invented plot, do not make any claim of factuality. But the converse is not true. There is no guarantee that the well-known plot refers to something which has actually taken place, since most of these plots are derived from epics and other mythological narratives. Generally, poeticians seem to have preferred themes which are taken from epics to those which are purely invented by the poet. Anandavardhana reminds poets that extra care should be taken by them in the case of invented plots when compared to a plot which has actually taken place. For it is quite easy for him to stumble due to carelessness and his lack of knowledge will be easily exposed.[30] Though he avers that the plot derived from a well known source could be modified by the poet to remove inappropriate incidents and episodes, which could be deterrents to the aesthetic appeal, generally he cautions poets not to alter the plot in a manner detrimental to their original dominant aesthetic appeal.[31]

The distinction between fact and fiction is more discernible in the differentiation of two types of narrative prose seen in Amarasimha's *Namalinganusasana*, an early dictionary and Bhamaha's *Kavyalankara*, one of the earlier texts in Sanskrit poetics. Here, a distinction is made between the prose romance *katha* and the historical narrative *akhyayika*. The characteristic feature of the latter is that it is an account of what has

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[28] Rajasekhara, *Kavyamimamsa*, ed. Gangasagar Rai (Varanasi: Chowkhambha Vidyabhawan, 1982), chap. 3, pp. 12–22; cf. Sushil Kumar De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1976), pp. 1–2.

[29] Even this mythical account of the genesis of poetry is not wanting in "geocultural design." Cf. Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, p. 203.

[30] Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyaloka*, p. 334.

[31] Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyaloka*, p. 335.

actually happened (*vrtta*)[32] as contrasted with the former, which is described as a work based on imagination.[33] Banabhatta's *Harshacarita*, based on historical events, is regarded as an example of *akhyayika*, while his own *Kadambari*, a purely fictitious story is regarded as *katha*. This would mean that Sanskrit poetics considered the distinction between fiction and non-fiction an important criterion within the realm of literary genre even when neglecting the same criterion in the distinction between creative literature and scientific discourses. However, we see that even this distinction is disregarded by some later poeticians like Dandin, claiming that such rigid demarcations are often blurred in actual practice. This seems to be an unfortunate literary amnesia ignoring some profoundly sensible perspectives of the vibrant past.

There have been attempts to separate imagination from actually perceived fact in Indian literary practices wherein the narrator retains the non-committal stance without losing him/herself into the pure world of fantasy, as in a dream scene or a scene involving abnormal states of mind. Thus, in Kalidasa's *Abhijnasakuntala*, the picture of Sakuntala drawn by the king Dusyanta seems to come into life in his experience, but the jester, his companion, stubbornly calls it a delusion and wakes him up from that illusion. Similarly, in *Meghasandesa*, when the hero, the Yaksa persuades himself to believe that the cloud in front of him is a living being, the narrator assures the reader that it is his peculiar mental state which is responsible for the delusion. We can conclude from all this that on the whole, Indian literary theory and practice had its own notion of fact and fiction which it held consistently. The world of fact does not necessarily mean the rational world which can be empirically verifiable. It also includes what the collective mind has perceived as real, including belief systems and myths. Thus, works like *Natyashastra* can claim that everything contained in it is authentic, since it is based on facts actual and imagined, held to be true by the community. The fictive world, on the other hand, is not the private world created by the individual poet, which does not have any truth claim nor is it interested in making such a claim.

When all is said and done, we have to remember that the imaginative realm of the literary world did not suffer in Indian tradition in its being compared to the "real" objective world. The "real" world itself is regarded by some idealistic philosophers professing allegiance to some schools of Vedanta and Buddhism as a phenomenon having no ultimate significance. However, they accept the practical efficacy of the perceived world. According to Sankuka, the enacted situation in a staged play is fictitious, since it is an imitation. The causes and effects of the emotion portrayed by the actor are unreal. They are assumed by the actor as existing in him, but are totally non-existent in him. But "they are not so apprehended by the spectator, who takes the actor for the real person and the imitated emotions for real ones."[34] The imitated objective signs, like a side-long glance from which an emotion like love is inferred, are unreal and hence different from ordinary signs like "smoke" from which one infers the existence of "fire,"

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[32] Bhamaha *Kavyalankara*, chap. I, v. 26. Cf. Anthony Kennedy Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), p. 182.

[33] Cf. Anthony Kennedy Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature*, 8 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), vol. 1, p. 182.

[34] V. K. Chari, *Sanskrit Criticism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), p. 209.

which are real. However, though they are unreal, they have practical efficacy in producing an emotion, which is real. The fear, which we experience when mistaking a rope for a snake, is real enough; similarly, the emotion, which the spectator infers from feigned causes, is also real. Sankuka, and following him, Mahimabhatta, quote the following verse from the Buddhist logician Dharmakirti to affirm that it is the practical efficacy, which counts, and not the inherent reality of things. The verse is as follows:

> Between two people approaching two lights, the one produced by a jewel, the other by a lamp [without being conscious of what they really are] with the idea that it is a jewel, there exists a difference in respect of causal efficiency but not a difference of mistaken cognition.[35]

The point is that the cognition of the jewel's rays as jewel is, strictly speaking, unreal; however, it ultimately helps the seeker of the jewel to attain the object sought by him, as contrasted with the person searching the jewel on the basis of his illusion of it caused by the light of the lamp. The same is true as far as the world of poesy is concerned. The characters depicted and their emotions may all be figments of imagination with no practical correspondence. But the aesthetic experience generated by the false premises is true and valid.[36] If the proof of pudding is its eating, the fictive world of literature amply proves its validity with the results it generates.

[35] Dharmakirti, *Pramanavarttika*, with a com. of Manorathanandin, ed. Rahula Sankrtyayana (Patna: Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1938–1940), vols. 24–26, chap. II, v. 57. The translation is that of Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience*, p. 31.

[36] C. Rajendran, "Is Rasa an Illusion? A Study in Mahimabhatta's Aesthetics," *Adyar Library Bulletin* 68 (2004–2006), pp. 226–238.

Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit

On Bookstores, Suicides, and the Global Marketplace: East Asia in the Context of World Literature

In recent years, we have witnessed a steadily growing flow of publications and lively discussions about world literature. Does East Asia count at all in the context of world literature? Do the Chinese poets of the Tang period like Li Bai (701–762) and Du Fu (712–770) figure as world literature, and on the basis of which criteria? Or is it Murakami Haruki, the contemporary Japanese author, who comes to mind first? And what about Korean literature, where translation activity into Western languages has grown exponentially in the past decade? Let me share some reflections from the perspective of a Japanologist, a specialist in modern and contemporary Japanese literature and intellectual and cultural history. Even though I take my examples mainly from Japan, I hope to show that this story is not just about this one country and culture but about the complex web of interrelations, and of transcultural entanglements, which we have to consider whenever discussing modern topics.

The notion of world literature is a widely disputed one, but this is not what I want to address here. So let us base our understanding of World Literature, developed by David Damrosch and others, on the presumption that a work is alive in a number of cultures and languages other than its origin, that it is read, discussed and perhaps adapted, and that it inspires other works in the target cultures.[1]

Needless to say, world literature in this sense does not refer only to modern works but comprises texts from practically all ages. There can be no doubt, however, that the increased mobility of writers and readers in the past century or so has helped to promote the notion. But for most historical periods, World Literature referred mainly to the big names of the European canon. This, as we also know, has to do with a number of factors, most prominently perhaps world history and its power relations. What I would like to do here, though, is, first to look at the process through which this notion took root in East Asia, taking Japan as a case in point. Interestingly enough, this story is intimately linked with the master narrative of modern Japanese intellectual and cultural history, and this allows us to identify in passing some telling aspects of our topic. I will then

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[1] Cf. David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 4.

move on to discuss intra-Asian literary contacts and their relevance for the concept of world literature. I will also point out some questions that remain to be discussed.

The master narrative of modern Japanese intellectual and cultural history, as we have known it for several generations now, is one of a highly developed civilization that had been closed to the world for more than two centuries, only to be "opened up" after increased pressure from the Western Imperial powers, including Russia, in the mid-nineteenth century. What followed was a concerted attempt on the Japanese side to "catch up and overtake" (*oitsuke, oikose*) the advanced powers in all areas deemed essential to the welfare of the nation. Japan's all-encompassing and rapid modernization since the late 19th century, its rise as a regional and world player that successfully fought against China and was the first non-European country to win a war against a European power, namely Russia, in 1905, is well known. Its colonialist strategies, culminating in the annexation of Korea in 1910, which opened into an extended warfare on the Asian continent as well as in the Pacific until 1945, is equally present in our minds. All the while, the relations with the Western world were characterized by changing degrees of attraction and repulsion in a continuing negotiation of Japan's national and cultural identity. So much, so well known.

Now let us take a closer look at the literary and intellectual history of modern Japan through a number of key scenes, which will link this master narrative with our topic. Just as Japan's modernization in general is to be understood as a complex process of negotiating Western knowledge, so is literary life in modern Japan rooted in more than one tradition, as Japanese literary authors and intellectuals had assimilated Western knowledge and acquainted themselves with Western literatures in considerable range and depth. Since the 1870s, political and historical works as well as literature from English, French, German, Russian, Italian and Scandinavian languages were published in translation in newspapers, journals, and in book form. The 1880s were also epitomized as the age of "translation literature" (*hon'yaku bungaku*), with Japanese versions of plays by Shakespeare, Schiller or Molière and Ibsen, poems by Goethe and Heine, Boccaccio and Dante, Thackeray, Byron, Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth, novellas by Poe, Twain, Hugo, Maupassant, Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Andersen, novels by Dickens, Stevenson, Bronte, Verne, Zola, Flaubert, Turgenev and Tolstoy, to mention only some of the authors translated in the second decade of the Meiji period, from the late 1880s through the end of the 19th century. More than merely a few authors also read Western literature in the original or in English or other translations. In this context, the Maruzen bookstore in central Tokyo, founded in 1869, only one year after the Meiji Restoration, with the aim of introducing Western knowledge and technical expertise through imported books arguably formed the most important window to the world for generations of intellectuals and writers. It is here where we witness the first of the key scenes in 20th century literature that I want to present.

One of Japan's typical modern urban intellectuals was Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, born in 1892, a brilliant and highly reflective author and a gifted aphorist, who is among the

few Japanese writers of his time to have been translated into Western languages during his lifetime. In his works, he taps Japanese folktales as well as the Bible, and he is thoroughly familiar with the literature of East Asia as well as of the occidental sphere. In one of his last works, the third person narration titled *A Fool's Life* published posthumously in 1927, he looks back on the happier and the darker stages in his life in the form of 51 brief episodes or reflections. The very first of these scenes is set in what everyone soon identifies as the Maruzen bookstore. The 20-year-old protagonist is perched on a "Western style" ladder, skimming the titles of Western literature high on the shelves—Maupassant, Baudelaire, Strindberg, Ibsen, Shaw, Tolstoy...

> The sun threatened to set before long, but he went on reading book spines with undiminished intensity. Lined up before him was not so much an array of books, but the *fin-de-siècle* itself. Nietzsche, Verlaine, the Goncourt brothers, Dostoevsky, Hauptmann, Flaubert....

As night presses in, the dimming light is about to end his search.

> At that very moment, directly overhead, a single bare light bulb came on. Standing on his perch on top of the ladder, he looked down at the clerks and customers moving among the books. They were strangely small—and shabby.
> *Life is not worth a single line of Baudelaire.*
> He stood on the ladder, watching them below....[2]

Here we have the key scene, not only to understand this particular author, but a whole generation. The year 1912, about which Akutagawa reminisces in this scene, marks the end of the Meiji and the beginning of the Taishō period (1912–1925), a time of growing social and ideological contradictions. At this moment, the young man's self-assurance is still determined by his feeling of being chosen for his contact with works of European literature and art. So completely absorbed is he in sucking up the *fin-de-siècle* and in transposing himself into the world of art that the anticlimax—the realization of the others, the "clerks and customers" as the representatives of the everyday world, on whom he looks down from the top of the ladder—prompts in him the somber acknowledgement of the primacy of art over life: "*Life is not worth a single line of Baudelaire.*" More than anything, it was this sentence which left its imprint in the minds of his contemporaries.[3]

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[2]   Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, *Aru ahō no isshō* ["A Fool's Life"] in: *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke shū* ["Akutagawa collection"], *Nihon bungaku zenshū* ["Collected Works of Japanese Literature"] (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1966), vol. 28, pp. 342–357, here p. 342. I quote from: Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, *The Life of a Stupid Man*, in: *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*, select. and trans. with notes by Jay Rubin. With an introduction by Haruki Murakami (London: Penguin classics, 2006), p. 187. This scene is also quoted in Seiji Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 52, and in James Dorsey: *Critical Aesthetics: Kobayashi Hideo, Modernity, and Wartime Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 41, who both give interpretations of this famous scene.

[3]   On this episode and on Akutagawa's somewhat ambivalent relationship with the foreign authors cf. also Carole Cavanaugh, *Portrait of the Writer as a Young Reader: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke in*

Only one month after writing these reminiscences at age 36, Akutagawa committed suicide, an incident of highly symbolic nature to many contemporaries who interpreted it as the failure of intellectual liberalism and modernist cosmopolitanism. Akutagawa himself was fully aware of the historical meaning of the episode in his work, which captures one glorious moment in his life as a writer, as he titled it "The Age" (*Jidai*), placing it at the very beginning of the work. The bookstore Maruzen is an important site in the representation of the cultural space of modern Japan and its relation to the West. The description is reminiscent of another writer's account of Maruzen's second floor from ten years earlier, as we read in Tayama Katai's memoirs *Thirty Years in Tokyo* (1917): "'The surging currents of nineteenth-century European thought, filtered through the second floor of Maruzen, were washing up on the shores of this solitary, Far Eastern island.'"[4]

What interests us here is the way in which Western literature finds its way into the country in very concrete terms, as a commodity in an increasingly commodifying cultural market. Akutagawa and his generation may still have taken refuge in the aura of art as a world of the imagination and of transcendence. They invoked the names of canonized Western authors to distinguish themselves and to form their identities as modern artists, and they strove to assimilate literary movements and styles such as naturalism, symbolism, or modernism, practically paralleling their development in the West.

In the mid-1920s, however, Japan and Tokyo in particular experience a rapid change towards the commodification of literature with the establishment of a mass market. These years see the foundation of many new journals for a general readership in which literature occupies a substantial section, providing a new generation of authors with the possibility of earning their living by commissioned texts. New book series are launched, modeled, among others, after the German Reclam edition.[5] The so-called "enpon boom"[6] of books as cheap as one yen per volume likewise facilitates access to literature for a mass readership, and it is in this context of a growing and widening consumer cul-

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Maruzen Bookstore, in: Dennis C. Washburn and Alan Tansman, edd., *Studies in Modern Japanese Literature. Essays and Translations in Honor of Edwin McClellan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1997), pp. 151−172.

[4] Katai Tayama, *Literary Life in Tōkyō: 1885−1915. Tayama Katai's Memoirs 'Thirty Years in Tōkyō'* (Leiden: Brill, 1987). I cite from Lippit, *Topographies*, p. 244, endnote 33.

[5] Cf. Regine Mathias-Pauer, "'Reading for Culture' and the Dawn of Mass Produced Literature in Germany and Japan: Case Studies of Reclams Universal-Bibliothek and Iwanami Bunko," *Senri Ethnological Studies* 28 (1990), pp. 111−126.

[6] The respective series, published beginning in 1926 with Kaizōsha publishers, Tokyo, was titled *Complete Works of Contemporary Japanese Literature* [*Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū*] and featured 63 volumes. Other publishers followed with similar series. On the specific developments in the publishing industry, the (relative) centrality of the Tokyo publishing world and the material as well as the symbolic impact of the *enpon*, cf.: Edward Thomas Mack, *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

ture that we also witness the start of series dedicated to World Literature, which in this context means Japanese translations of canonized works from European languages. Chinese classics, which were in a way regarded as part of the domestic cultural heritage, or other non-Western works are not included in these World Literature series.

Maruzen, the bookstore, is the site of a sobering experience in yet another major work by Akutagawa from the same late period, the autobiographical story "Cogwheels" (*Haguruma*). But this time, the space of the bookstore, where the protagonist at least privileges the intellectual over the material realm, has been transformed into a site of anxiety and panic:

> I found Strindberg's *Legends* on a shelf on the second floor of Maruzen and glanced at two or three pages. What was written there was no different from my own experience. Even more, it had a yellow cover. I returned *Legends* to the shelf and dragged down a heavy book at random. But in this book, there was an insert depicting a row of cogwheels that had eyes and noses, no different from human beings. (It was a collection of drawings done by madmen, assembled by a German.)[7] I felt a rebellious feeling stir in my melancholy, and like a crazed, desperate gambler, I opened one book after another. Yet for some reason, each book had hidden in it one or more needles, either in its text or illustrations. Every book?—Even when I picked up *Madame Bovary*, which I had read again and again, I felt that I myself was none other than the petit bourgeois Monsieur Bovary.[8]

We cannot dwell here on the fascinating aspect of how the cultural space represented by the bookstore is here occupied by the eruption of madness into the carefully constructed world of rationality. This mechanism was brilliantly analyzed by Seiji Lippit in his book *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, from which I quoted the translation of the Akutagawa text. But it is interesting to note in passing that this mechanism is based on a class identification (as petty bourgeois). Moreover, to borrow Lippit's words here: "If Akutagawa had earlier discovered himself as a reflection of the (Western) other, this process has now been reversed—every Western text in the bookstore has now been transformed into a reflection of himself."[9]

It looks as if our investigation into the relevance of the Maruzen bookstore for modern Japanese literature has led us far away from our initial question concerning the

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[7] The book is probably: *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken*, cf. Hans Prinzhorn, *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken. Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Psychopathologie der Gestaltung* (Berlin: Springer, 1983), a collection of some 4,500 paintings and drawings by psychiatric patients published in 1922 by psychiatrist and art historian Hans Prinzhorn (1886–1933). Artists like Paul Klee, Alfred Kubin, Max Ernst and the surrealist movement were inspired by the works published in the book. Akutagawa might have felt a particular attraction to the works, as they clearly reveal the close connection between genius and madness, creativity and psychosis, depression and euphoria, which he thought he had discovered within himself.

[8] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, *Haguruma*, in: *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke shū* ["Akutagawa collection"], *Nihon bungaku zenshū* ["Collected Works of Japanese Literature"] (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1966), vol. 28, p. 317. I quote from Lippit's translation: Lippit, *Topographies*, pp. 55–56.

[9] Lippit, *Topographies*, p. 56.

meaning of world literature in an East Asian context. But before I try to reconnect these threads, let me first quote one more example.

Kobayashi Hideo, born in 1902, who later became Japan's most influential literary critic of the 20th century, began his career by writing stories like "The Octopus's Suicide" (*Tako no jisatsu*), an autobiographical text from 1922. It recounts how Kobayashi's alter ego enters the bookstore full of burning desire for knowledge.

> He had been confused as to where to begin this quest. He had entered Maruzen, a five-yen bill clutched in his hand, but had lost all sense of which books to buy. He had grown furious at the other customers, thinking 'How can they possibly buy their books so nonchalantly?' On the verge of tears, he had fled the bookstore.[10]

Kobayashi's longing for inspiration through imported literature and to distinguish himself from the unthinking crowds cannot be satisfied through a visit to Maruzen. The aura of art has been lost in the age of mechanical reproduction.

It is this Kobayashi who supplies us with another key work for understanding 20th century Japanese intellectual life and literature and its possible relation to the notion of world literature. His seminal essay of 1933 titled "Literature of the Lost Home" (*Kokyō o ushinatta bungaku*) deals in his characteristically oscillating style with the spiritual homelessness of a modern Japanese person, whose return to the clearly organized native tradition of the premodern with its continental roots is rendered impossible. Nostalgia, but clearly also pride in being a modern contemporary are evident when he writes:

> Obviously, our modern literature [...] would never have emerged without the influence of the West. But what is crucial is that we have grown so accustomed to this Western influence that we can no longer distinguish what is under the force of this influence from what is not.

And he goes on to write:

> We have finally become able, without prejudice or distortion, to understand what is at the core of Western writing. [...] At this juncture, it is indeed pointless to call out for the "Japanese spirit" or the "Eastern spirit". Look wherever we might, such things will not be found.[11]

Kobayashi creates in his essay a vision of a home that has never been known, but he combines the idea of a generation of the lost home with the realization that Japanese literature and thought are now rooted in a world cultural context and can no longer retreat to "Japaneseness." Kobayashi's pointed dictum of a "lost home," with the positive twist of relating to a widened, quasi-global cultural frame of reference, is

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[10] Cf. Kobayashi Hideo, "Tako no jisatsu," in: *Shinchō* 80. 5 (April 1983), pp. 344–356. I owe this hint to James Dorsey, *Critical Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), p. 42. I quote from Dorsey's translation, ibid.

[11] Kobayashi Hideo, "Kokyō o ushinatta bungaku," in: *Kobayashi Hideo zenshū* ["Collected Works"], 10 vols. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1968), vol. 3, p. 37. The translation quoted is by Paul Anderer in: Kobayashi Hideo, *Literature of the Lost Home: Kobayashi Hideo—Literary Criticism 1924–1939*, ed. and trans. Paul Anderer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 53–54.

shared by most of his contemporaries. Seen in this way, Japan had been attempting a dialogue with the Western cultural world since the late 19th century, which had most of the time gone practically unnoticed by the Western world.[12] Japan's successes and her expansionism in a political, economic, and military sense overshadow the fact that culturally speaking, Japan had been treated more or less as a minor, largely irrelevant player due to its role as a receiver of literary artifacts from the West, and in this sense it shared the fate of the other East Asian nations. True, there are some exceptions in this overall picture of 20th century cultural trafficking, when we think of the impact of translations of Japanese nō theater and poetry on European poets and writers such as Ezra Pound and Bertolt Brecht; and the 11th century Japanese courtly epic of *The Tale of the Shining Prince* (*Genji monogatari*) has impressed generations of Western writers from Virginia Woolf to contemporary German authors. All in all, however, East Asian literature was not, even in East Asia itself, regarded as world literature, although Japanese authors had, as we have seen, appropriated the Western canon as part of their own cultural heritage through several generations.

By the 1930s, however, the notion of world literature was firmly established in the Japanese intellectual discourse, and it would be worthwhile to deal in detail with essays such as the one titled "World Culture and Japanese Culture" (*Sekai bunka to Nihon bunka*), published in 1934 by the famous translator of German philosophical works, Abe Jirō (1883−1959). Or take the brilliant Marxist critic Tosaka Jun (1900−1945), who underscored his universalist outlook in his essay "Nipponistic Ideologies," also published in 1934, by remarking that "world literature" comes into being through the authenticity of a singular work, transcending its own cultural context.[13] The 1930s were a time of increased tension between the internationalism and universalism of the socialist and the Marxist movements and a growing nationalism and nativism, which went hand in hand with Japan's militarization and isolationist tendencies during these years.

It is time now to step back for a moment and consider once more the picture drawn so far in relation to our topic. It seems that within the framework of the Japanese master narrative of the 20th century as a story of concerted modernization in positive and in negative terms—technological progress, democratization and education, but also expansionism and militarization—that this master narrative takes the Western world as the sole point of reference. But what about Asia, and in particular East Asia, in this

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[12] I elaborate on this topic in: Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, "A Farewell to Exoticism—Japan and the Western World," *Forensic Science International* 69. 3 (Shannon: Elsevier Scientific Publishers Ireland, 1994), pp. 177−186.

[13] Tosaka Jun, *Nippon ideorogī*, in: *Tosaka Jun zenshū* ["Collected Works"] (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1967), vol. 2, p. 298. The German translation by Fabian Schäfer goes: "So wie echte Literatur immer auch 'Weltliteratur' sein muss, so sind auch Philosophien und Theorien, die bloß einem Volk oder einer Nation zugänglich sein sollen, gemeinhin nicht authentisch." In: "Nipponistische Ideologien (1934)," in: *Tosaka Jun. Ideologie, Medien, Alltag. Eine Auswahl ideologiekritischer, kultur- und medientheoretischer und geschichtsphilosophischer Schriften*, ed. and trans. Fabian Schäfer (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2011), p. 97.

context? I have taken Japan's modern history as a backdrop to the story of how the notion of world literature took root in an East Asian country. And although it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the complexities of modern history in East Asia, I would tentatively present the thesis that Japan shares fundamental similarities in the experience of dealing with the West in cultural terms with its East Asian neighbors, its particular role as a colonial power notwithstanding. There may be a certain time lag in respect to these experiences, and we might also have to take into account Japan's role as a linguistic and cultural mediator between the West and its neighbors in the early 20th century, but when it comes to the idea of World Literature, the point of reference has, I assume, singularly been the Western canon.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I have to stress here that I do not adhere to the conventional myth of confounding modernization with Westernization. Recent historical research has begun to paint quite a different picture and has stressed the indigenous factors of modernization preceding Western impact. This also applies to literature, where it has become clear that Japan's negotiations with the West cannot be adequately grasped in a binary scheme. Relations with the Asian continent, in particular with China, remained an important frame of reference throughout, so much so that we could write an alternative history of modern Japanese narrations, one which was fed by the practice of translation, adaptation and secret assimilation of patterns from Chinese popular literature of the late 18th and early 19th century. Some researchers contend that these processes may have been much more distinctive for the development of Japanese literature than the encounter with the European novel in the 19th century.[14]

This is, of course, another story altogether, but what is important here is the fact that there are and have been important cultural and literary points of contact, which seem to play no part when it comes to the discussion of world literature. On the other hand, the 20th century is an age of increased regional exchange also within East Asia, even though it appears overshadowed by Japan's colonialism. Recent research has therefore focused on these aspects of the Japanese empire and revealed a vibrant intra-East Asian cultural and literary life between 1895 and 1945, despite the fact that it was conditioned by unequal power-relations. There has indeed been, as these studies have shown, a lively exchange between readers and writers in China, occupied Manchuria, Korea, and Taiwan, and this intertextuality, be it "passive" or "dynamic," continues into the 21st century.[15] I suspect that these rich and complex literary relationships during the past

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[14] Cf. Jonathan E. Zwicker's study on the "literature of tears": Jonathan E. Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination: Melodrama, the Novel, and the Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), but also the works of Japanese scholars such as Kamei Hideo with his focus on the analysis of narrative structures rooted in traditional forms.

[15] See, above all, Karen Laura Thornber's work, in particular her seminal study: Karen Laura Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

century will take time to feed into a new conceptualization of world literature, leaving behind at last the "The West and the Rest" paradigm.

As a matter of fact, however, we would have to go one step further and ask whether there are meaningful contacts not just within the East Asian region but also within wider Asia, or, to put it more generally, among different cultural regions in the non-Western world. This is a question that I myself cannot answer, but my assumption is that this is a relatively recent phenomenon fuelled by accelerated globalization and new communication media such as the internet. Speaking for modern Japanese literature, not much translation activity from non-European languages took place. The "Arabian Nights" entered Japan via translations from Western languages, and they figured as a rare example of original texts in non-European languages to have been accepted into the early Japanese World Literature collections. There is also the case of Dazai Osamu (1909−1938), an immensely popular writer, and his autobiographical novel *Ningen shikkaku*, translated as *No Longer Human*, published posthumously after his suicide in 1948, where reference is found not only to Dostoevsky and other Western writers but to Omar Khayyám (1048−1131), the Persian scholar, philosopher, and poet, and to a selection of his poems under the title *The Rubáiyát*. Dazai quotes from a Japanese translation, which is based on Edward FitzGerald's famous English versions.[16] So again it was a translation into a European language that functioned as a bridge to another non-Western literature in this relatively rare case of intertextualization within Asia.

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to speak of Asia in the plural here, for the cultural regions of East Asia, South Asia, or the Arab and Persian cultures all seem to form their own distinct cultural universe. So what about the literary contact between the diverse Asias today? Are they still dependent on translations into European languages, and what could stimulate more direct contact between them? It looks like the Nobel Prize for Literature, again a European institution, plays a certain role for the visibility and prestige of a writer and the national literature which he or she represents. We can take Japanese writer Kawabata Yasunari (1899−1972), who received the Nobel Prize in 1968 as the first writer of a non-European language, as a telling example. There is no doubt that interest not only in Kawabata but also in Japanese literature increased considerably after this, as can be seen by translation activity from the 1970s onwards. In East Asia, Kawabata was studied and translated intensely, and there are writers like Chinese avant-garde novelist Yu Hua (b. 1960) who confesses that, "I chose what I read of twentieth-century literature on the grounds of whether it had won the Nobel Prize or not. The first Kawabata I read was from the Zhejiang selection of Nobel Prize-winning works."[17] In other words, Kawabata is a case in point for the "Politics of Cultural

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[16] I owe this information to Jürgen Stalph, Dazai's translator into German, cf. "Das Drama des begabten Kindes," in: Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, *Ausgekochtes Wunderland: Japanische Literatur lesen* ["Hardboiled Wonderland: Reading Japanese Literature"] (München: text + kritik, 2008), pp. 100–107, p. 105.

[17] Quoted after Thornber, *Empire*, p. 380.

Capital" (Julia Lovell) and the Economy of Prestige. After he won the Nobel Prize, he was the most frequently translated Japanese writer in South Korea in the 1960s, with 15 translations of his novel *Yukiguni* (*Snow Country*, 1935–1947) alone, eight of them from 1968.[18] The popularity of this work is particularly noteworthy given the fact that it was popular among Japanese colonizers and soldiers throughout East Asia, primarily for its nostalgic evocations of the Japanese homeland. We also know that Kawabata was an ardent supporter of World War II. On the other hand, this was one of the works for which he won the Nobel Prize, and the novel evokes a timeless, idealized landscape. All of this might have made the work attractive for South Korean translators and readers nevertheless.[19]

But Kawabata is also read and intertextualized in the Arab world. There is a novel titled *Dear Mr Kawabata* by the Lebanese author Rashid al-Daif (b. 1945), originally published in Beirut in 1995. The English translation was published in London in 1999, and the book, which was translated altogether into eight languages, is so far the most successful work from this author. *Dear Mr Kawabata* is written in the form of a letter to the dead Japanese author, a stream of consciousness by a dying Lebanese man who is looking back on his life. There are recollections, both bitter and sweet, about Beirut and Lebanon as they were and as they could have been. And there are reflections on the daily language and the ideology attached to it. But why should Rashid al-Daif's protagonist choose the Japanese writer as his confessor? This question has engaged many commentators. One view is that it had to be a person from a far-away country, from a non-Western culture, as Europeans are too deeply entangled with the tensions in the Near and Middle East and the war in Lebanon. The protagonist is an intellectual who reflects on these fatal entanglements, and Kawabata, the famous writer from remote Japan counter-balances these troubles with his authority. The mystery of Kawabata's suicide is another fascination for the protagonist, who is struggling with his own suicidal impulses. Yet another reading of the novel claims that the protagonist's motivation for choosing Kawabata as his listener are his doubts concerning the ability of language to adequately convey his experiences. Words must be unhinged from their cultural context, their seemingly "natural" environment, to probe their meaning. Perhaps it is this aspect of Kawabata as sensitive to the cultural meaning of language that makes him a competent listener to the narrator in Rashid al Daif's novel.

If we take this Arabic novel as an example for references between different Asian literatures, does it represent a new development of growing awareness of what is going on in the literatures in other parts of Asia and a growing degree of intra-Asian adaptations, translations, and intertextualizations? I suspect that conventional hierarchies are still lingering. It looks like within Asia, Japan is relatively hegemonic, and the Nobel Prize for two of its authors—the other one being Ōe Kenzaburō (b. 1935) in 1994—could

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[18] Cf. Thornber, *Empire*, p. 380.
[19] In these reflections, I follow: Thornber, *Empire*, p. 380.

be an important reason for this.[20] But there is also the success of Murakami Haruki (b. 1949), the international star author who is popular in Europe as well as all over Asia, and in his wake, other young Japanese authors like Ekuni Kaori (b. 1964) are gaining a wide readership in countries like South Korea, China, and Taiwan. So far, however, East Asian and other Asian literatures are not translated to a comparable degree into Japanese. This also applies to our example of Rashid al Daif's novel, the Arabic dialogue with Kawabata. Although there was an article about the novel in Japanese, it was not translated. We can still sense a certain power imbalance and speculate about its background.

But returning to our topic of world literature, do we assume that Murakami Haruki, who is translated into so many languages and sold so many copies, is an author of world literature? To quote from a German review of his most recent work, the novel *1Q84*: "Murakami writes 'world literature', by having his novels published as million sellers all over. He thus strengthens Japan's image and the economy. This makes him a global player, but not a second Dostoyevsky."[21]

Now, how do we read this statement? Is it fed by a certain European arrogance? Or does this claim remind us of other possible criteria, as they were pointed out earlier in this paper? But who decides which writer and which works are canonized? And on what grounds?

This sketch of the locus of the literatures of Asia in the framework of world literature would, however, be hopelessly lopsided without a deeper historical dimension. As mentioned earlier, world literature is not a phenomenon of the modern and contemporary periods. And when we look back in history, we realize that world literature must have existed beginning in ancient times. If we include in literature the ancient myths, we can see that they did indeed travel across whole continents, as Claude Lévi-Strauss has shown with his research on myths, as when he traces Herodot's Kroisos or the legend of King Midas in the South China Sea as well as in Mongolia, Tibet and in Korea.[22] In this context, we do not see the hierarchies and unbalances, which we have observed since

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[20] This contribution was written before the announcement of the 2012 Nobel Prize, which was awarded to Mo Yan (b. 1955), the first Chinese writer to win the prize after exile writer Gao Xingjiang (b. 1940), who received it in 2000. It remains to be seen in which way these facts will affect the prestige of Chinese literature in the future.

[21] Lisette Gebhardt: "Cooles Japan, XXL. Der Erfolgsautor Haruki Murakami setzt mit seinem monumentalen Roman *1Q84* neue Massstäbe," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Nov. 11, 2010), http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/feuilleton/literatur/cooles-japan-xxl-1.8340598 (retrieved Nov. 20, 2010): "Murakami schreibt 'Weltliteratur', indem seine Romane in Millionenauflagen überall veröffentlicht werden. Er stärkt damit das japanische Ansehen und die Wirtschaft. Dies macht ihn zu einem Global Player, nicht aber zu einem zweiten Dostojewski." My translation.

[22] Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Die andere Seite des Mondes. Schriften über Japan* [*L'autre face de la lune. Écrits sur le Japon*, 2011], trans. Eva Moldenhauer (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012). See also a number of contributions in: Dominique Jullien, ed., *Foundational Texts of World Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), e.g. on the myth of Arachne or ancient Mesoamerican foundational texts, in: Jullien, *Foundational Texts*, pp. 165–176, pp. 47–68.

the late 19th century, but throughout the centuries, the flows have gone in one direction or the other. Lévi-Strauss gives a fascinating picture of the travels of these legends and myths, which all have their origins in Asia and which have travelled to the West and to the East. Buddhism as an important transmitter of legends was enriched by elements from Hellenistic culture, and Hellenism has absorbed, as we know, Asian elements as well. In this broader context, the idea of world literature can be framed differently again, and here, Asian cultures figure much more prominently than in the picture we have drawn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Of course, other prominent and more recent examples offer themselves from the field of genuine literary studies, like David Damrosch's investigation of *The Buried Book: The Loss and Rediscovery of the Great Epic of Gilgamesh* which presents the tale as a unifying story over time and continents,[23] or the recent collection of contributions *Foundational Texts of World Literature* from 2011, edited by Dominique Jullien, which also features literary bridges between East and West, ancient and modern, from the Alexander Romance and the Arachne myth to Ovid and Dante. It seems obvious that, depending on the period under consideration and the dimension of the chronological cross-section, the role of Asian literatures within what we now describe as transcultural flows and regard as world literature is rich and varied. And it seems that we have only now begun to study its implications.

But what about the 21st century, with the new media of communication and new possibilities for writers to reach a global audience? Do they have to write in a global fashion? What is the meaning of "local," "regional," and "global" in this context, anyhow? A new generation of authors seems to reflect on these issues. Korean author Kim Young Ha (b. 1968) made the following remark in an interview with a German-language newspaper in 2009. He commented on the fact that European readers of his works felt they were somehow missing an Asian or ethnic Korean touch in his works. But, he said, this might have been a natural consequence of the fact that his novels are situated in a historical moment when Western consumer culture boomed in his country. To the extent, then, that present-day Korea is part of a globalized world, the local color expected by international readers seems to fade, at least on the surface. Asked about globalization of Korean literature, which, according to his explanation, retains certain characteristics such as a pronounced preference for short narrations and the lack of light genres such as pulp fiction, however, he stated that this may happen eventually, but it cannot and should not be a goal.[24] Again, there is a whole set of new questions to address as writers, readers, publishers, and institutions accommodate themselves within

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[23] David Damrosch, *The Buried Book: The Loss and Rediscovery of the Great Epic of Gilgamesh* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2007).

[24] Cf. Ho Nam Seelmann, "Literatur als Wunschmaschine." ["Literature as a wishing machine"], interview with Kim Young Ha by Ho Nam Seelmann, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (May 30, 2009), http://www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/kultur/literatur_und_kunst/literatur-als-wunschmaschine-1.2646689 (retrieved Dec. 30, 2009).

the rapidly changing technological, cultural, and political framework of contemporary globalized consumerism.

Preliminary and meandering as these reflections on the concept of world literature from the perspective of Asian literatures may have been, with their seemingly random highlights on the development of the book market in 1920s Japan, the prominence of suicidal writers and their grasp of the European canon, as it was accommodated into a Japanese and East Asian literary heritage, and inter-Asian literary contact, these reflections hopefully have served to indicate the potential for new insight from this yet understudied area in a historical and in a contemporary context. After all, we can expect that Asian literatures will play an even more active part in the global market from now on. And it seems that as for the notion of world literature, we have only just begun to discover its many implications.

Mitsuyoshi Numano

Shifting Borders in Contemporary Japanese Literature: Toward a Third Vision[1]

Haruki Murakami and Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Two Most Popular Writers of Japan Today

The question I most often get abroad is, "Of contemporary Japanese writers of *junbungaku* (serious literature), whom would you consider worth translating into foreign languages?" My answer always varies. Trends in Japan change fast enough to make your head spin. As an undergraduate at the University of Tokyo in the 1970s, I used to answer without hesitation, "Definitely a tie between Kobo Abe and Kenzaburo Oe." Admittedly, this answer reflected my own tastes and was not 100% objective, but it had its solid grounds.

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[1] Parts of this paper and some of its ideas are based on papers which I previously presented and published on various occasions. Closely related as they are with each other, they have been revised, intertwined, and incorporated into this substantially new paper after the *Concept Laboratory* in Berlin. I would like to thank all those people who gave me opportunities to present them and helped me shape my ideas.

"Граница японской литературы и ее сдвиги в мировом контексте," *Иностранная литература* (Moscow, Innostranaya literatura) (2002), pp. 242–248.

"Toward a New Age of World Literature: The Boundary of Contemporary Japanese Literature and Its Shifts in the Global Context," first delivered as a key note speech *Redefining the Concept of World Literature* at the International Seminar of the University of Indonesia on July 19, 2006, and later published in *Renyxa* 1 (2010), pp. 188–203.

"Sekai no naka no nihon bungaku. Ekkyo, soretomo kyokai no hen-yo?" [Japanese Literature in the World: Border-crossing, or a Change of Borders?], in: Mitsuyoshi Numano, *W-bungaku no seik e* [Toward the Age of W-Litrature] (Tokyo: Goryu shoin, 2001), pp.13–40.

"Haruki vs. Karamazov: The Influence of the Great Russian Literature on Contemporary Japanese Writers," trans. Ryan Shaldjian Morrison. First delivered as a *Todai-Yale Initiative Lecture* at Yale University, on Dec. 8, 2009, and later published in *Renyxa* 3 (2012), pp.188–206.

"Japanese Literature in the Post-3/11 Era: Is the 'Future's Door' About to Open?," *Japanese Book News* 71 (2012), pp. 2–3. Parts of the last section in the present paper "Instead of an Afterword: Japanese Literature in the Post-3/11 Era" was taken from there with kind permission of the Japan Foundation. A note should be added that it was, in turn, based on "Postscript" to my book: *Sekai wa bungaku de dekiteiru* [The World is Made of Literature] (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2012), pp. 360–374.

How would I answer the same question today? I would probably have to reply half-jokingly: Haruki Murakami and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Haruki Murakami requires no introduction. Book 1 and Book 2 of his latest novel *1Q84*, published in May of 2012, quickly became an enormous bestseller, selling over 2 million copies—and setting a new record in terms of speed. And according to a recent newspaper article, his novel *Norwegian Wood*[2] still continues to sell in huge numbers—over10 million copies have already been sold.

It might seem strange, then, that I paired Murakami with Dostoevsky. For a person who is familiar with modern Japanese literary history, it would not be difficult to guess where I am going with this: Dostoevsky's impact (largely through translation) on modern Japan has been tremendous, and he deserves to be studied alongside Japanese writers. Yet even so, what does it mean that Dostoevsky is now as popular a writer as the international bestselling author Haruki Murakami? My paper will attempt to answer this question, as well as the broader one—namely, whether there is still a clear-cut border that separates domestic writers from foreign writers, or "original" works from translations.

In 2007 a new highly-acclaimed Japanese translation of Dostoevsky's great novel *The Brothers Karamazov*[3] was published in five separate volumes, and also became a bestseller with sales topping one million. Of course, it was not the first translation of this Dostoevsky novel. The Japanese are perhaps the world's most voracious readers of Dostoevsky, and there have already been over ten multi-volume "complete" collections of his works (*zenshu*[4]) issued to date. *The Brothers Karamazov* alone has been translated eleven times since the Meiji period. Given this historical familiarity with the book, why did it all of the sudden become a bestseller? One reason is perhaps that Kameyama's new translation is written in a fresh contemporary idiom that is relatively easy to read. It was included in a series called "New Translations of the Classics" (published by Kobunsha), whose purpose was to retranslate the modern Western classics into new and readable Japanese. The project was a huge hit, and authors ranging from Shakespeare to Tolstoy and Kafka have acquired a whole new Japanese readership.

The literary and historical significance of this "New Translations of the Classics" series—particularly its importance from the perspective of translation studies—will surely be much discussed in coming years. I should also mention that a parallel phe-

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2   Haruki Murakami, *Noruwei no Mori* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1987). For the English translation see: Haruki Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989).

3   Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Karamazofu no kyodai*, trans. Ikuo Kameyama, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2006–2007). For the English translation see: Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larisa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002).

4   *Zenshu* literally means "complete works" of a writer. In the Japanese practice publishers tend to use this term for any multi-volume collection of works even if it is not "complete." Therefore in 20th century Japan there have been a lot of *zenshus* of world literature ("sekai bungaku zenshu").

nomenon has occurred in the English-speaking world, namely, Richard Pevear and Larisa Volokhonsky's series of new translations of the Russian classics, including their 1990 publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Like the "New Translations of the Classics" project in Japan, this project also emphasizes its differences from earlier translations and has been warmly welcomed by English readers. It is beyond my abilities to give a detailed analysis of the qualitative differences between the various English translations, but I will say a word about Pevear and Volokhonsky's methodology, which appears to be the exact opposite of that employed by the Japanese translator Kameyama. What Pevear and Volokhonsky seem to be trying to do is to move the English closer to the original Russian. Their reasoning is that a reader-friendly version of the text already exists (Constance Garnett's famous translation), so why redo it? In the English-speaking world, the trend in translation seems to have moved in the direction of faithfulness to the original.[5] Rather than preferring reader-friendly translations, readers are demanding translations that are more faithful to the original. This change is reflected in the three translations of *The Tale of Genji*, which was first translated by Arthur Waley, then Edward Seidensticker, and finally Royall Tyler.[6] In Japan, however, it seems that the opposite is true: recent translations aim for reader-friendliness. Yet this is not necessarily because the previous Japanese translations have grown old with time; rather, readers demand that translations are written in a fresh, contemporary idiom. To borrow the terminology of the translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, the transition in translation methods can be characterized in the English-speaking world as a move from domestication to foreignization, while Japan has seen a move from foreignization to domestication.[7]

To return to the subject of the new Japanese translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, the recent unprecedented popularity of the book cannot be attributed solely to the fact that it is easy to read. In fact, many of the previous translations—including those by Masao Yonekawa, Taku Egawa, and Takuya Hara—are also fairly easy to read. Instead, the book's recent popularity is due to Dostoevsky's own strengths as a writer, and to those qualities in his works that make him relevant to contemporary Japan.

It is well known that the creation and development of modern Japanese literature is much indebted to the influence of the Russian writers, from Dostoevsky and Gogol to Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Chekhov. Comparative literature specialists have written much about how Shimei Futabatei, one of the founders of the modern Japanese novel, discovered a modern prose style through translating Turgenev's *The Hunter's Diary*, and

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[5] For a discussion of the history of English translations of Russian literature, including Garnett and Pevear and Volokhonsky, cf. David Remnick, "The Translation Wars," *The New Yorker* (Nov. 7, 2005).

[6] For a discussion of the differences between these translations, see: David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 296–297.

[7] For a discussion of the terms *domestication* and *foreignization*, see, for example: Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995).

about how the Shirakaba group, an influential literary coterie in the late Meiji and early Taisho eras, held up Tolstoy as their mentor.

The problem of how Russian literature influenced Japanese writers from the Meiji period on is of course a complex one, and cannot be sufficiently dealt with here; but it is clearly evident that Russian literature has been tremendously popular and has continued to play a significant role in Japan through the years. Although Russian as a foreign language has not been as popular as English, German, or French, Japan has been at least as equally aware of Russian literature as it has been of French, German, or English literature. Despite minimal direct contact with neighboring Russia and its people (particularly since the 1917 Russian Revolution), and despite the perceived fear of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, Japan has maintained an intimate connection with the literature of Russia. There is a short story by Ryunosuke Akutagawa from 1920 called "Yamashigi" ("A Woolcock")[8] in which Tolstoy and Turgenev appear as its main characters, and the story is so convincing that it could have been written by a Russian who had firsthand information about these writers. It goes without saying that the influence of Russian literature was so great that the Japanese of Akutagawa's day felt much closer to past Russian writers and their creations than to any real contemporary Russians, who remained a mostly distant and unknown presence.

In postwar Japan, the Russian classics suffered a decline in popularity. That said, the number of writers influenced by and well-versed in Russian literature was by no means small, and this group came to form one of the major schools of contemporary literature. The majority of its members were associated with the literary magazine *Modern Literature* (*Kindai bungaku*), which was started shortly after the war by Yutaka Haniya, Shugo Honda, Masahito Ara, Ken Hirano, and Ki'ichi Sasaki. Although unable to read Russian, these critics and writers possessed an astonishing degree of knowledge about Russian literature, and the critical works by Sasaki (on Chekhov), Haniya (on Dostoevsky), and Honda (on Tolstoy) have become modern critical classics in their own right.

In contemporary Japanese literature there are writers such as Otohiko Kaga, Kenzaburo Oe, Haruki Murakami, Masahiko Shimada, who are well versed in Russian literature and influenced by it in a significant way. The combination of Murakami with Russian literature might seem unexpected as he is generally considered an Americanophile among contemporary Japanese writers, but Russian literature has been of tremendous importance to Murakami. We can trace it in his various works.

It is true that Murakami is a great admirer of American literature, and its influences surely show. He is fluent in English, so fluent, in fact, that his Japanese sentences often look as if they were literal translations from English. He is also an accomplished translator of various American writers, including Raymond Carver, F. Scott Fitzgerald, J. D. Salinger, Raymond Chandler, and Truman Capote. For a writer of Murakami's

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[8]   Ryunsuke Akutagawa, "Yamashigi," in: *Akutagawa Ryunosuke zenshu, Chikuma buno* [The Complete Works of Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Chikuma pocket books] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, Chikuma bunko, 1987), vol. 4, pp. 132–149.

world stature to spend so much time and effort on translations is indeed a rare phenomenon. When his debut novella *Hear the Wind Sing* first appeared (1979), many critics pointed out the various influences from Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and Richard Brautigan.

Thus, one might find it surprising that Russian literature has been of tremendous importance to Murakami. On several occasions (such as interviews and talks), Murakami pointed out that long before he had ever heard of American literature he was reading the 19th century Russian classics, and that he even read *The Brothers Karamazov* several times.

In a 1985 dialogue with Kenji Nakagami, for instance, he had this to say:

> My first experience with the novel was mainly with Russian novels. There was a time when I read nothing but Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and the likes. That was the beginning of my affair with the novel. I didn't start reading American novels until I became able to read English.[9]

It is therefore not surprising that some of Murakami's novels relate, either directly or indirectly, to the Russian classics, and have an important symbolic relation to them. Many readers will remember that, for instance, "The Rat" (*Nezumi*), one of the important characters in his debut novella *Hear the Wind Sing*[10], was writing a novel about a funny musical group inspired by *The Brothers Karamazov* (I wonder what they sounded like). And in his next novel *Pinball, 1973*, the topic of Dostoevsky again comes up in a conversation between the protagonist and two twin girls—a conversation which determines the atmosphere of the whole work.

> "So hardly anybody's friends with anybody?" puzzled 209.
> "I guess not," said I. "Almost no one's friends with anyone else."
> Dostoyevsky had prophesied it; I lived it out.
> That was my lifestyle in the 1970s.[11]

The persistent referencing of literary figures, including Dostoevsky, perhaps reflects Murakami's emulation of the books he was reading while writing. In Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse Five*, for instance, one of the characters also refers to the Russian writer's novel:

> Rosewater said an interesting thing to Billy one time about a book that wasn't science fiction. He said that everything there was to know about life was in "The Brothers Karamazov," by Feodor Dostoevsky, "But that isn't *enough* anymore," said Rosewater.[12]

However, the references to Dostoevsky and the whole canon of Russian literature appear mainly in Murakami's longer novels, two of which are particularly relevant.

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[9] *Kokubungaku* [Japanese Literature] (Tokyo: Gakutosha), March 1985, p.18. My translation.

[10] Haruki Murakami, *Kaze no uta o kike* (Tokyo: Kondansha, 1979). For the English translation, see: Haruki Murakami, *Hear the Wind Sing*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1987).

[11] Haruki Murakami, *Sen kyuhyaku nanaju san nen no pinboru* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1980), p. 44. For the English translation, see: Haruki Murakami, *Pinball, 1973*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (Tokyo/New York: Kodansha International, 1985), p. 17.

[12] Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Slaughterhouse Five or the Children's Crusade* (Delacorte Press, 1969), p. 87.

The first is *A Wild Sheep Chase*. In this novel, "The Rat" explains in a letter his love for 19th century Russian literature.

> Probably we'd have been better off born in nineteenth-century Russia. […] Me, if I'd been born in the nineteenth century, I'm sure I could have written better novels. Maybe not your Dostoyevsky, but a known second-rate novelist.[13]

The second example is from *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. Toward the end of the novel, the narrator, just as he is about to leave this world, asks the librarian if she has ever read *The Brothers Karamazov*. She replies that she has, many years ago, and only once. He tells her she ought to read it once more, as there is much to be learned from it. He then parts with the librarian and, resting in a park, closes his eyes and recalls the names of the Karamazov brothers—Mitya, Ivan, Alyosha, and the bastard Smerdyakov—wondering how many people there are in the world who can recall those four names.[14]

Obviously, these references are not chosen arbitrarily, nor are they mere accessories; rather, the referencing of Russian literature is a persistent and deliberate motif that is repeated throughout Murakami's works.

For Murakami, Russia is not the Russia of today, or even of the Soviet era; rather, it is the 19th century country that produced the great writers Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Turgenev. Notably, there are very few (if any) contemporary Russian characters in his works.

His recent *1Q84* marks another turning point in terms of his relation to Russia. In this novel, a motif involving not Dostoevsky but Chekhov is brought to the fore, and Chekhov's famous axiom—"once a gun appears in a story, it has to be fired[15]"—serves a special function with regard to the development of the plot.

Also deserving of our attention are the book's numerous references to *A Journey to Sakhalin*, Chekhov's collection of observations taken during his trip to the Sakhalin

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[13] Haruki Murakami, *Hitsuji o meguru boken* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1982), p. 109. For the English translation see: Haruki Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (London: The Harvill Press, 2000), p. 76.

[14] Haruki Murakami, *Sekai no owari to hado-boirudo wandarando* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1985), p. 603. For the English edition see: Haruki Murakami, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (London: The Harvill Press, 2001), p. 389–390.

[15] Haruki Murakami, *1Q84*, Book 2 (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2009), p. 33. For the English translation see: *1Q84*, Books One and Two, trans. Jay Rubin (London: Harvill Secker, 2011), p. 346. This quote is important for the further development of the novel's plot as it suggests what will happen to the heroine in the future (in a rather misleading way). Famous as it is, the proverbial Chekhov's gun has no single definite version since Chekhov made statements to this effect not once and these statements slightly differ from each other. For a discussion of Chekhov's gun and its importance for *1Q8*4, see: Mitsuyoshi Numano, "Oweru, Chekofu, Yanachkku: 'Ichi kyu machi yon' o yori fukaku tanoshimu tameno chushakushu" [Orwell, Chekhov, Janáček: a Commentary for getting more pleasure from reading *1Q84*], in: Kawade shobo shinsha henshubu [the editorial staff of Kawade shobo sincha], ed., *Murakami Haruki "Ichi kyu hachi yon" o do yomuka* [How to Read *1Q84* by Haruki Murakami] (Tokyo: Kawade shobo shinsha, 2009), pp. 39–46.

Island. In 1890, at the age of 30 (roughly the same age as Tengo, the protagonist of *1Q84*), Chekhov was struck by the inexplicable idea of setting out for the island of Sakhalin. Risking disease (it was practically a suicidal expedition, as he was already ill), Chekhov proceeded to investigate the conditions of the prisoners living on the island, recording his findings and impressions in a book. As Tengo says, it was a work that "did little more than bewilder most readers, who found that it more closely resembled a dry investigative report or gazetteer than a work of literature."[16] Why did Murakami Haruki specifically single out this work for use in his novel, putting aside more famous works by Chekhov?

In *1Q84*, Tengo considers why Chekhov felt so compelled to travel to Sakhalin Island—a question that has been a riddle for scholars for over a century. Tengo tries to explain that Chekhov himself might not have understood exactly why he went, but he "was both a novelist and a doctor, [and] as a scientist, he wanted to examine something like a diseased part of the vast Russian nation." By going to the island and writing about it, Chekhov was able to set aside his usual literary pursuits and escape from the literary world of Moscow "he was fed up with" and from the "malicious critics of the day" who he was disgusted by.[17] This argument makes us wonder whether Murakami was super-imposing himself onto Chekhov, as we can presume that is exactly what the Japanese author also tried to do through his investigations into the 1995 Sarin Gas Attack on the Tokyo Subway. After the Sarin Gas Attack, Murakami wrote two works of nonfiction, *Underground*[18] and *In the Promised Place*[19] based on his interviews with victims of the act of terrorism and with followers of Aum Shinrikyō, the cult responsible for the attack. The project was Murakami's own attempt at a kind of social commitment, and the incident was his own version of Chekhov's Sakhalin Island. Perhaps it is for this reason that Murakami sees a bit of himself in Chekhov.

Translation and Border Crossing

Dostoevsky and Murakami are two names that represent the situation of Japanese literature in the context of world literature. Crossing the border into Japanese literature, Dostoevsky comes to Japan and becomes an integral part of it, while Murakami goes

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[16] Haruki Murakami, *1Q84*, Book 1, p. 461. For the English translation, see: Murakami, *1Q84*, Books One and Two, p. 276.

[17] Haruki Murakami, *1Q84*, Book 1, p. 462. For the English translation, see: Murakami, *1Q84*, Books One and Two, p. 276.

[18] Haruki Murakami, *Andaguraundo* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1997). For the English translation, see: Haruki Murakami, *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum and Philip Gabriel (London: Harvill, 2000). This English translation combines the 1997 *Andaguraundo* and the 1998 *Yakusoku sareta basho de* into a single book.

[19] Haruki Murakami, *Yakusoku sareta basho de. Andaguraundo 2* (Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 1998). The English translation is included in the above-mentioned *Underground* (2000).

out to become a part of world literature in the English-speaking world. It is clear that in both cases translation plays a crucial role: in Russian-to-Japanese and Japanese-to-English translations. It should be noted here that Murakami is very conscious of the English-speaking world as his potential market and even seems to prefer translation of his works from English, rather than from the original Japanese. In this aspect he can be compared to Milan Kundera, who wants to have his works translated from French, rather than from Czech.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between Kundera and Murakami in their attitudes toward translation. While Kundera, before he began to write directly in French with the novel *La lenteur* [Slowness] (1995), tried to create French translations as "authentic" as the Czech originals by collaborating with his translators, Murakami, on the other hand, welcomes the circulation of English versions of his works that are tailored to the needs of the English-language book market and that, as a result, sometimes differ from the original in a significant way. *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*[20], published originally in three volumes, for instance, was abridged radically to be published in one volume in English. To put it more simply, by engaging in the process of translation, Kundera believes in the authenticity of the original; for Murakami, there can be no single original version, and it is acceptable to him that English translations differ from the original as long as they serve the purpose of acquiring wider circulation in the world.

Even in our age of globalization, however, there are writers whose works cannot cross cultural and linguistic borders so easily. I myself once remarked in an article devoted to problems of translations:

> A work of literature is something like a flower that blossoms only once on the soil of a certain language. To translate it means nothing but transplanting it onto the soil of a foreign language and making it blossom once more. Therefore it is an attempt that is, by definition, impossible.[21]

Translators must know very well, from their own experience, that among first-class exquisite works of literature there are many that defy translation. Several years ago, when involved in compiling an anthology of contemporary Japanese poetry in Russian translation, I was obliged to persuade one of the most prominent Japanese *haiku* poets to give permission for his works to be included, though this attempt was in vain: he refused the proposal, saying something to this effect: A haiku can be called a haiku

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[20] Haruki Murakami, *Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1994–1995). For the English translation, see: Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, trans. Jay Rubin (New York: Knopf, 1997).

[21] Mitsuyoshi Numano, "Hon'yaku o meguru nanatsu no hijitsuyotekina dansho" ["Seven Unpractical Fragments on Translation"], in: Mitsuyoshi Numano, *W-bungaku no seiki e: Kyokai o koeru nihongo bungaku* [*Toward the Age of W-literature. Japanese-Language Literature that crosses its Borders*] (Tokyo: Goryu shoin, 2001), p. 154. My translation.

when it is written in Japanese. It is impossible to translate it as it cannot exist in a language other than Japanese.[22]

It goes without saying that translation of the classical genres of Japanese poetry, *haiku* and *tanka*, involves specific difficulties since these genres are bound by strict formal rules. In the field of Japanese prose, however, there still remains a huge untrodden *terra incognita.* To give just one example, Yutaka Haniya, whom I believe is one of the most interesting and important writers of post-war Japan, is practically unknown among Western Japanologists, and his tour de force, *Shirei* (Death Spirits, 1946–1995)[23], which towers in the history of modern Japanese prose as an unprecedented "metaphysical" novel, seems to have no chance of being translated because it is too difficult.

More generally, it can be said that historical novels that are based on particular historical settings rarely go beyond their own national border no matter how popular they are in their domestic market. Ryotaro Siba, for example, is a widely read writer of very popular historical novels and is even considered a "national writer," but he is practically unknown beyond the border of the Japanese language. The same is true of the Polish historical novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose historical trilogy, set in Polish national history ("The Trilogy"), is not known outside Poland, although *Quo vadis* (1896)[24], set in ancient Rome, once enjoyed enormous popularity throughout the world.

If borders still exist that surround Japan and the Japanese language, these borders have been shifting. This boundary shift can be seen clearly in the glaring contrast between the Nobel lectures of Yasunari Kawabata: "Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself" (1968) ("Utsukushii Nihon no watashi")[25], and Kenzaburo Oe (1994): "Japan, the Ambiguous [or vague, uncertain—*M.N.*], and Myself" ("Aimai na Nihon no watashi").[26] The title sounds strange in both English and Japanese, partly because it appears to be an ironic, somewhat provocative parody of Kawabata, the other Japanese Nobel laureate's lecture.

Looking back, one can assume that Kawabata received the honorary prize for his unique Japanese aesthetics, made accessible to the Western reader through his translated works. At the time, it was quite characteristic of the world, especially of Western countries, to expect Japanese literature to be completely different from that of other

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[22] These words are taken from a private correspondence between the poet and the author of this paper.

[23] Yutaka Haniya, *Shirei* [Death Spirits], 3 vols. [1946–1996] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003).

[24] For the English translation, see: Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Quo vadis: A Narrative of the Time of Nero*, trans. Jeremiah Curtin (Boston: Little, Brown, 1896).

[25] Yasunari Kawabata, *Utsukushii nihon no watashi. Sono josetsu* [Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself: An Introduction], trans. Edward Seidensticker (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1969). This edition contains the original text in Japanese as well as an English translation by Edward Seidensticker.

[26] Kenzaburo Oe, *Aimai na Nihon no watashi* [Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995). For the English translation, see: Oe Kenzaburo, *Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself: The Nobel Prize Speech and Other Lectures*, trans. Kunioki Ynagishita and Hisaaki Yamnouchi (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1995). The English edition is not identical in its selection of lectures to the Iwanami edition in Japanese. The Nobel speech was translated by Hisaaki Yamanouchi.

countries. Kawabata was chosen because he met these expectations. Here I am talking not so much about Kawabata's individual stance as about the historical position he accepted in this context—a context of Western expectations dominated by "Orientalism," to use Edward Said's terminology.

The Nobel Prize given to Oe, however, symbolizes something qualitatively new, the fact that Japanese literature is shedding the taint of exoticism and beginning to be accepted as "normal" literature, that is, as an equal component of contemporary world literature. It is no longer appropriate to use such labels as *unique Japanese aesthetics*. Kawabata, however, needed to define Japan in a univocal way using only one adjective ("beautiful"), and this naturally led him to separate himself and his works from the rest of the world, which was not ascribed such a clear-cut, univocal definition.

Unlike Kawabata, Oe asserts that there can be no such a "beautiful Japan" with which writers can clearly identify themselves; instead there is the "ambiguous Japan." This kind of consciousness brings the writer to a much more open position, since the premise of "ambiguity" makes it difficult to construct a clear-cut border and separate oneself from the rest of the world.

However, this "openness" does not imply the transformation of a "national" literature into a "transnational" one that is intended as a business-oriented world-wide production that is easily understood. In one of his lectures, Oe argues that *The Joke*—the first novel by Milan Kundera, which was written in Czech—can be called a work of "universal, really world-class writing." However, his later novel *Immortality*, published first in French before the publication of the Czech original because it was intended for a broader Western readership, gave Oe the impression that it was a product of French as "a regional language."[27] I myself share Oe's impression.

Here we are dealing with a peculiar paradox: only through his or her "localness" and national peculiarities can a writer reach universality. As for Oe's works, although he is well versed in Western literature and reads English and French texts extensively, often preferring those literatures to Japanese, his writings are in most cases based on a private life that is restricted to a rather small milieu in Japan. Many of his works are almost autobiographical and deal with his personal experiences living with his mentally retarded son. Oe has also written a number of novels that take place in a small village on the island of Shikoku, obviously modeled after his birthplace. As a result, Oe has created a whole world that revolves around that village, with which many of his works are interwoven. It is an imaginary literary realm that can be compared to Faulkner's *Yoknapatawpha* or García Márquez's *Macondo*. Thus, Oe succeeded in attaining worldwide acclaim simply by "staying put" within his small village, remote from the rest of the world. It is a rather common paradox that in the new age of globalization, any small place on the periphery can be one of many centers within a newly defined, decentralized world literature.

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[27] Oe, *Aimai na Nihon no watashi* [Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself], pp. 222–223. My translation.

New Phenomena in Contemporary Japanese Literature: Levy, Tawada, and Others

In contemporary "ambiguous" Japan, writers have appeared such as Hideo Levy (b. 1950), Minae Mizumura (b. 1951), and Yoko Tawada (b. 1960), all of whom cross the borders of Japanese literature in their own ways.

Levy is an American-born writer who writes exclusively in Japanese. His father was an American diplomat of Jewish origin who had no familial ties to Japan. Levy was brought up in Taiwan and Japan, where his father worked for many years. Later, Hideo Levy earned his doctoral degree in Japanese Literature at Princeton University. He was a professor of Japanese literature at Stanford University and even received the National Book Award for his splendid English translation of the *Man-yoshu*, the oldest anthology of the genre of Japanese traditional poetry (*waka*), compiled in the 8ᵗʰ century.

Levy suddenly decided to quit his successful academic career and move to Japan, where he has since lived. He writes only in Japanese and never translates his own works into English. In one of his essays, entitled "The Victory of the Japanese Language" ("*Nihongo no shori*"), he writes that we can now speak of the victory of the Japanese language not because more and more foreigners are studying the difficult language, but because there are finally non-Japanese writers who think and work in Japanese. These writers dispel the Japanese myth of *the trinity of Race-Culture-Language*. That is to say, "the Japanese language has shaken off the straitjacket of the *Japan as a homogeneous nation* ideology"[28] that has been dominant in Japan for such a long time.

New talents whose careers can be seen as parallels to Levy's are emerging, including some ethnic Japanese writers. For example, Minae Mizumura wrote a bilingual novel entitled *An I-Novel From Left to Right*[29]. The novel was unprecedented in terms of its bilingual text: it was written basically in Japanese, but a lot of English phrases are inserted into the body of the Japanese text without translation. The story is almost entirely based on lengthy telephone conversations between two Japanese sisters who have lived in the United States for twenty years and who often use English when speaking about daily life in America. The author does not bother to translate their English conversations into Japanese. As a result, we have a unique bilingual novel in which code-switching occurs incessantly with its heroines easily changing from English to Japanese and from Japanese to English. The second half of the novel's title, "From Left to Right" (which is written in English, with the Roman alphabet) refers to the European way of writing, which is unconventional within Japan, where texts have traditionally been written or printed in vertical columns from right to left. Thus, Mizumura's device can be viewed as a manifest violation of Japan's literary tradition.

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[28] Hideo Levy (Ribi Hideo), *Nihongo no shori* [The Victory of the Japanese Language] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1992), p. 38. My translation.

[29] Minae Mizumura, *Shishosetsu from Left to Right* [An I-Novel From Left to Right] (Tokyo: Sinchosha, 1995).

Somewhat later, however, Mizumura clearly showed her inclination to return to the tradition of Japanese literature, and as a result, wrote such novels as *A Real Novel* (*Honkaku Shosetsu*)[30] and *Inheritance from Mother: A Newspaper Novel*[31]—nostalgic homages to subgenres of the modern Japanese novel. Moreover, in her sensational essay *When the Japanese Language Perishes*,[32] she warns against the perilous situation of "national" literatures, such as Japanese literature, written in Japanese, a "national" (but not "universal") language that is on the verge of perishing under the shadow of an all-encompassing universal language, namely, English.

Writing both in German and Japanese, Yoko Tawada is an extremely language-conscious writer. However, unlike Nabokov, she does not aspire to that perfect mastery of two languages supposedly characteristic of the perfectly bilingual person. Rather, what preoccupies her as a bilingual writer is the sphere outside one's native tongue, which she calls "exophony" in one of her books, *Exophony, or A Journey Outside the Mother Tongue*. In this unexplored dimension she frees her linguistic imagination, experimenting with word play, interlingual puns, and the interweaving of heterogeneous linguistic echoes.[33]

With such brilliant precedents as Levy, Mizumura, and Tawada, we now see younger "border crossing" writers: Shirin Nezammafi (from Iran), Yan Yee (from China), Arthur Binard (from the United States), and Tian Yuan (from China). All of them chose Japanese as their language of literary expression, although Japanese is not their native tongue and their choice of the language was not imposed upon them by irresistible force. We now witness a new generation of Japanese-language writers who have chosen Japanese by their own free will.

One of the recent novels that has become a talking point in the Japanese literary world is the novel *White Paper* by Shirin Nezammafi. [34] This work earned the Newcomer Prize of the literary magazine *Bungakukai* in 2009 for its author, a woman born in 1979 in Teheran. It goes without saying that for her, the Japanese language is not a native language, but a language that she learned later in her life. The novel takes place in Iran in the years of the Iran–Iraq war. The main character is a girl who, having escaped war-torn Teheran, attends school in the town where she took shelter. It is a coming-of-age novel that portrays young love under the threat of bombings, a moving portrayal of young people under extreme circumstances who are earnest in their studies and in love. Japan does not appear anywhere in this novel. For some people, this begs

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[30] Minae Mizumura, *Honkaku Shosetsu* [A Real Novel] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2002).

[31] Minae Mizumura, *Haha no isan. Shinbun shosetsu* [Inheritance from Mother: A Newspaper Novel] (Tokyo: Chuokoron shinsha, 2012).

[32] Minae Mizumura, *Nihongo ga horobiru toki* [When the Japanese Languages Perishes] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 2008).

[33] Yoko Tawada, *Ekusofoni. Bogo no soto he deru tabi* [Exophony, or a Journey Outside the Mother Tongue] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003).

[34] Shirin Nezammafi, *Shiroi kami/Saramu* [White Paper/Salam] (Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 2009).

the question, why write this novel in Japanese in the first place? Just what does it mean for a foreigner to write such a novel in Japanese?

In order to consider this question, let us refer to another foreign writer: Yang Yi, who became the first Chinese writer to win the prestigious Akutagawa Prize in 2008. She is a Chinese national, born and raised in China, and Chinese is her native language. Her works always deal with Chinese characters who live their lives straddling both China and Japan, and this sets her apart from Shirin Nezammafi, whose debut novel is set in Iran and has no Japanese characters. For example, Yang Yi's Akutagawa Prize-winning novel *A Morning When Time Blurs*[35] deals with the vicissitudes of a Chinese man: his university years in the Chinese countryside, experiences during the Tiananmen demonstrations and the pro-democratic revolts, his arrest and abandonment of studies, his eventual journey to Japan, and his life there. By dealing with youth, with the crossings of love and revolution, this story reminds us of something nostalgic, which current Japanese literature seems to be on the verge of forgetting. This unique quality of the novel greatly appealed to the contemporary Japanese readership.

There is no problem with Nezammafi's Japanese, and Yang Yi's Japanese is even better than Nezammafi's, as she comes from a culture that uses Chinese characters, which are shared by Japan. But even so, the Japanese in which these authors write is somehow not quite natural and differs in subtle ways from the Japanese used by native speakers. The problem then is how we should view this "difference." Some readers might just call Nezammafi and Yang Yi's Japanese "strange," but I would consider what they are doing to be beneficial to both Japanese people and the Japanese language. A language is similar to a living being; if it develops in isolation in a closed world, it would endlessly repeat itself and eventually fall into decline. Japanese people have had, in their long history, the opportunity to take in elements from China and the West, and they have assimilated these foreign elements into their domestic language. Therefore, there is no need for us to be afraid of what is "different," which can only provide us with diversity.

But of course breaking a language barrier is no simple matter. I do not think that there will come a day when, like in current *sumo*, which is now dominated by Mongolian, Bulgarian, Estonian, Georgian, and Russian sumo wrestlers, non-native writers will be the dominant presence in the Japanese literary world. But it is also impossible to underestimate the meaning of the fact that new writers now work in Japan, such as the Australian writer and playwright Roger Pulvers, the Swiss novelist David Zopetti, the American poet Arthur Binard, and the Chinese poet Tian Yuan, all of whom we should pay more attention to from now on.

Also, using an example closer to home, in the place where I teach, the newly created Department of Contemporary Literary Studies at Tokyo University, there are foreign students from Ukraine, Poland, China, Korea, Kazakhstan, Venezuela, and the United States, and along with the other Japanese students at the department, they write essays

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[35] Yang Yi, *Tokiga nijimu asa* [A Morning When Time Blurs] (Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 2008).

and dissertations in the Japanese language about writers such as Banana Yoshimoto, Yoko Tawada, and Osamu Dazai.

Now the question is: Just what kind of meaning can we find in the act of literary creation in a language foreign and non-native to a writer? We can say that, at least in the case of those foreign writers who are currently writing in Japanese, the first and most prominent thing they do is to shed light on Japanese expressions that are half-buried in the midst of mundane, everyday life, and by doing so, they contribute to the diversity of the Japanese language and make it richer and stronger.

Secondly, these writers have brought to the Japanese language from outside of it something that we might call the "grand narrative" that was almost forgotten in every-day Japan, and this element has the capability of providing strong stimulation to modern Japanese literature. I think that the important point in considering foreign writers is, ac-tually, not whether the Japanese language used by them is good or clumsy. We are facing a question that goes far beyond that.

What, then, is at the core of the question? In my view, the existence of foreign writers entails the question of whether the Japanese language can be used to depict the world outside Japan, and whether the Japanese language that native speakers use is fit to vividly portray the world outside of Japan.

We often consider the internationalization of Japanese literature as represented by the fact that Kenzaburo Oe received the Nobel Prize for Literature and is greatly admired throughout the world, or by the fact that Haruki Murakami has been translated into many languages and is read widely in translation. That is to say, we think of the inter-nationalization of Japanese literature in terms of "from the inside to outside" of Japan when talking about the spread of Japanese literature. However, on a different note, as I am arguing, foreign authors writing in Japanese engage in a process that takes place "from the outside to the inside" of Japan, a process that has enriched the literature written in the Japanese language. We must look at both of these directions in order to understand the real meaning of the internationalization of Japanese literature.

In Search of a Third Vision

I admit that what I have been discussing here based on the examples of some Japanese writers is not totally new to those acquainted with world literature of the 20th century. Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Elias Canetti, Witold Gombrowicz, Milan Kundera, and Joseph Brodsky—to mention only the most outstanding examples—each crossed national, cultural and linguistic borders in their own way to explore new horizons in world literature. Obviously, Japanese writers like Hideo Levy and Yoko Tawada fit into this context very well. In a sense, through the act of border crossing they liberate Japanese readers from the traditional framework, which confines them within a seemingly homogeneous Japanese culture; they seek a path that will eventually lead Japanese

literature to the open space of world literature. Non-Japanese readers are also liberated, thanks to the efforts of such writers, from the *idée fixe* of exotic Oriental literature, and are able to accept Japanese culture on the common platform of the contemporary world.

Before concluding, let me briefly revisit the very notion of world literature, which I have been using without any clear-cut definition. In practical usage in Japanese, the phrase "world literature" (*Sekai Bungaku*) simply means "foreign literature," usually excluding Japanese literature. In Japan, an encyclopedia of world literature does not contain articles on Japanese literature. This kind of separatism is still deeply rooted in the Japanese consciousness, and the dichotomy of oneself versus the rest of the world is still difficult to overcome. Given this inertia, Goethe's utopian definition of world literature has not yet lost its validity and actuality. It is not surprising that the direct successors of Goethe's position were Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who stated in *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848 that, "[n]ational one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature."[36]

We are, however, living in a different post-colonial age in which small nations all over the world are struggling to establish their own cultures and literatures in the face of all-engulfing English, the *de facto lingua franca*. If the diversity of many languages, resisting the hegemony of one universal language, is the essence of world literature today, this sharply contradicts Goethe's universal notion. Can we bridge these two contradictory visions of world literature? If such a bridge is possible, it might provide a third vision of world literature that would be capable of integrating the previous two.

I myself have been seeking such a third vision for many years. I would like to refer here to the linguist Roman Jakobson, who sought throughout his life structural "invariance" in language, although he knew so many languages and was aware of their striking differences.[37] If the search for universality ignores human diversity, it will succumb to totalitarianism; yet, at the same time, if the search for diversity is not supported by the belief in universal human values, it will fall into nihilistic relativism and eventually collapse into anarchy. Here a metaphor may help: world literature is, in my opinion, a machine in perpetual motion that moves between the two poles of universality and diversity. The very process of this perpetual motion is what I call world literature.

Instead of an Afterword: Japanese Literature in the Post-3/11 Era

I should finish my paper here, but the earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeastern Japan in March of 2011 and the nuclear crisis that followed made us keenly

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[36] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 39.

[37] Roman Jakobson, "My Favorite Topics," in: Roman Jaokobson, *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, edd. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 3–7.

conscious of a new "border" in Japanese literature: a border that separates the literature before 3/11 from the literature after 3/11. It is true that the border in question is of a quite different nature, but let me briefly discuss it as one of the various borders that pertain to contemporary Japanese literature. This is intended to be a kind of afterword to my paper and, at the same time, should provide some introductory remarks on the future of Japanese literature.

The impact of the 3/11 catastrophe still continues to affect every aspect of life in Japan. Literature is no exception. Struggling with a despairing sense that this was not the time for literature, contemporary writers have responded in a variety of ways since disaster struck the country on March 11, 2011.

Almost immediately, a number of poets responded with lines that were plain, poignant, and fierce. Ryoichi Wago, a Fukushima-based poet previously known for rather abstruse contemporary verse, suddenly shifted gears after the disaster, using Twitter to publish a succession of very short pieces that rapidly gained a substantial following.

> In the end, there are only tears. I want to write furiously, like a man possessed.
> Radiation is falling. The night is quiet.
> Every night has its dawn.[38]

These pieces could hardly be classified as poetry in the conventional sense—the author himself refers to them as "pebbles of poetry." But they moved people with their straightforwardness.

Kai Hasegawa, one of Japan's leading *haiku* poets, turned to *tanka* to express his feelings on the catastrophe, responding to what he described as an "irresistible urge" to write with a relentless surge of poems (*Shinsai kashu; A Collection of Poems on the March 11 Disaster*):

> Do not speak lightly / Of twenty thousand deaths /
> Each one of them / A parent or child / A brother or sister.[39]

> Recovery: / An impressive word and brave / But /
> Those who have been lost / Will not return again.[40]

What drove this *haiku* poet to shift to the slightly longer *tanka* form? As Hasegawa quotes in the postscript to the collection of his poems, the *tanka* poet from the Heian period Ki no Tsurayuki famously wrote in his *Kanajo* [Japanese Preface], the introduction to *Kokinshu* (or sometimes called *Kokin Wakashu*), the first imperially sponsored collection of verse in Japanese:

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[38] Ryoichi Wago, *Shi no tsubute* [Pebbles of Poetry] (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 2011), p. 10, p. 16, p. 262. My translation.

[39] Kai Hasegawa, *Shinsai kashu* [A Collection of Poems on the March 11 Disaster] (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2011), p. 8. My translation.

[40] Hasegawa, *Shinsai kashu* [A Collection of Poems on the March 11 Disaster], p. 144.

When we hear the warbling of the mountain thrush in the blossoms or the voice of the frog in the water, we know every living being has its song.

It is poetry which, without effort, moves heaven and earth, stirs the feelings of the invisible gods and spirits, smooths the relations of men and women, and calms the hearts of fierce warriors.[41]

If we take these words as a reference to the universal power of *tanka*, which literally means "short songs," perhaps we can conclude that the shock of last year's disaster awoke the spirit of *tanka* that was lying dormant in Japanese hearts, leading Hasegawa from the exquisite literary form of *haiku* to the traditional form of *tanka*, which turned out to be more fitting for emotional expression in the moment of crisis.

Meanwhile, Yo Henmi published a series of vivid, almost grotesque poems titled *Me no umi-Watashi no shisha tachi ni* [Sea of Eyes: To My Departed]. For the author, who grew up in one of the Tohoku towns devastated by the tsunami, the work is at once an act of mourning, a requiem, and above all, a poet's desperate attempt to summon the power of poetic expression and pit it defiantly against the violent forces of the universe.

My departed dead:
You must sing your poems alone.
Let the shore daisies keep from flowering,
Let the yellow plants that cling to the cliffs refrain
from mourning—
Until the right words have been found, each one unique
and singular,
And assigned to the lungs
Of my departed dead.[42]

Novelists have also responded in a variety of interesting ways, albeit somewhat more slowly than poets. A number of novels written since the disaster show how writers' imaginations have been tested by the terrible events of 3/11. I would like to touch on two outstanding examples: *Uma tachi yo, sore demo hikari wa muku de* [O Horses! At Least the Light Remains Pure][43] by Hideo Furukawa and *Koi suru genpatsu* [The Nuclear Plant in Love][44] by Gen'ichiro Takahashi.

Furukawa headed to Fukushima in early April of 2011, not long after the earthquake, as if spurred by some kind of urge for self-destruction. He got close to the nuclear plant and describes what he experienced there in his novel. The result is more than just reportage. The book is a jumbled mix of reality and action, in which Furukawa finds himself joined in his car by a character from *Seikazoku* [The Holy Family],[45] one of the

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[41] *Kokin Wakashu*, Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), vol. 5, p. 4. For the English translation, see: *Kokinshu: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*, trans. Laurel Rasplica Rodd and Mary Catherine Henkenius (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 35.

[42] Yo Henmi, *Me no umi* [Sea of Eyes] (Tokyo: Mainichi shinbunsha, 2011), p. 48. My translation.

[43] Hideo Furukawa, *Uma tachi yo, sore demo hikari wa muku de* [O Horses! At Least the Light Remains Pure] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2011).

[44] Gen'ichiro Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu* [The Nuclear Plant in Love] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011).

[45] Hideo Furukawa, *Seikazoku* [The Holy Family] (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2008).

author's earlier works set in the Tohoku region. This fusion of action and nonfiction was perhaps the only way the disoriented author could deal with the overwhelming reality of what he was witnessing.

With *Koi suru genpatsu*, by contrast, Gen'ichiro Takahashi maintains his position at the vanguard of postmodern Japanese literature, depicting the aftermath of the nuclear accident in typically absurdist, surrealist style. The novel deals with the struggles of a porn film director instructed by his boss to make an adult movie to raise money for the reconstruction effort. The novel takes its title from the film he makes. Some may find the barrage of explicit content in the novel inappropriate or even disrespectful. Personally, I think the author deserves respect for refusing to tone down his usual style even in the face of Japan's three-pronged disaster. Although the disaster may well have "exposed things that previously lay hidden in this country,"[46] unspoken taboos still exert a powerful influence over literary expression. Dismantling these taboos is one of the things Takahashi sets out to achieve in this novel.

A remarkable array of nonfiction and commentary has already been published about the disaster. Perhaps the most significant studies to emerge so far are *Fukushima no genpatsu jiko o megutte: Ikutsu ka manabi kangaeta koto* [On the Nuclear Accident in Fukushima: Some Lessons and Thoughts][47] by the physicist Yoshitaka Yamamoto and *Nihon no daitenkan* [Japan's Great Turning Point][48] by the religious scholar Shin'ichi Nakazawa. Although both books discuss the issues of nuclear power from the perspective of each author's area of expertise, both rise above their immediate context to the level of well-written cultural criticism. These two books stand as an eloquent testimony to the way in which many people in Japan have worked to develop a way of critical thinking and a distinctive set of values since March of 2011.

Of the literary essays that have appeared so far, the most impressive is *Haru o urandari wa shinai—Shinsai o megutte kangaeta koto* [I Don't Reproach the Spring: Thoughts on the Earthquake],[49] a small masterpiece of criticism by the author Natsuki Ikezawa that seems likely to survive as one of the enduring literary documents of the catastrophe. Containing his rage, the author provides a lucid account of his visits to the devastated areas. A sense of deep empathy with the victims' plight runs through the work. As well as offering profound literary insights into the Japanese mind, this is a book of cultural criticism underpinned by the author's background in the natural sciences and supported by his keen sense of social mission. The title, incidentally, comes from a poem by the Polish poet Wisława Szymborska called "Parting with a View" (Pożegnanie widoku). The first lines continue as follows:

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[46] Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu* [Nuclear Plant], p. 203.

[47] Yoshitaka Yamamoto, *Fukushima no genpatsu jiko o megutte: Ikutsu ka manabi kangaeta koto* [On the Nuclear Accident in Fukushima: Some Lessons and Thoughts] (Tokyo: Misuzu shobo, 2011).

[48] Shin'ichi Nakazawa, *Nihon no daitenkan* [Japan's Great Turning Point] (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2011).

[49] Natsuki Ikezawa, *Haru o urandari wa shinai—Shinsai o megutte kangaeta koto* [I Don't Reproach the Spring: Thoughts on the Earthquake] (Tokyo: Chuokoron shinsha, 2011).

I don't reproach the spring
for starting up again.
I can't blame it
for doing what it must
year after year.[50]

The poem describes the poet's emotions as the first spring arrives after the death of her husband. But for anyone reading the poem in post-disaster Japan, it is all but impossible to see the lines as referring to anything other than the situation in Tohoku in the spring of 2012. I prefer to see this not as a misreading, but rather as proof of the universal power of literature to outlive its original time and place and even acquire fresh meaning in a new context.

Indeed, many works written years ago have gained new meaning in the days since 3/11. The most startling instance is Hiromi Kawakami's "*Kamisama 2011*" [God Bless You, 2011].[51] The short story *Kamisama* was the author's debut work, and originally appeared in 1993. It was a sweet, fairytale-like story in which the first-person protagonist goes hiking along a river with a bear who has recently moved into her apartment building. Shortly after the disaster, Kawakami wrote a new version, transplanting the story to the world after the nuclear accident. Overall, there are no major changes to the plot or the writing. And yet everything feels utterly changed. Why? The reason is simple: In the new version, almost everything that appears in the story, including the river itself and the fish that live in it, has been contaminated by radiation. It is remarkable how the same words take on entirely new connotations when they are set in a world after what the story refers to only as "the incident."

I have touched on a number of early responses to the disaster—but the truth, of course, is that literature, and full-length novels in particular, require a longer gestation period. It is still too soon to evaluate the tendencies and achievements of post-3/11 literature. In time, more mature responses will no doubt appear. Kenzaburo Oe's *In Late Style* may be a harbinger of what is to come. The first installment of the Nobel Prize winner's latest novel, which appeared in the January 2012 issue of *Gunzo*, makes clear that Oe, after considerable deliberation, has embarked on an attempt to wrestle with the question of what kind of writing is possible in the post-3/11 era. The work takes on an unusual format, consisting of the author's own notes interspersed with passages written by three female family members. Although there is no way of knowing how the story will unfold, the first installment contains several tantalizing allusions to Dante, quoting

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[50] Wisława Szymborska, *Poems New and Collected*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh (San Diego/New York/London: Harcourt, Inc., 1998), p. 240. Ikezawa quotes these lines from the collection of Szymborska's poetry: *Owari to hajimari* (Koniec i początek), trans. Mitsuyoshi Numano (Tokyo: Michitani, 1997), p. 47.

[51] Hiromi Kawakami, *Kamisama 2011* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011). For the English translation, see: Hiromi Kawakami, *God Bless You, 2011*, trans. Ted Goossen and Motoyuki Shibata, in: Elmar Luke and David Karashima, edd., *March was Made of Yarn. Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Meltdown* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), pp. 37–54.

the "future's door" referred to in *The Divine Comedy*. After a disaster of this scale, what kind of future can we anticipate, in our lives and in our literature? Drawing on Dante's words, this is the question that Oe seems to be asking of himself—and of us.[52]

Surveying Japanese literature after 3/11, I could not refrain from the strange association that would tie these contemporary Japanese writers with *émigré* writers who try to survive a social disaster by defecting to another country—that is, another reality. Japanese literature is now undergoing another process of border crossing: the transition from "before" to "after." If world literature is, as Damrosch maintains, writing that gains in translation, we can also talk about a new value being acquired by Japanese literature in the process of this border crossing imposed on it by the unprecedented catastrophe.

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[52] Kenzaburo Oe, "Bannen yoshiki shu" [In Late Style], *Gunzo* 1 (2012). The serialization is still continuing (as of June 2013).

Joachim Küpper
Some Remarks on World Literature

I will start my deliberations in a rather personal way. I would like to give some information on my genetic background. As far as I was told in my parents' home, my family can be traced back to the beginning of the 19th century. Not one of the approximately sixty people that are among my known ancestors is from the place where I am living now, namely Berlin. If I drew a circle with a 500 kilometer radius around the German capital, however, all the places where my ancestors are from would be included in this area. Some of them were from Sweden, a few from Poland; the vast majority, however, were from what could be subsumed under the (historically somewhat unstable) label of "Germany." If I cut off the southern third of this circle where none of them was from, the region comprises approximately 500,000 square kilometers. Since the surface of our globe is roughly 500,000,000 square kilometers, I could be reasonably described as a firmly "rooted" person with a strong and indisputable local belonging. My ancestry did not bestow on me one of these fashionable post-modern split identities, which are so prone to inspire questions of hybridity, belonging and identity. I am simply German, nothing else.

  Things are different when we move from genes to memes, to cultural codes. My mother tongue is German. But when I am asked which text I consider the greatest epic I know of, my answer would be: the *Iliad*. And the second narrative commonly attributed to an author whom we are used to calling Homer, the *Odyssey*, is for me the uncontested paradigm of all those narratives that do not render reality as it is (this would be the case for the *Iliad*), but as we wish it to be. As for the genre of drama, the archetypes I would name are *Oedipus* by Sophocles and *Iphigenia* by Euripides. For the sub-genre of comedy, I would most probably opt for the *Batrachoi* (*The Frogs*) by Aristophanes. When it comes to poetry, the only extant entire poem by a woman called Sappho[1] sets, from my perspective, the standards for this genre, which focuses on the expression of our most intimate emotions.

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[1] *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, edd. Edgar Lobel and Denys Lionel Page (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), "*Text Nr. 1*", p. 2.

According to the mainstream discourses on "roots" and "identity," I should prefer instead genre models that have their origins in the region that I am from and that were written by people with whom I share my ethnicity. There are not many texts extant from the pre-Medieval age in Central and Northern Europe, but I am quite familiar with the most important ones, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Edda*, both of which I have published on.[2] I have to confess that I find them historically interesting, but aesthetically inferior, simply less "well wrought" than the epics mentioned above. And I do not feel that I have an emotional link to these texts. When I read them, my interest is analytical, as are my findings. The *Nibelungenlied*, in the version that has come down to us, is from my perspective a precious document of the transition between an oral culture and the age of script, and also between polytheism and monotheism. What fascinates me about the *Edda* are first and foremost the numerous structural parallels I immediately detect with regard to mythical stories from other traditions known to me, pre-Columbian Latin American, for instance.

What I just outlined with respect to literary texts also applies to texts we typically label "religious." I was raised as a Christian. My oedipal revolt made me abandon my ancestors' belief for more than a decade, and it was my study of medieval and early modern literary texts (Dante, Calderón), which then made me understand how deeply Occidental culture is imbued with Christian concepts. I realized that I would not be able to do any serious scholarly work in the field without a more profound knowledge of this tradition. I started studying the most important texts, the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, the writings of the Church fathers and the medieval and early modern theologians, and I was fascinated by the intellectual depth of these texts as well as by their rhetorical perfection. When someone asks me today about my religion, I would answer: I am Christian (not a very fervent one, though, and a little bit more Protestant than Catholic, a little bit more Calvinist than Lutheran). I am aware that the belief I feel to be "my" religion is in no way from here—not from the region I belong to, nor from the people with whom I share my genes. Its pre-concepts were first propagated, as far as we know, by a Pharaoh whose only link to my local roots is the fact that the bust of his beautiful wife Nefertiti has, since the nineteenth century, been one of the most precious exhibits of the finest museum in the city where I live. After this Pharaoh's death, his successors restored the traditional polytheism. I imagine Ikhnaton might have held that venerating great humans by erecting pyramids and thus elevating them to the level of demi-gods is not a good idea, in case there is only one God. It may have been views such as these that can explain the fact that the new religion, which was officially abolished shortly after its emergence, went on flourishing amongst the slaves, who had to bear the hard fate of being in charge of building these pyramids. Anyway, one day huge numbers of these slaves ran away. It is not quite clear how they succeeded to cross

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[2] Joachim Küpper, "Transzendenter Horizont und epische Wirkung. Zu *Ilias*, *Odyssee*, *Aeneis*, *Chanson de Roland*, *El cantar de mío Cid* und *Nibelungenlied*," *Poetica* 40. 3–4 (2008), pp. 211–267.

the Red Sea and to escape into the desert of Sinai. They had a strong leader who told them that the one and only God would protect them and lead them into a promised land. That is where they settled down. Their state or kingdom underwent the varying fortunes typical of smaller or medium-sized kingdoms in that period. Several hundred years later, a charismatic unorthodox preacher emerged within this community of former Egyptian slaves. The religious authorities had him executed by the Romans (who had gained control over the kingdom 70 years earlier). But his charisma was so strong that his disciples went on venerating him and propagating his preachings. The words ascribed to him were then written down by Hellenized Jews, and later on they were systematized by Greeks and Romans. The most important amongst the latter was a man from North Africa, from present-day Libya. In the famous account he gives of his life— the first autobiography in world literature—he speaks briefly about a son he had who died as a child. But according to what else he says about his life as a young man, he may have had further children of whose existence he never knew.

It cannot be ruled out that people like the late Gaddafi (or the leader of the anti-Gaddafi opposition movement) had or could have genetic links with this man whom I consider to be the greatest theologian of "my" religion. Be this as it may, they have much closer genetic links to him than I do. In terms of genes, my commonality with Augustine will not be more important than the one established by the fact that our common mother is Eve (or Lucy, as modern science calls her).

According to our dominant discourses, I should rather pray to Wotan and Odin, and not to this somewhat strange Egyptian-Jewish-Greek-Roman triune deity. But what I know about Wotan and Odin just does not appeal to me, whereas the long tradition of Christian theology and Christian art inspires in me the feeling of being on the terrain where I belong.

I would like to make one further point. No lengthy explanations are required to state how this entire aesthetic and religious culture that I consider to be "my" culture came to the 500,000 square kilometers I mentioned above, that is, to the place assigned to "my" people from the dawning of history onward. The oldest and—as far as I am concerned—most appealing city in the region within this circle where I was born bears the name of Cologne, a name that clearly demonstrates its origins. Roughly two thousand years ago, the Romans colonized the western part of the circle mentioned, which means: they defeated the locals—my ancestors in terms of genes—by military force, that is, they killed the men and the children, they raped the women and then kept them for their pleasure, they destroyed the villages, they then erected their strongholds and enforced the adoption of their language and their way of living.

It is frequently ignored that this is not the entire story. Approximately four hundred years after this violent conquest, the Roman Empire collapsed. It was conquered within a few decades by tribes from Northern Europe who were genetically very close to the locals once defeated by the Romans. If the locals did not immediately throw off the yoke of Roman culture, this could be explained by the fact that a four hundred year-

long process of colonization and cultural imperialism had completely cut them off from their roots. But the really astonishing feature of this history is that the Germanic conquerors did not enforce the adoption of their traditional culture. Rather, and within a couple of decades, they adopted the culture of the defeated—quite in the same way as the Romans, when they were at the zenith of their political and military power, had adopted the culture of the defeated Greeks and the religion of an unorthodox sect of the defeated Jews.

What may we distill from this panorama? Certainly not some stream-lined algorithm, according to which culture would function. It is not always the case that the militarily defeated triumph on the terrain of culture. But most importantly, it does not always seem to be the case that the dominant culture is the culture of those who are in power.[3] The simplistic views derived from classical Marxism—that physical power secures the dominance of those who once succeeded to gain control over economic resources, and that culture is nothing but a super-structure that "translates" physical power relations onto the level of conceptual interaction—are not compatible with the story I briefly outlined, the story of the tradition we are used to calling Occidental.

What is perhaps more important in an age when Marxism is waning is the fact that this story is hardly compatible with the biologism that dominates our present-day intellectual debates. There is no systematic link between ethnic belonging and culture, just as there is no systematic link between local belonging and culture. We do have many features in common with animals and plants, but we, as humans, are ultimately different from animals and plants.

What, then, if not ethnicity and "rooting," are the factors that determine our cultural belonging?

I am afraid that I will not be able to give a satisfactory answer to this vital question. Thinking and re-thinking the problem again and again for decades now,[4] I have a slight

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[3]   This means that there are, of course, in human history, episodes which perfectly conform with the Marxist pattern. The implementation of Occidental culture in Latin America as well as in India is one important example, another one from the period discussed above is the Hellenization of the entire Eastern Mediterranean which occurred as a consequence of Alexander's the Great military expansion.—Marx and Engels developed their theses in a period before the age of European imperialism. The postulates regarding the relation between cultural and physical or economic dominance mainly refer to the frame of specific national cultures. It was Lenin's theory of imperialism—absorbed into an all-encompassing edifice of thought called "Marxism" by Western leftist intellectuals from the seventies of the 20th century onward—which considers all of modern, in particular 20th century global history as a struggle between "dominant" and "exploited" countries, where the patterns once developed by Marx to describe the class struggles within specific nations do apply. In a somewhat paradoxical move, the proletariat from the "dominant" countries thus becomes part of a global ruling class (if it does not adhere to communism but is, rather, "bribed" by social democratic parties into accepting capitalism); consequently, even popular culture from "imperialist" (capitalist) countries would thus be part of the hegemonic ideological structure.

[4]   My most important publication in the field is the essay: Joachim Küpper, "Kanon als Historiographie. Überlegungen im Anschluß an Nietzsches *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen,*

tendency to maintain that our preferences (or, as I rather should say: my preferences, since all this is a very personal thing) are not primarily content-related. My understanding of "content" in this context is a very broad one. It encompasses patterns otherwise called world-views, ideologemes, all sorts of historical stuff. It is, indeed, striking, to which extent we are willing to engage with contents totally alien to us in case they are presented in a way that appeals to us. One of the essential points of the entire discussion at issue here seems to be the description of what we mean when we speak of a work of art as being "well made." Even if Western art and literary history teach us that such technical standards of the "well made" vary over time and across epochs, it remains to be discussed to which extent they vary, or, to put it another way, whether there are (or are not) certain abstract principles underlying all the variations observable.

Are there even general aesthetic standards, that is, universal modes of what it means for something to be "well made" in the domain of music, of painting, of architecture, of literary texts, which would appeal to any human being, regardless of her or his ethnic belonging and cultural "roots"? I vividly remember an afternoon and an evening spent in Paris with a colleague and friend of mine in the spring of last year. She was preparing at the time an exhibition in the Louvre of German painting from the age of Classicism. We agreed to see each other in a small restaurant overlooking the gardens of the Palais Royal, and after a light meal we walked from there to the Opéra Bastille, where we attended a performance of *The Huguenots* by Giacomo Meyerbeer. The performance was alright, but would not be worth recalling in detail. What may be worth mentioning is the extreme aesthetic shock I felt when, after seeing the wonderful classicist buildings of the Palais Royal and the Louvre complex, and after the somewhat older architectonical marvels of the Marais, I was suddenly confronted with this now twenty year old, somewhat run down amorphous mass of metal and glass that the late French president François Mitterrand had had built in the center of Paris. I was familiar with the building superficially since I had passed by it in my car now and then, but I had never been there before and had never before looked at it as an artifact in itself. I am not at all sure that this building, as well as the Glass Pyramid erected in the inner courtyard of the Louvre castle, will guarantee president Mitterrand the same immortality as the pyramids bestowed on the Egyptian Pharaohs.--The ethnic roots of the friend with whom I had the pleasure to share my walk through Paris as well as my feelings concerning the scenario, are non-European, as I should perhaps add.

The question of possible existing transcultural and transhistorical, that is, universal aesthetic standards is even more virulent for the third one of the three great art forms. Is the enthusiastic reception of Western classical music in countries like Japan and Korea an instance of perfidious Occidental cultural imperialism? And even if it is, how are we to deal with the fact that many musicians in the leading Western orchestras of our time, in New York, London, Vienna, Berlin, quite visibly have a genetic endowment, which,

zweites Stück," in: Maria Moog-Grünewald, ed., *Kanon und Theorie* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1997), pp. 41–64.

according to the mainstream theses of cultural studies, should make them feel uncomfortable when dealing with artifacts from countries that had once broken into their countries by military force or even conquered them and made them into a sort of demi-colony? The frequently heard counter-argument: that these non-Western people would only be capable of acting in a reproductive, and not in a productive way within the frames of Western music seems to me somewhat misled. What we are used to calling "classical music" covers a productive period from, roughly, the seventeenth to the twentieth century. In the historical cultural capitals of the West, classical music has become an almost exclusively reproductive phenomenon from the middle of the last century onward.

As far as I see, there are still two very important points for me to mention. The first point concerns the question of to which extent the spreading of cultural artifacts beyond the territorial and ethnic boundaries of their creators is a one-way-street, if at all; the second point relates to the specific question on which this volume is focused, that is literature as an art form that differs from music as well as from painting, sculpture and architecture.

As to the question of the one-way-street, I would like to refer to cultural history once more, that is, to a scenario we are able to contemplate from a more tranquil perspective than present-day phenomena, since the civilizations we are dealing with no longer exist. As for Greece and Rome, it would be extremely difficult to maintain that there was some sort of balanced cultural exchange between the two. Roman culture hardly existed before the adoption of the Greek models, and all those literary as well as philosophical texts written in Latin, which later on had a reception history in Greek or Hellenic territories, were inspired by Greek models—which does not mean that they would, by necessity, be inferior in artistic value. Still, they are dependent phenomena. The only point that confers some sort of "balance" upon the history of the ancient world is the already mentioned fact that, with respect to physical power on the one hand and cultural power on the other, the relations of dominant and dominated were inverse.

It cannot be ruled out that we are moving towards a quite analogous constellation in the course of the present-day process of globalization. The center of physical power seems to be moving to the East, and at the same time, there is an adoption of Western cultural modes and models in the East, the rapidness and breadth of which is breath-taking.

The discourses of political correctness, however, require that one at least briefly discuss the problem of possible reverse influences. It is a fact that since the end of the nineteenth century, non-Western art has been received enthusiastically in the West (primarily sculpture and painting, but not literature, which already brings me close to the second point still to be discussed). And indeed, the similarities of certain paintings by Picasso and some "primitive" African art exhibits in the Trocadéro museum, which the painter came in contact with when he traveled to Paris in 1900, are striking. But there would not be any difficulty to explain the artistic principles of these paintings by Picasso as a more or less plausible result of an evolutionary move away from mimetic

representation, which, as regards European painting, set in during the period when the technique of photography emerged. In short: I have a slight tendency to consider the reception of non-Western art in the West during the 20th century as an instance of what I would call the "exotic fascination." Since the age of Romanticism, innovation and aesthetic novelty are the leading parameters when it comes to defining what art is (in contrast to mere entertainment). Non-autochthonous, in other words exotic artifacts are, of course, always and by necessity an instance of novelty, and are immediately and enthusiastically dubbed as "artifacts of outstanding value." But their influence on the evolution of Western art cannot be reasonably equated with the spreading of Occidental artifacts and cultural models, the pace of which—as it seems—dramatically accelerated after the end of the period of physical colonization.

The second point that remains to be discussed is indubitably more difficult to tackle. Music is extremely abstract, its links to local cultural, but non-artistic practices are rather vague. In the West, string instruments and flutes are of a different kind than in other cultures, but these differences cannot measure up to the differences between natural languages and even less to the differences between ideologemes, as, e.g. world-views or religions. Music does not represent something which would have an existence outside the world of music, or, if indeed it did, as, e.g. representing "emotions," the items represented would be somewhat universal. To a minor degree this also applies to representational painting and sculpture. The basic structures of bodies (of plants, animals, humans) are the same all over the world, what is considered to be a beautiful (an aesthetically pleasing) structure varies within specific cultures over time, so that there is, in principle, no obstacle to arriving at an agreement as to what might constitute some sort of world art with respect to music and sculpture or the fine arts in general.

Literature, however, is, as I have argued in the first part of my paper, so deeply imbued with specific cultural patterns (world views or religions; conceptualizations of what a human being is; moral and behavioral standards, etc., etc.) that it seems hardly possible to grasp the meaning or the "message" of a given literary text and to appreciate its aesthetic value without being familiar with the cultural patterns that inform it. And why should a person raised in the Buddhist tradition take an interest in reading the *Hebrew Bible*, the *New Testament*, the writings of Augustine and of Thomas Aquinas (which is, according to the specialists, the core canon one has to be familiar with in order to be able to read Dante's *Divine Comedy*)? This person is perhaps happy within her or his "own" philosophical and religious tradition, and it would thus be best for her or him just to ignore the existence of Dante's text. Or, to put it polemically: in contrast to music and painting, if it is about literature, all discussions about something like a world literature may be nothing else but stratagems of a more or less astutely veiled attempt at ideological subversion and subjugation.

I would like to recount an anecdote from my daily professional life before I come to some concluding remarks. At the *Dahlem Humanities Center* we invite outstanding scholars to give papers within a lectures series labeled *DHC Lectures*. Of course, we do

not invite people from the Western context only. Two or three years ago, I met the Dean of a highly esteemed school in China which is strong in the Humanities, and we agreed to host three scholars from that school within our lecture series. Our Chinese partners were free to choose whom to send, and the chosen colleagues were free to choose a topic. One of the three gave a paper on Dante, and in the course of the discussion it turned out that this man had spent more than 25 years of his life producing a *terza rima* (that is, a rhymed) translation of the *Divine Comedy* in Mandarin, which is certainly not an easy task. The translation was first published less than a year before his visit to the *Dahlem Humanities Center*. In the course of this year, the translation sold over two hundred thousand copies. The country, China, is huge, indeed, but on the other hand we have to consider the fact that the distribution of a text imbued with Christian views is certainly not encouraged by the authorities in the still existing People's Republic of China. Thus, the figures I just gave are amazing, and I am not sure that those who bought a copy of the *Divine Comedy* in the Chinese translation did so in order to learn more about an exotic religion that is still not free to proselytize in this country in the way its founder mandated that this be done. What is it that ultimately attracts non-Occidental, non-Christian readers to receive a text that deals with the system of the seven capital sins, with the concept of a life after death, with a strange third space called purgatory, with beautiful women re-appearing as spirits or angels after their death, with heathens like Virgil teaching lessons pertaining to a religion they have never heard of, etc., etc.? Instead of indulging in speculations, I would like to give a quote from one of the most lucid theoreticians of literature I have ever read, Jurij M. Lotman. In his now famous book *The Structure of the Artistic Text*[5], he discusses the problem I am dealing with by taking Tolstoij's *Anna Karenina* as an example.

> Thus the plot of Anna Karenina reflects, on the one hand, a certain narrow object—the life of the heroine, which we are fully capable of comparing with the lives of individuals who surround us in everyday life. This object, which has a proper name and all the other trappings of individuality, constitutes only a part of the universe reflected in art. […] [T]his same subject [plot] […] is a reflection of another object which tends to expand without limit. We can regard the life of the heroine as a reflection of the life of any woman belonging to a certain epoch and a certain social milieu, [or as a reflection of the life of] any woman, [or of] any person [of any human being]. Otherwise the tragic vicissitudes of her life would only be of historical interest, and would simply be boring for a reader far removed from the special task of studying the life and manners of past epochs.[6]

From my perspective, this passage is nothing else than a more detailed exposition of Aristotle's definition of the literary text in contrast to both historiographical and

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[5]   First print in Russian 1970.
[6]   Jurij M. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, edd. Ladislav Matejka and Mark E. Suino, trans. Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977), p. 211. Additions in brackets are mine.

philosophical texts. The former, according to Aristotle in *Poetics*, chap. 9[7], deal with "particulars" ("a 'particular' means, say, what Alcibiades did or experienced"); as such, they are of interest only to readers who take an interest in the specific events recounted. The latter ones, according to Aristotle, convey messages that are non-specific and abstract, that is, "general" or "universal" (καθόλου). Literary texts—fictional ones, but also those with an authentic substratum—are conceptually a sort of hybrid, they are "more philosophical" (φιλοσοφώτερον) than historiographical texts. They narrate particular events, that is, things clearly located in space and time and related to individual persons. But their message is, as Aristotle argues, situated on the level of the καθόλου, they convey something more general. Let me add just one thought to this argumentative string, which may even be my own contribution to the debate.[8] In the case of most of our literary texts, this "general" or "universal" level is not just "there" as something that would have been made explicit by the author. It is rather a dimension implemented by us as readers. Because what should the "meaning" of an invented story about people who never factually existed be if not the allegorical encoding of something more abstract, which becomes evident when taking their fictional lives into consideration?

I would like to conclude by saying that the abstractive mode—with regard to time, place and ethnicity of its origin—which characterizes music and paintings is not an empirically given fact in the case of literary texts. But the way we deal with literary texts—to my knowledge, not only in the West, but all over the world—systematically implements this level of abstraction in the process of reading, of interpretation. Or, to put it another way: in contrast to what the mere appearances—the difference between natural languages and cultural codes—seem to teach us, there is, in principle, no obstacle to the creation of a canon of world literature. The way we are used to dealing with literary texts is prone to superseding differences of time, of place, of cultural frames. Having said this, I would be ready to concede that there might be a more controversial discussion of my theses when it comes to agreeing on the concrete *content* of such a canon of world literature.[9]

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