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Migration and Translation in a World Literature Perspective

Svend Erik Larsen,
Aarhus University/Sichuan University

Abstract:

In recent years two themes have been instrumental for the advancement of world literature studies. One is migration; the other is translation. As disciplines, neither migration studies nor translation studies belong to the field of literary studies in their own right. Migration has for many years been a field within social and cultural studies and is now acquiring increasing urgency in today's geopolitical context. But with the rapidly growing number of works representing various experiences of migration, it has also irrevocably entered literary studies. Likewise, as an academic discipline translation studies was for years a subject hosted by linguistics before new trends emerged in the 1970s and gained ground in the 1990s with a theoretical perspective to also encompass intermedia translation and a broad register of c-cultural discourses, literature included. With Henry Roth's Jewish-American migration novel *Call It Sleep* (1934) as my basic text, I will explore the world literature perspective of migration and translation.

Keywords: migration, translation, world literature, comparative literature, Henry Roth, Chinua Achebe

In recent years two themes have been instrumental for the advancement of world literature studies. One is migration; the other is translation. As disciplines, neither migration studies nor translation studies belong to the field of literary studies in their own right. Migration has for many years been a field within social and cultural studies and is now acquiring increasing urgency in today's geopolitical context. But with the rapidly growing number of works representing various experiences of migration, it has also irrevocably entered literary studies. Likewise, as an academic discipline translation studies was for years a subject hosted by linguistics before new trends emerged in the 1970s and gained ground in the 1990s with a theoretical perspective to also encompass intermedia translation and a broad register of cultural discourses, literature included.¹ Of course, practicing translators have always worked with literature but not as a field of research.

¹ See Lefevere and Bassnett.

These recent developments have made migration studies and translation studies ripe for literary scholars working in a world literature perspective.² They have added a political awareness, in as much as both migration and translation involves power relations, the power of place, and the power of meaning production. Moreover, they have added a much needed theoretical and contextual ramification to literary studies, which has been mainly closed in on itself since its emergence in Europe as an academic research field around 1800. This inward gaze turned in two directions; firstly, towards the aesthetic particularities of literature. From the mid-eighteenth century, with the aesthetic theories of Ephraim Lessing and Alexander Baumgarten in particular, literature was singled out as a quasi-autonomous object of study. The broader cultural outlook, typical of the Renaissance and also the Enlightenment in general, became more and more myopic. Secondly, literary studies tended to look towards the national characteristics of literature. Such features were believed to constitute the immanent essence of literature (and other art forms as well) with a whole panoply of ideological implications ranging from nationalism bordering on fascism to a self-conscious minority awareness.³

Among both writers and critics the effect was that the preoccupation with a shared European literary history beyond the boundaries of national languages and territories withered away. At the same time, comparative perspectives with the potential of opening or re-opening the larger cultural and linguistic context only came second, mainly considered to consist of comparisons between authors, works or entire literatures with an already established and primary national definition.⁴ Consequently, the emerging interest in world literature, as it occurred with Johan Wolfgang von Goethe's critical ideas and poetical practice in the 1820s as the most widespread inspiration, took on an idealistic aspect relying on immanent literary values cast in trans-historical and universalist terms.

In contrast, the revival of world literature today consists in breaking away from this inward-looking idealistic take on world literature and, in particular, from the fervent cultivation of national literatures and its package of ideological implications. Of course, today's world literature studies have also utilized the many and varied critical methodologies that have developed from the founding years of literary studies. Yet, more importantly, the reorientation of literary studies meant a keen receptiveness to other continents, other languages, other types of local cultural formations, other genres, other themes – where 'other' always means other than the physical and colonial boundaries of European culture and the national thinking that underpins it. However, given the century-long global impact of Europe, this so-called provincializing of Europe (Chakrabarty 2007) always unfolds in a dialogue with the undeniable influence of European culture around the world, both in academia and in culture at large. Literary studies as a discipline is also involved directly in the power relations as they are articulated by migration and translation.

Hence, this approach has also called for new theoretical and analytical foundations for literary studies, or at least for a fresh inspiration coming from new angles. As the aim of world literature studies is to re-contextualize the reading of known texts and to enlarge the entire field and awareness of its context by integrating new texts, whether overlooked by tradition or produced today, this inspiration had to come from outside the established paradigms, especially with regard to issues of contextualization. At the same time, the ambition was, and is, to also turn the inspiration 180 degrees around and send it back, transformed, to inspire anew the field where it originated. When translation was exposed to the cultural turn outside linguistics, linguists also had to change perspective. Likewise, when the study of migration moved on from the field of economics and geopolitics and came to include religion, ethics, language, narratives and imagination, migration studies as it has been conceived by social studies acquired new dimensions. In other words, migration and translation are concerned with much more than geopolitics and efficient communication, just as literature is about much more than plot, character and rhetorical devices. In this sense world literature becomes a truly interdisciplinary enterprise.

2 Just a few recent examples from a growing bulk of literature: Walkowitz, "The Location", Apter, Thomsen, Beecroft, Walkowitz, "Born Translated".

3 See Lionnet and Shih.

4 See Larsen, "From Comparatism".

1. A Helluva Country

So far, the political have only been mentioned in the opening and will remain so until the end of this essay. In between I will take a look at a somewhat neglected American masterpiece with migration and translation as its backbone and, by doing so, also offer a relevant perspective on the political. The text is Henry Roth's debut novel *Call It Sleep* from 1934, one of those texts that explodes in the hands of the reader – and the writer as well: drawing on his own experiences Roth, then only 28 years old, emptied his imaginative resources for quite a while, unable to write again until late in life, even close to his death in 1995, but never at the same level again.

The novel is set in the United States before World War I, during the great influx of immigrants through the port of New York and Ellis Island. The Schearl family, a young Jewish family, settles in New York in 1907, first in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and then on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The first location was the major Jewish neighbourhood of New York with about 50,000 Jews when the Schearls arrived, the second one was closer to the metropolitan turbulence of the big city, but still a Jewish neighbourhood yet in much closer contact with other immigrant groups.

Albert has crossed the Atlantic first, arriving from the rural areas of Austrian Galicia. Later he welcomes his wife, Genya, and their young child, David, to New York. Galicia, in today's Western Ukraine around the town of Lviv/Lwów/Lemberg close to Poland, was then part of the Austrian-Hungarian double monarchy. This is a region where European conflicts have moved boundaries and peoples repeatedly over the centuries, the twentieth century included. In Mary Louise Pratt's apt terminology (Pratt 6f), it is a contact zone between German/Austrian, Ukrainian, Polish, Hungarian, Russian and Yiddish languages and cultures. Coming to New York means changing one type of multicultural locality of a vanishing feudalism with another, the urban multicultural contact zone of an emerging modernity. The protagonist is young David, living with his embittered, grumpy and often violent father, Albert, who changes jobs several times, but eventually ends up as a milkman, and with his gentle and infinitely protective and loving mother, Genya. Her sister, Bertha, comes over and other people, mostly Jews from their neighborhood and boys from the street, enter David's world. He is about three when he arrives and eight when the novel ends.

Among migrating peoples, the Jews have an almost mythical status, related to the Jewish diaspora. Likewise, New York is the mythical destination for migrants. With the foundation of Israel, the post-holocaust history of Jews has added to the myth – in contrast to the foundation of other states over the centuries in the wake of great wars, this foundation was interpreted by many as a fulfillment of a religious prophecy more than a repetition of a geopolitical reorganization that is common when conflicts have shattered a stable geopolitical arrangement.

New York, as an embodiment of the American melting pot, also represents a myth, but a secular one, often expressed as the entrance to the land of the American Dream – “the Golden Land” as Genya says, nervous and hopeful, when she leaves the ferry (Roth 11)⁵ – where everyone can advance from rags to riches by his, and to a lesser extent her, own force and initiative. However, the idea of America was first shaped and dressed in religious garments by the Quaker and Puritan settlers in the seventeenth century before it lost its religious core, which is only echoed today in the religious fundamentalism used in public rhetoric to present the USA as a place selected by God. Jews and New York have been attributed with a global transcendence – the stuff myth and dreams are made of.

It remains to be seen whether the reality of history will come back with a vengeance in Israel and the USA when it challenges their proto-transcendental self-interpretation. Yet, it is clear that after the formation of the state of Israel, the mythical status of Jews, as the iconic migrating people against whom the fate of other diasporic peoples has to be measured, has been profoundly contested. In his introduction to historical types of diaspora, *Global Diasporas* (1997), Robin Cohen shows how the

5 Cf. the title of Larsen, “A Helluva”.

Jewish diaspora and its diversified developments is only one among several diasporas from the older and also more recent history of Mankind of an equally tragic nature, not a comprehensive and trans-historical model of them all, an alleged *Idealtypus* in the sense of Max Weber with an added mythological twist. Diasporas should not be understood through a model, but as intersections of different and thus comparable historical processes.⁶

In their essay on globalized memories, “Memory Unbound. The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory” (2002), Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder point to the fact that the memory of the Holocaust has gone global and thereby entered a field of de-localized myths, in this case as the prototype of extreme atrocity compared to which other genocidal horrors appear less important. In this position the Jewish people run the danger of losing a sense of the historicity of their persecution, while other victims of genocides, when filtering their sufferings through the Holocaust model, may have difficulties in approaching their misery in its particular historical conditions. In other words, diasporas and their commemoration should not be organized vertically under the umbrella of a trans-historical model, but leveled out horizontally as different events with an equal importance to those involved, each of them to be captured and commemorated on their own historical conditions.

A similar questioning of a mythological logic applies to New York as an iconic destination of immigrants with the Statue of Liberty meeting the newcomers next to Ellis Island. In this context, the city becomes a concept in the history of migration more than a place. In 1907, when the Scheerls arrive, and in the 1930s, when Roth came to the city, the immigrants did not enter a land which was a nation in the same way as the old European or Asian countries were. Only as late as 1893, during the world’s fair in Chicago, did Frederick Jackson Turner introduce a collective sense of national identity in his much-debated speech on the closure of the frontier. At that time, this idea had not yet seeped down to the inhabitants, least of all to the host of immigrants who did not come to a nation with a closed frontier, but to a land of infinite possibilities and endlessly open spaces.

Nations or local communities in the traditional sense had for centuries been the homes for peoples, their cultures and languages, all of which was immediately visible and audible in the landscapes and cityscapes, to the inhabitants as well as to visitors. In 1907 and today, as Europe amply exemplifies in 2015 and 2016, during the still ongoing refugee crisis such places where everything already has a place and a meaning are not easy to be part of for immigrants. However, the Scheerls’ situation is different. Although they leave a region where migration and political changes since time immemorial have moved around with rulers and political borders, and still do, by 1907, the clear outline of the local place and its traditions had not moved. This was a place with a *genius loci* for its peoples, in spite of the fact that it was a multicultural locality, as feudal states and many modern nation states were and still are, although this aspect has been underplayed, more or less violently, in nineteenth-century national ideology.

After the family has been re-united in the first chapter of the novel the sense of belonging evaporates, not only because they are immigrant but also because the place is different. They soon find out that the vague ideas they had about an American Dream have no foundation in the everyday reality in the Jewish community in New York and probably not anywhere else. We do not hear much about ‘elsewhere’. Yet, they cherish their memories from Galicia, a point of comparison for what a ‘real’ place means, and Genya buys a picture of an unspecified rural landscape that keeps their memories alive. There is no evocation of any competing American national idea or reality to which they have to adapt, not even to an American Dream. We are not in the world of social climbers of, say, Theodore Dreiser or Scott Fitzgerald, but of people seeking security. The Scheerls are definitely not rich but are not destitute either. They would never figure in Jacob Riis’ shocking photo report *How the Other Half Lives. Studies of the Tenements of New York* (1891). Their main task is to adapt to the tough urban reality where survival rather than social advancement comes first, supported only by the Jewish faith and traditions. At times, they are confronted with habits and beliefs of

⁶ See Knott and McLoughlin.

other migrant communities in the neighborhood, but with no requirement from die-hard Americans to accept a new national identity. The opposition between indigenous and foreign does not apply; only different types of foreignness are involved.

There is no notion that this place is the home of somebody else with a shared history, identity and language necessary to know and adapt to; it is only a living place for many people whose home was elsewhere but is now of no common relevance but for themselves. Place bound identity is something definitely lost and is only retained as a fantasy. Here, home is the known apartment, the street, a few people, maybe the neighborhood, the broken languages they use, often different broken Englishes. Outside, the bustling city is a place of confusion, surprise and sudden danger. A helluva country, as frightening as it is promising.

Roth's novel is built upon these two mythical phenomena, the people of the iconic migration and the iconic city of migration, but the hierarchy of each of the mythical entities and other waves or places of migration, considered as less typical or less important when measured against the Jews and New York, is broken down in the novel. The centre of the story is the Jewish community because that is where the main characters belong, though it is never seen as a particularly noteworthy example of a migrating community compared with others. It just happens to be theirs, and neither the identity of the Schearls nor of anybody else is related to New York or America as a particular historical place, a nation, but to a social entity and its human and social relations which could be located in any other place than New York, a free floating Galicia carrying them further and further away from their old home. The shared language of most of the characters is Yiddish, a vernacular language but not a national language; it is an Eastern-Central European *lingua franca* amalgamating German, Hebrew/Aramaic, Polish and other Slavic languages as well as a bit of Romance languages and Hungarian, and with an adapted Hebrew script including vowels, although often written in Roman script. This is a travelling language of migration.

Roth anticipates the more recent take on globalized migration assuming that people do not move from one home to the home of others, from which they may strive to go back to the old place which defines their identity, or where they have acquired a new identity by being successful in the eyes of the indigenous population. The world he depicts is a world where migration itself is the basic condition for identity without one community serving as a model for others, but where they all share this condition whether they are settling somewhere or moving. The Austrian Galicia of the Schearls had dissolved by the time Roth grew up and moved to the USA. Should the Schearls have wanted to go back in the 1930s, there would have been no place to return to. After World War II, Hannah Arendt's *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft* (1950) pointed to the many refugees who had no home left, but were on the move and could not be returned to anything. Their home was not necessarily physically destroyed, but like that of the Palestinians or the Kurds it had no sovereign political status. In Arendt, Roth's intuition meets with a philosophical reflection that finally explodes as a social reality today.

2. A Place of Migration

Nevertheless, Roth does not write in the post-World War II world of globalization. New York is still a locality with clear boundaries between neighborhoods, but is also described as a globalized micro-world. The way this generalizable effect is obtained has to do with Roth's use of the narrator and point of view. The Prologue, the arrival of Genya and David in New York, is related to us by what is traditionally called an omniscient narrator, with a transpersonal point of view, in the know of everything about history and life in general, but not quite as much about the interior life of the characters: "It was May of the year 1907, the year that was destined to bring the greatest number of immigrants to the shores of the United States" (9)⁷, or: "The truth was there was something quite untypical about their behavior" (11), 'they' being Genya and David. The narrator knows things, but not about the two newcomers:

7 All references to the novel are given only with page numbers in brackets.

They had been standing in this strange and silent manner for several minutes, when the woman, *as if driven* by the strain into action, tried to smile, and touching her husband's arm said timidly, "And this is the Golden Land." She spoke in Yiddish. (11, ital. mine).

When it comes to interior motivations and thoughts, even the narrator will have to rely on inferential guessing: 'as if'. This is the key to the narrative strategy for the rest of the book. The protagonist is David. He carries the point of view, the incomprehensible new world is seen through his perceptive, scared, attentive eyes, often with no clue to any understanding of what is going on. If David is guessing about the ways of the world, the narrator is doing the same with David. He is balancing on the edge of David's consciousness and the world around David, often using not only free indirect discourse but also increasingly interior monologue as David's experiences and reflexive capacities grow through the novel. There is also plenty of direct speech and at times de-personalized descriptions of the external world. David is only between three and eight years old, but his small world embraces the significance of the whole universe; his insecurity represents the general insecurity of human life.

This strategy of enlarging the limited individual perspective is applied to the two separated worlds, the outdoor world of the city and the indoor world of David's apartment. *Outside* is the turbulence of the foreign city, now and then with a fragile familiarity along the streets he comes to know, but taking a wrong turn, one is lost. When they move from Brownsville to Lower East Side, David realizes that Brooklyn after all has become somehow a familiar space. *Indoors*, David feels the coziness and safety emanating from his mother, while the Jewish traditions make it a safe haven for him, only interrupted by the threatening demeanor of his father. Here, memories from Galicia now and then are contrasted with the tensions of their urban life, but also recalling the hidden traumas of the past which, maybe, made them leave the old home. In a fit of anger Albert has caused his father's death by leaving him alone with a raging bull, and Genya's affair with a local Christian organist of Hungarian descent, a *goy*, made her pregnant with David. His parents have no love for each other, but need each other in order to leave the local shame and contempt behind. So, all three spaces, the city, the home and the memorized old home, are penetrated by a fragile balance between familiarity and insecurity, but mostly tending towards insecurity. The characters dangle in empty space, frightened, lonely and left to their own limited powers. David's love, angst and hope are condensed into a prism for the same feelings and losses in everybody else's life.

The slight change in David's thoughts and reactions at the beginning and at the end shows the quiet development of a three-year-old to an eight-year-old, from someone who does not know anything about his new abode to a boy who becomes slightly more acquainted with new life conditions, but then is also caught up in new unanswerable questions. All the way through, the fragile individual grasp of a situation is rendered with a general perspective.

In the opening paragraph of the novel David is just three. He is thirsty, but the passage is about his own entire life and about the whole world:

Standing before the kitchen sink and regarding the bright brass faucets that gleamed so far away, each with a bead of water at its nose, slowly swelling, falling, David again became aware that this world had been created without thought of him. He was thirsty, but the iron hip of the sink rested on legs tall almost as his own body, and by no stretch of arm, no leap, could he ever reach the distant tap. Where did the water come from that lurked so secretly in the curve of the brass? Where did it go, gurgling in the drain? What a strange world must be hidden behind the walls of a house! But he was thirsty. (17)

Towards the end of the novel the same embedding of situation, individual life and outlook on the world at large is still made by a child who does not comprehend the world around him, but with all the experiences he has had, his thoughts mushrooming into a confused bundle of fears and memories. The situation is

that he has been promised a rosary from his admired older Catholic friend, Leo, who is free and resourceful, who has skates and a kite, who helps himself in the family kitchen. David is supposed to help him secretly to find an opportunity to grope David's step-cousin, Esther, without exactly knowing what this early sexuality is about, but clearly recognizing that this promise and the rosary will cause trouble.

This morning it is going to happen. Genya is cleaning the windows. David is thinking both of his trip with Leo and of his mother on the window sill, and looming behind that the memory of some of the street urchins who had been peeping from the roof when Genya washed herself in the kitchen, naked:

High morning.

His nervous gaze wandered from frosted window to clock and returned to the window. [...]

– Wish she came in! Get scared when she sits like that. Fourth floor too – way, way down! If she –! Ooh! Don't! And that window it was. Can see the roof from here. Yes, there where they – Son-of-a-bitch! – there where they looked.

Irritably, he shifted his gaze to the other window, which was open and looked out on the street. The sky above the housetops, rinsed and cloudless after rain, mocked him with its serenity. In the street, too far below the window to be seen, the flood of turmoil had risen with the morning and a babel of noises and voices poured over the sill as over a dike. The air was exceptionally cool. Between the drawn curtains of an open window across the street, a woman is combing a little girl's hair with a square black comb. (329)

As in the opening lines, this is a concrete situation with an intense sensual perception at the center. Here, the focus is not a simple faucet, but a complex interwoven set of observations; some, like the window, motivated by things present, others, like the clock, by the secret excursion with Leo he is going to embark on, and others again, like the very precise registration of the girl and the 'square black comb', are signs that his thoughts are easily being diverted by his double fear, both of his outing with Leo and of his mother. Again, with the noisy city below and the sky above the situation is extended to the world at large.

When the narrator dives into David's flickering thoughts, the free indirect discourse, blended with inner monologue, shows that the complexity of the outer world reigns also in his mind. He has not thought of the rosary as an anti-Jewish symbol – he is just eight – but as beads bringing him much needed luck:

The beads made you lucky, he said. Don't have to be scared of nothing. Gee if I had! – but don't want it, that's all. Ain't going. And that funny dream I had when he gave me it. How? Forgetting it already. Roof we were with a ladder. And he climbs up on the sun – zip one two three. Round ball. Round ball shining – Where did I say, see? Round ball and they busted it off with a cobble and puts it in the pail. And I ate it then. Better than sponge cake. Better than I ever ate. Wonder what it's made of – Nothing, dope! Dreams. Just was dreaming – (330)

Here his fear of actually going with Leo is overshadowed by the dreams triggered by the acquisition of the rosary beads: to be without fear, eating the sun and taking in the light and the whole universe. But then, as with his thirst at the beginning, he returns to the world of immediate sense perception, thinking of sponge cake. His mother, now coming in from the window cleaning, senses his nervousness, but with no idea about the inner turmoil of her child. His world is expanding, but with it his fear and his loneliness. The familiar space of the apartment has been invaded by the outside space, the city and the big uncertain world.

After a noisy, violent family brawl, the rosary is found by his father and David flees into the street, now seemingly a safer place than home. The world is turned upside down:

Dusk. Storelight and lamplight condensed – too early for assertion. The casual, canceled stur and snarling of distance. And on the sidewalks, men and women striding with too certain

a gait, and in the gutter, children crossing, calling, not yet conceding the dark's dominion. The world dim-featured in mouldering light, floating, faceted and without dimension. For a moment the wild threshing of voices, bodies, screams, the fury in the pent and shrunken kitchen split their bands in the brain, flew out to darkened east, the flagging west beyond the elevated, the steep immensity of twilight that dyed the air above the housetops. For a moment, the rare coolness of a July evening dissolved all agony in a wind as light as with the passing of a wand. And suddenly there was space between the hedges of stone and suddenly there was quiet even in the fret of the cities. And there was time, inviolable even to terror, time to watch the smudged and cluttered russet in the west beckon to the night to cover it. A moment, but a moment only, then he whimpered and ran.

– Can't! Ow! Can't! Can't run! Can't! Hurts! Hurts! Ow! Mama! Legs! Mama! (403)

For a moment he is transposed to a surreal space of peace and rest and loses contact with physical reality, as he experienced when he went with his father through the city to distribute the milk: “He felt as if his mind had slackened its grip on reality” (274). This lasts only until the physical pain in his legs calls him back; the dreamy space of tranquility without dimensions, encompassing the whole universe, disappears in a flash of a second.⁸ Belonging is nowhere in the real world; migration is turned into a human condition.

3. Lost in Translation

Can one at least talk about it? Yes, but only with a shared language across the different peoples and cultures meeting or colliding in the urban space of migration. This heterogeneity of languages is a key problem, also for the narrator who has to translate David's inner life into a language we can understand and which also exposes the increasing complexity of his life and thoughts. David's thoughts are mostly articulated in Yiddish, the first language of his family and many people in his surroundings. The same goes for the actual conversations between the characters, if not in Yiddish, then in broken Englishes not able to contain what David has on his mind, but only rather practical things. The characters are lost not only in space but also in translation. In this way translation is a central driver in the novel on two levels where mutual communication and understanding are at stake in a world which for most characters is a place of alienation, transition and loneliness, interrupted only by passing moments of love and reconciliation. There is the level of the characters, and there is the level of the narrator who has to translate the speech and thoughts of the characters into readable English without losing the linguistic and cognitive confusion, if not despair, of the characters. The novel is a huge experiment on the necessity, the limits and possibilities of translation in a world of migration.⁹

The sense of alienation and confusion is transferred to the reader as well. In some places we have unfiltered sentences in Hebrew, though transcribed into the Roman alphabet, in Italian, Hungarian, or Yiddish, not always translated by the narrator into English. When David registers that he cannot understand Aunt Bertha's babble, we learn that she and Genya speak Polish as well, which at times is not translated into English but simply left out. When English is used in direct speech, it is rendered as more broken than most readers will be able to decipher without some re-reading of many passages. If David finds the world impenetrable and hard to decode, we are at times at no less of a loss than the boy.

Let us take a random passage to show how the narrator represents the conversation between the characters, the like of which can be found on any of the c. 450 pages. David is talking with the older Leo, from

⁸ At the end David makes an experiment with tram rails, creating a flashing light by creating a short-circuit with a piece of metal as he has seen other street boys do. He hopes to see the light of God as he has heard from the book of Isaiah in the school of the local Jewish rabbi. God touches the lips of Isaiah with burning coal, his sins are forgiven and he sees the light of God. David has an obsession with light as a vision of safety, purity, freedom, security beyond his day-to-day world, but also an experience he can have in this world. In this final section we are also beyond the daily mind of David who is knocked unconscious and believed to be dead. Here, the narrator can no longer just represent the inner and outer events in broken English, free direct discourse or inner monologue, but inserts passages of poetry as well. The whole novel moves to another discursive level.

⁹ See Wirth-Nesher's afterword to Roth.

a Catholic Polish family, while David is a Yiddish-speaking Jewish boy. They have to bridge their cultural differences and their different types of broken English as well. However, they are united by the shared kind of kids' street language of mixed linguistic backgrounds. The narrator has to translate all this for the reader together with the mental state of David. They are talking about David's aunt, Bertha, who now has a candy store:

“Is she got a reggiler big canny staw?” Kneeling before the ice-box, Leo had been buttering bread. And now he pushed several objects from a large platter onto a small one. “Ice cream poller too?” He arose.

“My aunt? Naa. She god just a –” [David] broke off, gaped at what Leo had placed on the table. In one of the plates was a stack of buttered bread, but on the other, a heap of strange pink creatures, all legs, claws, bodies – “Wod’s dat?”

“Dese?” Leo snickered at his surprise. “Don’cha know wat dis is? Dem’s crabs.”

“Cre–? Oh, crebs! Dey wuz green-like, w’en I seen ‘em in a box on Second Evenyeh–“

“Yea, but dey a’ways gits red w’en ye berl ‘em. Dey’re real good! Gonna eat some?”

“Naa!” His stomach shrank.

“Didntcha ever eat ‘em?”

“Naa! Jews can’t.”

“Cheez! Jew’s can’t eat nutt’n.” He picked up one of the monsters. “Lucky I ain’t a Jew.” (319f)

This is an amazing piece of phonetic writing, one of the easier examples in the novel. The problem with the use of plural and singular in verbs, some problems with some of the vowels and with English [ð] and [P] are obvious, and some of the deviations from standard English are not unusual in colloquial speech in many places. They are just boys, so they talk about concrete things, like eating habits, not about the larger religious ramifications.

First of all, David is horrified and then uses his Jewishness as a shield. Crabs are not kosher, but he does not know crabs when he sees them. Although the narrator interrupts with passages in standard English, he is not neutral. He sees things with David’s eyes all the way through. From the observant use of the word ‘objects’ when the crabs are just unspecified things to David via creepy-crawly descriptions, to the generic word ‘monstrous’ when the full digestive horror has entered his timid mind, supplemented by his knowledge of forbidden food without knowing why.

If the theme of migration opens the question of what it means to feel at home in a volatile world of migration, or just safe, translation brings up another issue of safety. This is the topic of trust and mistrust. Matters of language, cognition and honesty are compressed into the problem of translation. Can we trust that we are able to understand what we hear? That people speak the truth? That people are able to express themselves so what they want to say actually comes across? – Clearly, David is ambiguous with regard to crabs, hiding his immediate fear of the food with reference to Jewish habits that he cannot explain. He admires Leo, but does not trust him, and with good reason: Leo wants to exploit him to get close to his step-cousin. When Leo uses the word ‘crab,’ David repeats it, slightly stuttering, a pronunciation different from Leo’s (‘cre–, crebs’), showing that this is an alien word to him, as ‘rosary’ is a little later. David cannot understand the life of Leo and the words and things that belong to it – and vice versa.

Can we trust the translator in spite of the meticulously phoneticized rendering of speech? In the beginning he represents David’s Yiddish, as spoken by a three-year old, in simple English: “Mama, I want a drink” (17). The same applies later when David has lost his way in the city and a woman addresses him:

“Little boy.” The words were in Yiddish. [...] “Are you a Jew?” For a fleeting instant, David wondered how he could have understood if he hadn’t been a Jew.” “Yes” (237).

They both speak Yiddish, not street English where ‘yes’ would have been written as ‘yeah’. On the written page, Aunt Bertha seems to speak colorful English with lots of scolding and swearing, but she actually speaks Yiddish, not English. As with the boys’ broken English translated into phonetic writing, the narrator renders Bertha’s forceful outbursts into a well pronounced and grammatically correct but non-idiomatic English, echoing her Yiddish way of speaking: “He was an old monster, the Baron, may he rot away! His eyes were rheumy, and his lips munched as though he were chewing a cud. He had a back as crooked as his soul.” (147). At times, though, aunt Bertha’s Yiddish accent is shown. David visits her in her candy store:

“Hea, I giff you an pineapple vit’ emmend. Do I speak English better?” – “Yea.” He pocketed them. – “End a liddle suddeh vuddeh?” – “No, I don’t want it.” He answered in Yiddish. For some reason he found himself preferring his aunt’s native speech to English. (309)

No wonder that David finds her loud Yiddish in the streets embarrassing, now that he himself is more accustomed to variations of migration English. It gets even worse when she escorts him to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the small boy has to calm her down and translate for her in his combination of children’s language and broken English (147-151).

David has an astute awareness that language is a source of doubt and mistrust needing translation which, however, only adds to the doubt and discomfort. Hence, what the narrator does when he both thematizes and practices translation, is to represent how the persistent questioning of trust among the uprooted characters is attached to the limits of language and translation just as much as it is connected with the urban turbulence of New York. David’s father, Albert, is the extreme case. He does not have the command of a differentiated language, either of Yiddish or of English, and translates his linguistic deficiency into violence, or a threatening silence, when he is overwhelmed by powerlessness.

In one situation in particular, the narrator uses the whole scale of narrative devices to expose how translation at the same time moves the boundary between trust and mistrust with regard to language, cognition and honesty. David, now aged five, is in the kitchen, sitting on the floor near Genya and Bertha. His presence is forgotten by the two sisters who talk about painful memories from back in Galicia. These memories also involve David, although he only vaguely intuits what it is all about, a lack of understanding which is amplified by the women’s mixing of Polish with Yiddish. That it actually is Polish, he does not know. It is just a strange tongue, the narrator tells us. David is still the eyes and ears of the narrator, but as the narrator also offers us fragments of the conversation in direct speech, which David does not quite apprehend, the adult reader has no difficulty in grasping that it is about Genya’s love affair and David’s biological father.

David only understands that something about him and his beloved mother is hidden, and this remains with him as a mistrust even of her, the safest person in the world. Nobody is lying to him, though, and he is not lying either. They are just talking about things he should not know, and he is just in a place where he should not be at that moment without having the courage to make his presence known. So, whereas the two sisters trust each other when sharing the hidden details of the past – “Can’t you trust me?” Bertha exclaims (192), the situation as a whole produces mistrust.

It is a long sequence, comprising the whole chapter 9 of book 2, but a few selected details will illustrate the point. David hears and sees his mother:

“There are only three people who know,” she began with an effort. “Mother, father, myself of course, and – and another – in part. I shouldn’t want –.”

“Oh, No! No! No! Trust me Genya.”

David squirmed, shivered with anticipation, fear. [...] The oblique nod of her head seemed to beckon her sister to join her in the realm of another speech [Polish]. For when she spoke again her words had fused into that alien, aggravating tongue that David could never fathom. [...] Her

eagerness tantalized him, goaded him into sharper listening. It was no use. He scrutinized her mother. The color has risen to her throat. Now her eyes stared and were dark and she spoke rapidly. Now they narrowed and the wide brows knit crookedly. Pain. What hurt her?" (195)

Now and then the two interlocutors again shift into Yiddish and David snatches some words, but also new words he does not know. So he still has no clue as to what the sisters are talking about:

– But – Listen! That was a Yiddish word! A whole phrase! “After the old organist, dead” ... Another! “Alone in the store” ... A word! “Handsome” Like mica-glints in the sidewalk, another phrase! “A box of matches” ... He turned steadily to watch her. [...] What was an “orghaneest”? He was educated, that was clear. And what else, what did he do? He might find out later if he listened. (196)

He has to make a combined linguistic and conceptual translation beyond his abilities. The transcription of ‘orghaneest’ both mimics the foreignness of the word to him and the accent of the two women. Moreover, like his mother who has “no words” (198) and asks: “How shall I put it into words” (200), David is also engaged in the initial translation of experience on the brink of comprehensibility into language.

Toward the end of the conversation, his confusion becomes almost unbearable and the disquieting shift to Polish only adds to his uneasiness:

With the same suddenness as before, meaning scaled the horizon to another idiom, leaving David stranded on a sounding but empty shore. Words here and there phrases shimmering like distant sails tantalized him, but never drew near. [...] It seemed to him, lying there almost paralyzed with the strain, that his mind would fly apart if he brought no order into this confusion. Each phrase he heard, each exclamation, each word only made the tension within him worse. Not knowing became almost unbearable. He felt as nothing he had ever known were as important as knowing this. (197)

David’s whole world depends on his capacity to translate the words, comprehend their meaning and grasp their wider bearing on his life. He has an acute sense of being lost in translation without ever being found or being able to find a way out.

4. The Political

I promised eventually to come to the issue of the political. Politics, as we know, involves the governance of a state, a community, an institution or a company and the principles and power relations these are based upon. Political is an adjective that will specify different aspects of the type of governance and power in question – political programs, political decisions, political parties, political discourse, political propaganda, political power, political intrigues etc. Of course, literature with a marked political profile is also political, that is, literature engaged in certain ideological battles or addressing political issues as constitutive themes with a decisive influence on plot, characters etc. such as migration, finance or geopolitics. However, there are endless shelves of books without any such political features, or books that engage with political issues so as to create a backdrop for the narrative, the imaginary language or the use of other aesthetic devices that does not determine the basic structures of the text. Roth’s novel is clearly a novel of that kind.

Hence, the term ‘the political’ may be more relevant. Both politics and the political have to do with *polis*, the city-state. If politics concerns its governance; the political involves everything that defines the shared life of humans in a larger social organization on an individual and collective level. ‘Everything’ ranges from language, the orchestration of sense perception, psychology, cognition, communication, rheto-

ric, ethics, imagination – to the extent that such factors shape the shared life of humans.

Chinua Achebe, who more than most writers brought the political onto the literary scene, makes the following point:

The matter is really quite simple. Literature, whether handed down by word of the mouth or in print, gives us a second handle on reality, enabling us to encounter in the safe, manageable dimensions of make-believe the very same threats to integrity that may assail the psyche in real life; and at the same time providing through the self-discovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with these threats whether they are found within problematic and incoherent selves or in the world around us. (Achebe 170)

A novel like Roth's could be said to be such a second handle. Highlighting place awareness and language as crucial, also outside the field of politics in the narrow sense, Roth makes the political a concrete experience in human life, determining the identity of humans in a social and cultural setting where the power and limits of place and language are questioned through the themes of migration and translation. The use of politics in literature is based on reference, whereas the unfolding of the political has to do with a contextualization that reveals the political as a dimension of most literature.

To look for references to geopolitics and capital in this novel will not get us very far, although both aspects frame people's lives. The task at hand is rather to challenge literary studies to constantly work in a more subtle way with new contextualizations of literature in order to make it engage with the political through literary strategies. This is a pressing issue in a cultural setting of intensified globalization. It is important to make us recognize that politics belongs only to isolated spots of the larger landscape of the political. We need more detailed maps to cross the whole landscape of literature and open our eyes to new social and cultural vistas encompassing a larger and more complex dimension of culture than the space of politics.

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World Literature and World History

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Abstract:

From the very beginnings of the discipline in the middle of the nineteenth century, the study of world literature has been part and parcel of Comparative Literature. However, for most of the time, what was meant by “world literature” within the discipline of Comparative Literature was largely restricted to European literature, and usually even to only some major European literatures. In this sense, the study of world literature effectively “worlded” the world according to Europe’s, or by extension the West’s, vision of itself and of the world it commanded until recently, and as reflected also in the world histories written during the same period. As of the end of the twentieth century, and accelerating as of the turn of the millennium, the study of world literature, and of world history, has been “worlding” the world differently, following changing geopolitical circumstances. In all this, China plays a major role.

Keywords: world literature, world history, China

To anyone working in the field of literature it is no secret that since the turn of the millennium there has been an increased interest in the study of world literature. Suffice it to think of Pascal Casanova’s *La République mondiale des lettres* (1999, translated into English as *The World Republic of Letters* in 2004), Franco Moretti’s essay “Conjectures on World Literature” (2000), followed by many other essays on the same subject now collected in his *Distant Reading* (2013), and David Damrosch’s *What is World Literature?* (2003), to simply mention the three works that have had most impact. Damrosch has also been the chief editor of the six-volume *Longman Anthology of World Literature*, the first edition of which appeared in 2004. The chief competitor to that Longman anthology now is the *Norton Anthology of World Literature*, a much updated and expanded version, again in six volumes, of a long-running Norton anthology that since the 1950s, and under various titles, had covered something that passed for world literature until roughly the end of the twentieth century. I say “had passed for world literature” because in essence the term then merely covered European literature, mostly ancient Greek and Roman, and also Italian, Spanish, French, English and German literature, with a minute sprinkling from some other “minor” literatures. In its new dispensation “world literature” aspires to make good on its global ambition, as testified most evidently by the two anthologies I just mentioned. Why was there this turn-around? And what are we to expect from the study of world literature in the near future? These are the questions I want to address.

It is commonplace to credit Johann Wolfgang (von) Goethe (1749-1832) with the invention of the term *Weltliteratur* or world literature in one of his conversations with his amanuensis Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854) as recorded by the latter in his *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (1836-148, *Conversations with Goethe*). In fact, though, Goethe, because of his enormous reputation throughout Europe, only gave the term the wide currency it subsequently gained. The term itself was already used some fifty years before Goethe ever used it by August Ludwig von Schlözer in his *Isländische Litteratur und Geschichte* of 1773, when he said that “Es giebt eine eigene Isländische Litteratur aus dem Mittelalter, die für die gesammte Weltlitteratur eben so wichtig, und größenteils außer dem Norden noch

ebenso unbekannt, als die Angelsächsische, Irrländische, Rußische, Byzantinische, Hebräische, Arabische, und Sinesische, aus eben diesen düstern Zeiten, ist." (Schamoni 289). (There is a proper Icelandic literature from the Middle Ages, which for the totality of world literature is as important, and beyond the North just as unknown, as are the Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Russian, Byzantine, Hebraic, Arabic, and Chinese literatures from these same dark times). To illustrate the haphazard knowledge his contemporaries had of Icelandic literature, but in fact all of the literatures he had just enumerated, Schlözer uses the fictional example of a Chinese visiting Europe buying specimens of various kinds of European writing, and upon his return to China keeping these in a closet where many years later they are discovered by another Chinese who on the basis of these scant and really coincidental materials goes on to construct what he thinks of as "European" literature. That Schlözer here singles out China is no coincidence. Schlözer was not primarily a literary historian, but a general historian, who had written, or would write, on Swedish, Russian, and Dutch history, but also on the history of trade in the time of the Phoenicians, and on world history, even producing an introduction to world history for children in 1779. And his interest in China was undoubtedly spurred by the then more general interest with European philosophers in that country. That interest, in turn, followed from these philosophers' more general concern with world history, or with what the Germans called *Weltgeschichte* and the French *histoire universelle*. The birth of *Weltliteratur*, or world literature, then, is closely linked to the study of world history. Goethe, although as far as I know he never mentions Schlözer, was undoubtedly familiar with the discussions on *Weltgeschichte*. He knew some of the main actors in that discussion, such as the German philosopher Herder, personally. In fact Goethe had arranged for Herder to receive an appointment at the court of the Duke of Weimar, where Goethe himself lived. Beyond this, though, discussions on *Weltgeschichte* and *histoire universelle* simply formed part of the intellectual climate of Goethe's era. In these discussions China played a central role. It is also important to note that Goethe's very first remarks on *Weltliteratur* were inspired by his reading of a Chinese novel in translation. So let us now have a look at what were the thoughts on world history as they circulated in Goethe's time.

Until the eighteenth century China plays no, or at best only a very minor part in world histories by European historians. In his *Histories*, written in the early fifth century BCE, it was Herodotus' intention to record the past of all peoples and regions known to him, in essence Greece, the Mediterranean, Persia, Egypt, and North Africa. The latter he saw as part of Asia, as his world had only two continents: Asia and Europe, with Europe to the North and Asia to the South of a line running from the Pillars of Hercules, or Straits of Gibraltar, through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and the Black and Caspian Seas. In Herodotus's view the two continents were surrounded by water, although he was unsure of Europe's far northern parts. Although Herodotus claimed to have travelled through many of the regions he described himself, and to have gathered information from travellers, merchants and the like eyewitnesses, especially what he reported about the more peripheral regions of his world smacks more of legend and fantasy than known fact, although of course here too he may have been reporting what he heard from, or read with, others.

Diodorus Siculus, or Diodorus of Sicily, in the first century of our Common Era wrote a forty-volume *Ἱστορικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* or *Bibliotheca Historica* in which he drew on the work of many earlier historians to trace the history of the world as known to him from the mythical beginning, over the Trojan War and the reign of Alexander the Great, to the time of Julius Caesar. Herodotus and Diodorus saw history as primarily driven by the ambitions of rulers, and the resistance this provoked, with Herodotus often interpreting the career of such rulers as following the pattern of Greek tragedy, with hubris leading to a final fall.

The medieval chronicles, both in Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire, mostly just listed dates and events devoid of a narrative framework, and put everything in a Christian context. In fact, this is still the case with the eleven-volume *Histoire Universelle* (1626-1630) of Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné (1552-1630) and the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681) of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704), with the notable difference that d'Aubigné writes in defense of Protestantism and Bossuet of Catholicism.

Things change in the eighteenth century. Of course, by then Europe was well aware that there lay a mighty empire far to the East. After all, the Mongol conquest of much of the Eurasian continent, including

forays into Eastern Europe and the establishment of the Golden Horde Khanate in what we now know as Russia, had brought “China” almost frighteningly close. Marco Polo had brought back fabulous tales about the land and court of the Great Khan, and Catholic missionaries had been traveling China for some centuries already, some of them rising to important positions at the imperial court. Yet the eighteenth century saw an increased interest in China because of some specific circumstances.

To begin with, as Peter Frankopan states in his recent *The Silk Roads*, “in the 1680s, the Qing Court in China lifted its restrictions on foreign trade, leading to a surge in exports of tea, porcelain and Chinese sugar” (Frankopan 270). So, he argues, “the late seventeenth century marked the start of a new era of contacts between Europe and China” (Frankopan 270). Frankopan notes that these contacts “were not confined to commerce.” “The mathematician Gottfried Leibniz, who developed the binary system, was able to hone his ideas thanks to texts about Chinese arithmetic theories sent to him by a Jesuit friend who had gone to live in Beijing towards the end of the seventeenth century” (Frankopan 270).

At the same time, though, Europe was rapidly arriving at a world view in which it saw itself as superior to the rest of the world. So even while acknowledging the existence, and also the antiquity, of parts of the world beyond Europe, European thinkers were at the same time setting up these “other” societies and civilizations as negative counterparts to their own. This, of course, is at the heart of Edward Said’s critique of “orientalism,” which in the eighteenth century starts to emerge as a field of knowledge and a discipline.

Montesquieu (1689-1755) in his celebrated *De l’Esprit des Loix* (1748, *On the Spirit of the Laws*), Part III, Books XIV through XIX, attributes the superiority of Europe over Asia and the other continents to the former’s being blessed with a temperate climate facilitated by a particular geography, leading to a Europe marked by a zest for liberty while Asia is ruled by despotism. And in Chapter XXI of Book XXII, which itself features in Part IV, Books XX through XXIII, addressing the relationship of the Law to various aspects of Commerce and Trade, Montesquieu ascribes the then still relatively recent rise of Europe in the world to the increase of commerce of the European nations with the world beyond Europe following the voyages of discovery: “La boussole ouvrit, pour ainsi dire, l’univers” (Montesquieu 641, the compass, so to speak, opened up the world).

Voltaire, in the introduction to his *Abregé de l’Histoire Universelle depuis Charlemagne, jusques à Charlequint* (1754, *Survey of World History from Charlemagne to Charles V*), partially follows in Montesquieu’s footsteps when he states that:

ma principale idée est de connoître autant que je pourrai, les moeurs des Peuples, & d’étudier l’Esprit humain. Je regarderai l’ordre des Successions des Rois & la Chronologie comme mes guides, mais non comme le but de mon travail. (Voltaire s.l.)

(my principal idea is to know in as far as I can the customs of the various peoples and to study the human mind. I will take the succession of kings and chronology as my guide, but I will not make them the goal of my work.)

But just as he intends to set the (hi)story right as to the only relative importance of Princes and Potentates, he also immediately does the same with regard to Europe’s place in the history of the world:

Avant de considerer l’état où étoit l’Europe vers le tems de Charlemagne, & les debris de l’Empire Romain, j’examine d’abord s’il n’y a rien qui soit digne de mon attention dans le reste de notre Hémisphère. Ce reste est douze fois plus étendu que la Domination Romaine, & m’apprend d’abord que ces monumens des Empereurs de Rome, chargés de titres de Maîtres et Restaurateurs de l’Univers, sont des témoignages immortels de vanité & d’ignorance, non moins que de grandeur.

Frappés de l’éclat de cet Empire, de ses accroissemens & de sa chute, nous avons dans la plupart de nos Histoires Universelles traité les autres hommes comme s’ils n’existoient pas. La

Province de la Judée, la Grèce, les Romains se sont emparés de notre attention; & quand le célèbre Bossuet dit un mot des Mahométans, il n'en parle que comme d'un déluge de Barbares. Cependant beaucoup de ces Nations possédoient des Arts utiles, que nous tenons d'elles: leurs Pays nous fournissoient des commodités & des choses précieuses, que la Nature nous a refusées; & vêtus de leurs étoffes, nourris des productions de leurs terres, instruits par leurs inventions, amusés même de les jeux qui sont le fruit de leur industrie, nous nous sommes fait avec trop d'injustice une loi de les ignorer. (Voltaire s.l.)

(Before looking at the state in which Europe found itself at the time of Charlemagne, and the ruins of the Roman Empire, I first examine whether there is nothing worth my attention in the rest of our hemisphere. This rest is twelve time larger than what fell under Roman rule, and the first thing it teaches me is that the monuments of the Emperors of Rome, carrying the titles of masters and restorers of the universe, are the immortal witnesses of vanity and ignorance, no less than of grandeur.

Struck by the success of that Empire, of its growth and fall, we have in the major part of our world histories treated other people as if they had not existed. The province of Judaea, Greece, and the Romans have gotten all our attention; and when the famous Bossuet says one word about the Muslims, he only talks about them as a flood of barbarians. Yet many of these nations had useful crafts, which we inherited from them: their countries gave us commodities and precious things, which Nature had withheld from us; and clothed in their fabrics, fed by what their lands produce, taught by their inventions, entertained even by the games that are the fruit of their diligence, we have too unjustly made it into a law for us to ignore them.)

True to his intention, Voltaire in the first twenty-six pages of his work discusses China, and in a further twenty-eight pages he turns to India, Persia, Arabia, and “Mahométisme” or Islam.

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), whom I mentioned earlier as a personal friend of Goethe, published the four parts of his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humankind) from 1784 to 1791. Part I in five books discusses the physical conditions of the earth we inhabit, the realm of plants and animals in relation to Man, a comparison between animals and Man, the specificity of Man, and the spiritual powers ruling the realm of Man. Part II in another five books discusses the organisation of the world of Man in the various regions of the earth, the influence of climate and geography on Man, the various forms of human life this has caused, the role of language and religion, and the various traditions about the creation of the earth and Man. Perhaps surprisingly for a theologian and minister, and notwithstanding the fact that in his “Vorrede” he had dedicated his work to God, in the final chapter seven of his tenth book, “Schluß der ältesten Schrifttradition über den Anfang der Menschengeschichte,” Herder gives short shrift to Biblical and other religious traditions. If indeed there has been such a thing as the Flood, Herder says, and Asia in particular for him uncontrovertibly bears witness to such an event having happened,

Allenthalben am Urgebürge der Welt bilden sich nach der Überschwemmung Völker, Sprachen und Reiche, ohne auf die Gesandtschaft einer Familie aus Chaldäa zu warten; und im östlichen Asien, wo der Ursitz der Menschen und also auch [421] die stärkste Bewohnung der Welt war, sind ja noch jetzt offenbar die ältesten Einrichtungen, die ältesten Gebräuche und Sprachen, von denen dieser westliche Stammbaum eines spätern Volks nichts wußte und wissen konnte. Es ist ebenso fremde, zu fragen, ob der Sineser von Kain oder Abel, d.i. aus einer Troglodyten-, Hirten- oder Ackerkaste abstamme, als wo das amerikanische Faultier im Kasten Noah gehangen habe. der feste Mittelpunkt des größten Weltteils, das Urgebürge Asiens, hat dem Menschengeschlecht den ersten Wohnplatz bereitet und sich in allen Revolutionen der Erde fest erhalten. Mitnichten erst durch die Sündflut aus dem Abgrunde des Meers emporgestiegen,

sondern sowohl der Naturgeschichte als der ältesten Tradition zufolge das Urland der Menschheit, ward es der erste große Schauplatz der Völker, dessen lehrreichen Anblick wir jetzt verfolgen. (Herder 420-21)

(Everywhere in the oldest part of the world after the flood we find peoples, languages and empires without their waiting for the arrival of a family from Chaldaea; and in East Asia, where lies the origin of Man and where the majority of men on earth lived, we still find the most ancient institutions, the oldest customs and languages, of which our Western tribe of a later people knew nothing and could know nothing. It is just as strange to ask whether a Chinese is a descendant of Cain or Abel, that is to say whether he originates from a caste of troglodytes, hunters or farmers, as it is to ask whether an American skunk hung in Noah's cupboard. . . . the fixed centre of the largest continent, ancient Asia, has been Man's first place of abode and has remained so through all the earth's revolutions. It is not because it emerged first from the deeps of the sea after the flood, but because both according to natural history and the most ancient traditions it is the urland of Man, that it became the first great theatre of humanity, upon which to cast our eye, as we will now do, will be most instructive.)

Consequently, then Herder, like Voltaire before him, in the first of the five books making up Part III of his work proceeds to address the history of China. Further chapters deal with "Kotschinchina, Tongking, Laos, Korea, die östliche Tatarei," and Japan, Tibet, and "Indostan," concluding with some "Allgemeine Betrachtungen über die Geschichte dieser Staaten" (General remarks on the history of these states). The twelfth book treats the history of "Babylon, Assyrien," and "Chaldäa, Meder und Perser, Hebräer, Phönizien und Karthago, Ägypten," and concludes with "Weitere Ideen zur Philosophie der Menschengeschichte" (Further ideas on the philosophy of human history). Only then does Herder turn to Greece in his thirteenth book, followed by a book on the Etruscans and Romans, and finally a book on how "Humanität," an attitude of "Menschlichkeit" or "humaneness," is the ultimate goal of humanity, a state characterized by "Vernunft und Billigkeit" (Reason and Justice). Part IV, again in five books, discusses the history of various ethnic European groupings, Christianity, and developments in Europe during the Middle Ages and up to the Renaissance. Herder had a further Part V planned, which he never completed, and which followed the course of history up to his own present. The final book, number 25, was to present "Die Humanität in Ansehung einzelner, in Verhältnis zu der Religion; in Rücksicht der Staatsverfassungen, des Handels, der Künste, der Wissenschaften. Das Eigentum des menschlichen Geistes. Sein Wirken überall, auf alles. Ausichten." (Humanität with regard to the individual, in relation to religion; with an eye to state institutions, commerce, the arts, the sciences. As the property of the human mind. How it affects everywhere, everything. Prospects for the future.)

In the same year 1784 in which Herder published Part I of his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) expressed much the same ideas in his short essay "Idee einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht" (Ideas on universal history from a cosmopolitan perspective). Starting from the assumption that Nature and Providence have created Man to a specific purpose, Kant in a number of logical steps or "theses," argues that (Thesis Five) "The greatest problem for the human race, to the solution of which Nature drives man, is the achievement of a universal civic society which administers law among men." Just as the free will of individuals need be checked by laws that ensure that no man's free will hamper that of his fellow men, so too "In a league of nations, even the smallest state could expect security and justice, not from its own power and by its own decrees, but only from this great league of nations, from a united power acting according to decisions reached under the laws of their united will." Thesis Eight reads, "The history of mankind can be seen, in the large, as the realization of Nature's secret plan to bring forth a perfectly constituted state as the only condition in which the capacities of mankind can be fully developed, and also bring forth that external relation among states which is perfectly adequate to this end." Therefore, Kant concludes, "This gives hope finally that after many reformative revo-

lutions, a universal cosmopolitan condition, which Nature has as her ultimate purpose, will come into being as the womb wherein all the original capacities of the human race can develop.” Thesis Nine, then, posits that “A philosophical attempt to work out a universal history according to a natural plan directed to achieving the civic union of the human race must be regarded as possible and, indeed, as contributing to this end of Nature.” (Kant s.l.)

In many ways, Montesquieu’s ideas on the influence of climate and geography, as also taken up by Herder, and Herder’s and Kant’s teleologies of “Humanität” and “Weltbürgerlichkeit” or world citizenship under a world federation of nations come together in the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (1837, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*) of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). For Hegel, history, in accordance with Providence, strives to attain absolute “Geist” or “Spirit.” “Given this abstract definition,” he argues in his Introduction to the *Vorlesungen*, “we can say that world history is the record of the spirit’s efforts to attain knowledge of what it is in itself” (54). At the beginning of his essay on “The natural context or the geographical basis of world history” appended to the Introduction, Hegel distinguishes between what he calls the frigid and torrid zones, and the temperate zone. In the former, he claims, the life of the intellect and of reason are well-nigh impossible. It is the latter that is the natural home of these things, and given the difference in available landmasses in the northern and the southern hemispheres it is the northern part of the temperate zone that ‘must furnish the theatre of world history’ (Hegel 155). Given the other natural features of this northern temperate zone, moreover, it is the north-western part of Europe that must play the main role on this stage. “The Orientals,” Hegel posits,

do not know that the spirit or man as such are free in themselves. And because they do not know this, they are not themselves free. They only know that One is free; but for this very reason, such freedom is merely arbitrariness, savagery, and brutal passion, or a milder and tamer version of this which is itself only an accident of nature, and equally arbitrary. This One is therefore merely a despot, not a free man and not a human being. The consciousness of freedom first awoke among the Greeks, and they were accordingly free; but, like the Romans, they only knew that Some, and not all men as such, are free. ... The Germanic nations, with the rise of Christianity, were the first to realize that man is by nature free, and that freedom of the spirit is his very essence. ... the penetration and transformation of secular life by the principle of freedom, is the long process of which history itself [is made up] ... World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom – a progress whose necessity it is our business to comprehend. (Hegel 54)

It is these general remarks “on the different degrees of freedom – firstly, that of the Orientals, who knew only that One is free, then that of the Greek and Roman world, which knew that Some are free, and finally, our own knowledge that All men as such are free, and that man is by nature free – supply us with the divisions we shall observe in our survey of world history and which will help us to organize our discussion of it” (Hegel 54-55). In a further appendix to the Introduction, “The Phases of World History,” Hegel then sees as “the goal of world history” that “the spirit must create for itself a nature and world to conform with its own nature, so that the subject may discover its own concept of the spirit in this *second nature*, in this reality which the concept of the spirit has produced; and in this objective reality, it becomes conscious of its subjective freedom and rationality. Such is the progress of the Idea in general; and this must be our ultimate point of view in history” (Hegel 208-209). Hegel saw this Idea as most fully realized in what he calls “the Germanic world” (Hegel 206), which for him comprised what today we call Western Europe. Given that he also saw the State as the ultimate result as well as guarantor of “this reality which the concept of the spirit has produced” it has often been assumed that his view of world history singled out Prussia, the state of which he himself was a citizen, as the embodiment of what he called the “Geist seiner Zeit” and therefore as the provisional culmination of world history. This is certainly the way Hegel’s philosophy of (world) history was interpreted by the proponents of German unification under Prussian leadership not long

after Hegel's demise, and how it has been appropriated by (sometimes extremist) German nationalist movements thereafter. In fact, such a transformation of Hegel's views of (world) history fit the wave of nationalism washing over Europe after the upheavals of the Napoleonic era under the aegis of Romanticism. As a consequence, most historiography as of roughly the 1830s for the longest time was concerned with national history rather than world history.

If in the eighteenth century, starting with Montesquieu, then, we find that world historiographers consistently include China in particular in their considerations, we also notice that in general this happens as a foil to European history, which almost invariably is presented as superior and more advanced because it is seen as more dynamic. Voltaire, for instance, maintains that "le corps de cet Etat subsiste avec splendeur depuis plus de 4000 ans, sans que les lois, les moeurs, le langage, la manière même de s'habiller aient souffert d'altération sensible" (Voltaire 2, the main body of this state for more than 4000 years has existed with great splendour, without noticeable changes to its laws, customs, language, or even its ways of dress). And even if Voltaire credits the Chinese with having invented many of the techniques and appliances commonly used in Europe in his own time, he also consistently downgrades the use the Chinese themselves have made of these inventions: "La Boussole, ainsi que la Poudre à tirer, étoit pour eux une simple Curiosité" (Voltaire 15, the compass, like gun powder, for them was simply a curiosity). In contrast, suffice it to remember Montesquieu's remark that for the Europeans the compass opened up the world. Voltaire explains the "peu de progrès" (lack of progress) of the Chinese from on the one hand their "respect prodigieux" (prodigious respect) for tradition, and on the other hand the complexity of their writing system. Hegel, some seventy years after Voltaire, apparently still shares the latter's opinion when he posits that "the character of the *Far East*, and of the Chinese empire in particular" is that "it cannot change itself by its own efforts" (Hegel 198). China, then, is presented as Europe's "most other 'Other':" ancient and immutable China as the antithesis to modern and dynamic Europe.

When Goethe in conversation with Eckermann on 31 January 1827, then, remarked that he found the characters in the Chinese novels from which he first gathered his ideas on world literature to be not so different from those in European novels, his own included, even while this may have corresponded to Herder's and Kant's ideas on *Humanität* and world citizenship, he also seems to have gone against the grain of the more general thinking about China as it obtained in contemporary world history theories. Likewise, although Goethe is always credited with having put *Weltliteratur* on the map of literary studies, from a world history study point of view his intervention, as my reference to Schlözer indicates, was rather belated. And of course his insistence on the coming of an age of world literature was almost immediately after his death belied by a focus, first in Germany and then around Europe, on national literatures and the writing of histories of national literatures. If world literature entered into the picture at all it was always as the lesser term when compared to some national literature. As just one illuminating example, though there are plenty more, we may point to Richard Moulton's 1911 *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture*, in which he defines "world literature as "Universal Literature [by which he means the sum total of all literatures] seen in perspective from a given point of view, presumably the national standpoint of the observer" (Moulton 6), a scope he somewhat later enlarges to "the English-speaking peoples" (Moulton 9). If we replace Moulton's "English-speaking peoples" with "Europeans," this more or less remained the perspective from which to study world literature until almost the end of the twentieth century.

In the meantime, and as I have had occasion to argue elsewhere, the Eurocentric view of world literature particularly with an eye to Chinese literature, has been duly corrected, at least in intention, in the two major world literature anthologies I mentioned earlier, the Longman and Norton editions. As I argue in another paper, it has also been corrected in the comparative approaches to world literature practised for instance in Alexander Beecroft's *Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China* (2010) and Wiebke Denecke's *Classical World Literatures: Sino-Japanese and Greco-Roman Comparisons* (2014). For another example we may turn to Karen Thornber's *Empire of Texts in Motion* (2009), in which she traces how Japan served as hub for the spread of European literary influences, especially from France,

throughout East Asia, and particularly through Korea and China. However, and that is the point I want to make, even these more recent views on world literature in one way or another still start from the national literature approach that has been the rule since roughly the middle of the nineteenth century, and which implicitly also created the very possibility for the birth of comparative literature. I would here want to argue for yet another approach to world literature, and as with the very beginnings of world literature I will first look at what is happening in the field of world history for cues. Again, China here plays a major role.

Until the end of the twentieth century in world history as well, an essentially Eurocentric view remained dominant. Even if H.G. Wells *Outline of History* (1920) or Arnold Toynbee in his twelve-volume *A Study of History* (1934-1961) paid much attention to non-Western civilizations, they invariably saw Western civilization as the culmination of history and the world's inevitable future. Western civilization remains the focus even with Oswald Spengler's famous prediction of its end in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918, *The Decline of the West*). In contrast, William Hardy McNeill (1917-) purposely called his own 1963 world history *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, a title that speaks for itself when it comes to its position on human history. Closer to our own times Immanuel Wallerstein in his three *Modern World System* volumes (1974-1989) posits the unity of the world's economic system (and in its wake, or concomitant with it, also other systems such as the military and political ones), as of the sixteenth century, at its core Western Europe, a semi-periphery comprising the rest of Europe, and a periphery containing the rest of the world, all in a relationship of exchange. These exchanges can be charted according to volume, intensity, kind of products, and so on. Moretti adopted a world systems theory approach, along with concepts from evolution theory, in his *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (1998) in which he charted the trade in books, translations, ideas, forms, genres, styles, and motifs in Europe, as well as in his later writings on world literature. Using Wallerstein's own world system theory André Gunder Frank arrived at very different conclusions from Wallerstein in his *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (1998) in which he argued for the centrality of the axis China-India in the world economy and hence world history. Lincoln Paine in *The Sea and Civilization: A Maritime History of the World* (2014) and Peter Frankopan in *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (2015) illustrate the importance of China in a global network of trade and communication ante-dating by far Wallerstein's world system. Robert D. Kaplan, who in a 2012 volume titled *The Revenge of Geography* argued for the importance of geography in geopolitics, in 2014 published *Asia's Cauldron*, in which he locates the South China Sea as the nexus of future world politics. As I have suggested elsewhere, such views on world history might call forth a world literature that is not oriented towards a comparison of national literatures but that studies what Walter Benjamin, and after him Mads Rosendahl Thomsen in his *Mapping World Literature* (2008), referred to as a "constellation" comprising, to stay with our focus on China and its "world," works by Marco Polo (the *Travels*), the sixteenth-century Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões (the *Lusiads*), Joseph Conrad (his tales and novels set in the Indonesian archipelago and the China seas), the Dutch early twentieth-century poet J.J. Slauerhoff (poems, novels, stories set in China), the Italian twentieth-century novelist Italo Calvino (*Invisible Cities*, modelled after Marco Polo's *Travels*), and the Portuguese contemporary novelist Gonçalo M. Tavares (*Uma viagem a Índia*, modelled after Camões), all of whom wrote about what we used to call the "Far East," in the widest sense: going there, getting there, trading there, failing there and getting lost there, and do so in a densely woven web of intertextuality.

But other constellations are possible, following other approaches to world history. John Robert McNeill, the son of William Hardy McNeill, in 2000 gave *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. In a similar vein, Robert B. Marks in 2015 published the third edition of his *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*. A good example of a world literature study along ecological lines is Karen Thornber's *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*. In fact, Thornber is picking up on a number of recent developments in world history with books planned on *Global World Literature*

and Health: Moderating Expectations, Negotiating Possibilities, Climate Change and Changing Cultures, Leprosy, Culture, and Global History, and Networking Literatures: East Asia and the Indian Ocean Rim.

And there is Jürgen Osterhammel with his *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (2014 I English, German original in 2009), which adopts a truly global perspective on all aspects of life during the nineteenth century. More piece-meal approaches can be found with Sven Beckert's *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014), and many more such books dealing with specific commodities or products. But one could also think of even more general works such as Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1999) or Yuval Noah Harari's *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (2011). Asking "what is world history?" Paine in the Introduction to his *The Sea and Civilization* gives the following answer: "world history involves the synthetic investigation of complex interactions between people of distinct backgrounds and orientations. It therefore transcends historians' more traditional focus on politically, religiously, or culturally distinct communities seen primarily in their own terms at a local, national, or regional level" (Paine 4). Replace "world history" with "world literature" and you have a marvellous programme for the future of a discipline!

In fact, this is exactly what Christopher Busch argues in a piece called "Areas: Smaller than the World, Bigger than the Nation," in the American Comparative Literature Association's most recent Report on the State of the Discipline. Busch calls for "the pursuit of new (or renewed) geographies that go beyond the nation but resist the centrifugal pull, the temptation, of the world." One way of transcending the nation is via Gayatri Spivak's "critical regionalism," at term she used in her 2007 *Other Asias*, which looks at units larger than the nation, linked in what Spivak in her *Death of a Discipline* volume of 2003 still called a renewed form of "area studies." Busch proposes a redefinition of "area" to comprise the continental (hemispheric America, Europe), oceanic (The Pacific Rim, Transatlantic), imperial (Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian), linguistic (Sinophone), and commercial (the Silk Road). In another piece in the same Report Christian Moraru takes the idea of "world literature" to its logical conclusion by arguing for a "planetary" versus a "global" literature, whereby he ascribes an ethical dimension to the former, concerned with safeguarding the planet earth entrusted to humanity, as opposed to the indiscriminate global commercialism threatening this planetarity. That China, and hence Chinese literature, stand to play a prominent, and most likely a determinative role in all this is beyond doubt.

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The Ethics of World Literature

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Abstract:

There has been no time in the West when ethics were not part of the discussion of the value and import of literature. The study and promulgation of world literature, however, raises unique challenges in regard to the ethics of reading, interpretation, and translation. This paper notes the ethical dimensions of Goethe's dialogue with Eckermann that remains a touchstone for scholars of world literature. It then compares those dimensions with some contemporary theories of world literature, and queries contemporary philosophical aesthetics for models of reading most adequate to the task of approaching world literature.

Keywords: literary ethics; Chinese literature; aesthetics; world literature; Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The discussion of literary ethics is broad and varied enough that I will not have time to follow its every twist and turn here. "Ethics" is one of those words in English which seems to be understood intuitively more than it is rigorously defined. I proceed from the basic definition that ethics concerns systematizing, regulating, and recommending right courses of conduct. We are all familiar with one variety of ethical criticism: the kind that judges the moral qualities of characters and actions in a work. Is Antigone's attitude when she insists on burying her brother the morally correct one, for example, or merely an example of willfulness or oppositional-defiant disorder? This moral valuation of literary characters first seen in Plato's *Republic* and in Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen* has continued down to the present day. Plato, in that same work, first tied the ethical standards of characters in epic and tragedy to the overall effect of a work on its audience, and seemingly in a direct and proportional fashion. Logically, it would seem, the ethics of individual characters and actions became by extension or contagion the ethics of the text, and by extension of its author, towards its reader. Great authors came to be seen as great moral educators and as the successors to religious sacerdotess. Following postmodernism, on the other hand, a new conception of ethical criticism arose, in which the ethical moment flows in the other direction, from the reader to the text. One does justice to a text the way one does justice to a person, in this way of thinking. Readers of texts should display "openness and attentiveness, the suspension or emptying of the self and the receptive alertness to the otherness of the text" (Wallace 14).

What about the ethics of world literature, however? Since world literature is not a text but a network of textual relations, the ethics invoked by world literature tends to be systemic rather than individual in nature. Literary texts mediate value systems, norms and ethical questions through how they tell – that is, both through the specific use of language (semantics, syntax, rhetoric) as well as through narrative approaches. These approaches are, in the context of studies on narrative ethics, which has a tradition stretching back several decades, or several millennia if we include Gorgias and Plato, much studied; and yet, with new literary practices on the one hand and the development of narratology, postcolonial studies and gender studies as well as the development of new media on the other, new questions arise. Since the 1990s, when the field of world literature began to be theorized in a coherent way, world literature debates have consistently been conducted on the basis of ethics, with the ethical stances only rarely being explicitly laid out, as I will at-

tempt to do here.

There is primal scene in the formation of world literature. It occurs on the morning of 31 January, 1827, when the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe informs his friend, Johann Peter Eckermann, that he has lately been reading a Chinese novel that has been translated into French. Eckermann reacts with surprise, expressing his feeling that such a thing must look very strange, but Goethe reassures him that in fact the Chinese “think, act, and feel almost exactly like us, and we soon find that we are perfectly like them, except that all they do is more clear, pure, and decorous, than with us.”¹ A bit later, Eckermann asks whether the particular novel that Goethe has been reading is an especially noble specimen of the genre, and Goethe responds that no, it is merely one among thousands, and that the Chinese had already been writing them since the Germans were still living in the woods. Goethe expresses here the *Menschheitsideal* (ideal of humanity) that permeates much of his later work: the hope of a kind of universal translatability between cultures based on similar thought, action, and feeling. Goethe furthermore ethically acknowledges a filial debt to the Chinese, a young person’s respect for an elder. He implies that Europeans could learn from the Chinese how to be more clear, pure, and decent. After a comparison with the licentiousness of the French songwriter Béranger, Goethe is led to the first of his pronouncements on world literature: “I perceive more and more that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, and revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men” (22). No one should think that he or she has done anything extraordinary by composing a good poem. “But, really, we Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit, when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us” (23). There is perhaps some justification for our thinking that Goethe is here referring to the interlocutor Eckermann’s ignorance that the Chinese would be capable of writing novels, in ignorance of a shared global humanity.

This preliminary discussion leads Goethe to his famous pronouncement on world literature: “National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach” (23). As has often been remarked, Goethe’s idea of world literature is an emergent one: world literature is not a thing, an entity, only secondary a market and commercial process, but primarily a goal of enlightenment. Less frequently remarked is the “muss” in his statement, the moral imperative of bringing about world literature. Each of us *must* work to hasten the coming. But what does Goethe mean by “each of us”? Does the “us” include authors, critics, teachers, students, readers? We are called to help bring world literature about: we owe it to someone. Analogous to the debt owed the Chinese for writing novels long before Europeans had become civilized, this is a debt owed by those living in the present, those whose vision is restricted by the boundaries of nation, to unspecified future generations. Goethean world literature is a hermeneutics and worlding of the previously hidden and invisible. Its first pedagogical subject is Johann Peter Eckermann, for whom Goethe has just shrunk the distance between self and other.

From beginning to end of this conversation, then, we see that this ethics of openness towards the Other permeates Goethe’s original proposal for the coming of world literature. We see it elsewhere in Goethe’s famously scattered writings on the topic. For example, the Scotsman Thomas Carlyle “has written the life of Schiller, and has estimated him throughout as it would have been difficult for a German to do” (Strich 349). Friedrich Schiller was an important German writer, and a friend of Goethe, yet Goethe here does not reserve the essential or “correct” judgment on Schiller to himself, nor even to those who read Schiller in German. Goethe reverses here the Herderian notion of absolute identity between cultures and their writers, providing the additional and paradoxical insight that cultures not only have a right to treasure their own writers just because they are their own; they can also be mistaken about or overlook aspects of their own writers. A fuller understanding of literature comes through cross-cultural comparison, and it is the ethical obligation of literati to care about what the world thinks of “their” writers. Goethe reserves an honorable

¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Johann Peter Eckermann, “Conversations of World Literature (1827),” in David Damrosch, Natalie Melas, and Mbongiseni Buthelezi, eds., *The Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009), 21. Further citations in text.

place for German culture as a catalyst for world literature, counsels them to patience and tolerance, and once again, almost in Harold Bloom's sense of creative misreading, rescues misunderstanding from the trash heap of absolute uselessness: "The nations all look to us, they praise, blame, adopt and reject, imitate and distort, understand or misunderstand us, open or close their hearts towards us: We must accept all this with equanimity because the result is of great value to us."² The exact nature of this great value, however, remains unspoken.

It is no surprise, then, that Goethe emerges as a hero of Pheng Cheah's recent book on world literature, *What is a World?: Postcolonial Literatures as World Literature*, due to the German thinker's positing of *Weltliteratur* as a spiritual idea and a form of ethical consideration of the Other. Cheah expresses the ethical dimension of world literature thus: "Literature [...] can play an active role in the world's ongoing creation because in its very existence, it enacts the opening of the world by the coming of the other, and it makes the world by disclosing and constituting actors" (Cheah 186). This disclosure is perhaps what Eric Auerbach meant in the famous essay "Philology of World Literature" when he said that "Our earth, the domain of *Weltliteratur*, does not merely refer to what is generically human or common."³ The generic and universal yield a static rather than a dynamic and future-oriented conception of world literature. So, too, does a world literature which is limited to exchange across space. For Cheah, by enacting the coming of the Other, world literature provides a kind of comfort or consolation, an idea to which we will return in a bit. The philosopher G. F. W. Hegel, in Cheah's view, kept the idea of spirit and of immanence, but gave it a basis in conflict rather than in hermeneutics, creating thereby the original "clash of civilizations," in which radically different approaches to art cannot mingle or coexist, but rather one must annul one another. There is a verticality rather than a horizontality to Hegelian world literature, with Europe on top. Karl Marx then reduced world literature to the workings of the global marketplace that abolish regional and local barriers in every sphere of human society: "The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. [...] The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature."⁴ Marx's vocabulary of "national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness" almost seems taken from Goethe's conversation with Eckermann. Yet, in his achronological, spatial and commercial conception of world literature, the dimension of time delivered by literature is abandoned. Goethe's idea of intellectual commerce is reduced to the exchange of "hard goods" that eliminates sectarianism. The idea of world literature as a "common property" rather than a "universal possession" raises the spectre of the elimination of national and linguistic differences in literature – Auerbach's apocalypse.

Cheah's Heideggerian formulation of world literature as an opening to the world connects us with philosophical approaches to literary ethics that do not explicitly invoke world literature. Among the multitude of philosophers examining ethics in literature, Daniel Jacobson's work is perhaps the most applicable to WL, and also the one that comes closest to the Goethean project. Jacobson argues that by rendering valuable something that we would not normally consider to be valuable, a literary work reveals heretofore unacknowledged values and gives us a sense of what it's like to hold a perspective different from our own, thereby making its readers more empathetic and open-minded:

The primary ethical function of narrative art is to provide imaginative acquaintance with the ethical perspectives which works of narrative art characteristically trade in, but may or may not advocate. This acquaintance model is compatible with poetic assertion, but it does not require it; we can learn from a work without being taught by it. Hence it is not biased toward didactic works

2 Goethe, *Über Kunst und Altertum*, vol. 6, part 1, 1827. Cited in Strich, p. 349.

3 Eric Auerbach, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," in David Damrosch, Natalie Melas, and Mbongiseni Buthelezi, eds., *The Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009), 126.

4 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. Theo D'haen, César Domínguez and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (New York: Routledge, 2013), 17.

or propaganda. [...] The goal of broad imaginative acquaintance is best served by works that illuminate novel or otherwise significant but not necessarily good or true perspectives (Jacobson 333).

Of course, Jacobson's is a general theory of the ethical dimension of literature, not a theory of world literature, but we may posit that the greater the cultural distance between reader values and textual values, the broader the imaginative acquaintance. When I have my world literature students read the epic of India called *The Ramayana*, it is not with the intention of turning them all into good Hindus, even though it is very much the function that epic has had in Indian cultural history. While so-called "national literatures" are constructed as monuments with the purpose of reconfirming reader's identities within an imagined community, world literature better fulfills Jacobson's "imaginative acquaintance model" of literary ethics.

In a volume of essays called "Teaching World Literature," Kathleen Komar describes just such a moment of literature's power of imaginative acquaintance as she tells the story of her giving a world literature class to her students at the University of California, Los Angeles during the Rodney King riots. These riots, which paralyzed large parts of the city for six days in 1992, pitted a variety of ethnic groups against each other: blacks vs. whites, blacks vs. Asians, and so forth. The ethnic tensions that worked themselves out in violent acts during the riots were present in Komar's world literature classroom as well. Two German texts that deal with issues of justice, poverty, and oppression were on the class syllabus. Komar narrates: "We discussed in both texts what happens to a society when the very legal and political systems that are supposed to uphold justice and equality become polluted and corrupt. [...] Suddenly those of my students who could not confront one another directly because of racial and ethnic distrust had found a way to talk about their personal feelings and how they experienced the injustice of their various positions" (Komar 107). What made this a "teaching moment" for Komar was a curious combination of immediacy and distance: students were focused on issues that also appeared in the texts; at the same time, however, it was easier to talk about the issues by addressing their treatment in texts that are equally foreign to everyone than by addressing each other. An existential relationship is established with world literature precisely through the distanciation and "imaginative acquaintance" that it provides.

But at what point does mere acquaintance with and non-commitment to a particular viewpoint become a problem rather than a virtue? Jahan Ramazani quotes from Sylvia Plath's famous poem "Cut":

Saboteur,
Kamikaze man—

The stain on your
Gauze Ku Klux Klan
Babushka
Darkens and tarnishes...

And then notes: "Plath's figurative leaps, especially from herself to Jews in Nazi concentration camps and Japanese victims of nuclear bombs, have been criticized as too free and indiscriminate. [...] Plath may seem irresponsible for linking the Allied saboteur to the Axis kamikaze, the Ku Klux Klan hood to the Russian babushka, and for eliding their political and historical differences—except that her metaphorical connections also underscore the cross-regional and global violence registered and compressed in the poetic unconscious at midcentury" (Ramazani 593-594). Is Plath's poem the hermeneutic understanding of the other posited by Goethe, or a ransacking of imagery without a deeper understanding or connection, a kind of generalized Orientalism? Is metaphor here, as Ramazani suggests, an ethical connection between different forms of suffering? Or is the suffering really that of ourselves as readers who are set adrift on the endless ocean of global cultural reference?

One can perhaps connect Goethe's ethics of world literature to the later statements of Auerbach, Cheah, Komar, and Ramazani through the idea of consolation (Trost). What sort of consolation can world literature provide to its readers, and how ethically ground is such consolation – not holding out the false promise of universals, for example? Those of us who read, study, and teach world literature would do well to analyze our fables so as to confront this ethical dimension of our project.

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“Hati-Colt”: a Chinese-oriented Literary Theory

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Abstract:

In this age of literary theory and criticism, all various theories originated in the West have been imported into China; many Chinese academics have followed what the Western theorists have advocated passionately and indiscriminately.

On the other hand, Western academics have virtually paid no attention to what their Oriental counterparts have written. Traditional Chinese literary criticism has even been denounced as vague, lacking of analysis and conceptual system, and unsuitable for modern-day literary discourse; it is suggested that traditional Chinese criticism should transform itself to become modernized.

The author, while being benefited from Western theory and criticism, maintains that much of the traditional Chinese criticism is very valuable for its brilliant ideas, its high analytical quality, its systematic presentation and its capability for critical application. He has thus developed a literary theory based upon China's paramount classic on literature, *Wenxin Diaolong*. In the process of construction, he draws ancient and modern ideas from China and the West as materials for support, illumination, supplementation and East-West comparison. The theory is labeled “Hati-Colt” in which “Hati” means “Heart-art and Tradition-innovation,” and “Colt” means “Chinese-oriented literary theory.”

This paper is in the main an abridged version of the author's long article written in Chinese concerning “Hati-Colt.” To demonstrate the applicability of “Hati-Colt,” a few examples in practical criticism are given in this paper. The author maintains that “Hati-Colt” covers important elements in the study of literature and it aspires to be a common poetics suitable for universal discourse.

Keywords: *Wenxin Diaolong*(*WXDL*) , literary theory, comparative poetics

1. “Grand commonality” between Chinese and Western poetics

The 20th century and the present decades have been an age of literary theory and criticism. Various critical theories such as Marxism, psycho-analysis, New Criticism, archetypal criticism, structuralism, feminism, reception aesthetics, deconstruction, post-colonialism and new historicism came on stage one after another. They all originated in the West and have been imported to China where critics since the start of the 20th century have adopted these sundry theories in their critical endeavors, many of them following passionately and indiscriminately what the Western theorists advocate.¹ On the other hand, Western scholars and critics have virtually paid no attention to what their Oriental counterparts, modern and ancient, have written. In treatises by T.S. Eliot, René Wellek, Northrop Frye and Terry Eagleton, to name but a few, we

¹ Please refer to Appendix I for remarks on “difficult criticism.”

do not find any statement from Confucius, Liu Xie, Qian Zhongshu or James J.Y. Liu.² There are misunderstandings and perhaps even bias shown in some Sinologists' studies on traditional Chinese literary theory.³

In the meantime, Chinese academics of literary theory are found having lost the ability to speak or write about their own discipline on the international level—the so-called “suffering from aphasia,” (181-223) a term made popular by Cao Shunqing. Not a few of them have even gone so far as to denounce Chinese literary criticism as impressionistic, vague, lacking analysis and conceptual system, and unsuitable for modern-day literary discourse, while praising Western criticism for its precision, analytical quality and systematization. Some Chinese scholars have suggested that traditional Chinese criticism should transform itself to become modernized.⁴

Does this accusation against traditional Chinese literary criticism hold good, and for that matter, can we thus infer that Chinese literary criticism and Western literary criticism are vastly different?⁵ To explore this issue, we may first look into the classical period of literary criticism; and perhaps to our surprise we discover that there is quite a “grand commonality” (“*datong*”) between Chinese and Western poetics. Take Ben Jonson's long poem in praise of Shakespeare published in 1623 for example (this present year of 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of the bard's death).

In his “To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us,” Jonson declares that he would try to appraise Shakespeare's work as fairly and objectively as he could; then through comparison, he extols Shakespeare's greatness and uniqueness. He further notes that Shakespeare cherishes nature as well as art; and that the master is gifted as well as hard working. The concepts Jonson has adopted (which might be considered commonsensical to-day) and the rhetoric he has used in praising the English dramatist indeed come close to those in Liu Xie's *WXDL (Wenxin Diaolong)*, which in one translation is *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, and in another one——my own one——is *The Heart and Art of Literature*, and in other treatises of classical Chinese criticism as well. Jonson hails Shakespeare's artistic brilliance and compares the English bard to the sweet swan of Avon; these metaphors remind one of such remarks on authors and their works as “with glittering words and flying high like a singing phoenix” (Liu Xie's words), “glorious lights with a thousand-mile length” (Han Yu's words) and “morning sun and singing phoenix” (Zhu Chuan's words) in classical Chinese criticism.

Ben Jonson is definitely neither a descendant of Ban Gu nor Jiang Kui; however, he has written, as this poem praising Shakespeare demonstrates, a piece of literary criticism with Chinese characteristics. Or, to put it in another way, Liu Xie, Han Yu and Zhu Chuan have written pieces of literary criticism with English characteristics.⁶

To be sure, there are differences and sometimes vast differences in things Chinese and things Western; nevertheless, as the late Qian Zhongshu, a scholar of great erudition, has contended, “the hearts and minds of peoples by the East Sea and by the West Sea are the same.”(1) What Qian recognizes here is the

2 See also Wong Waileung. “20th century literary theories: China and the West”.

3 See also Wong Waileung. “Notes on Chinese and Western ways of thinking—an issue in comparative poetics”.

4 See Part I (“Introduction”) of Wong Waileung. “Heart-art and tradition-innovation: construction of a Chinese-Western literary theory based on *Wenxin diaolong*” to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Cultural Studies and Literary Theory* published by Sichuan University Press.

5 While traditional Chinese literary criticism has been denounced as impressionistic, vague, and indulgent in using metaphorical language, there is a case in which a well-respected Western critic has written his theoretical essays in such a “Chinese” style. Janet Sanders and Laurence K.P. Wong, et al, have criticized the vague language in Walter Benjamin's discourse on translation theory. Please refer to Sanders. “Divine Words, Cramped Actions: Walter Benjamin—an Unlikely Icon in Translation Studies” in *TTR*, 16.1 (2003): 163. Wong draws readers' attention to Benjamin's “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” (“The Task of the Translator”) translated by Harry Zohn. In that article, Wong asks us to see a “heady cultural cocktail” at work, to see how “eminently quotable,” how “meshed with the thoroughly enigmatic” it is. Below are a few quotations from this article: “While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds” (79). “Unlike a work of literature, translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one” (79-80). “Indeed, the problem of ripening the seed of pure language in a translation seems to be insoluble, determinable in no solution” (80). The above information (including the quotes from Benjamin) is quoted from Laurence K.P. Wong's book *Dreaming across Languages and Cultures: A Study of the Literary Translations of the Hong lou meng*. New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014:43.

6 For sources concerning Jonson's criticism and other related quotations in the above paragraphs, see also Wong Waileung. “Ben Jonson's literary criticism in ‘Chinese’ style—Ben Jonson's praise of Shakespeare and Chinese and Western comparative poetics”.

sameness in the basic values, psychology and archetypal patterns of behavior of the humanity; and Qian in his works including the four-volume *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* (*Guanzhuei bian*) has provided us with hundreds and thousands of pieces of evidence to illustrate his view.⁷ The function of literary criticism is to analyze and to appraise works of literature and their authors, this idea being as Chinese as it is Western. The above-quoted metaphors used by Liu Xie and Ben Jonson, one phoenix and the other swan, are different but they are both beautiful birds; moreover, the use of metaphors is a common practice in describing literary styles among critics Chinese and Western. To cite one more comparison, the ancient great Chinese poet Qu Yuan is hailed by Liu Xie as “casting influences on generations of writers,” while Shakespeare is proclaimed by Ben Jonson in the afore-mentioned poem “not of an age, but for all time.”⁸ Great writers of the East Sea and of the West Sea are alike in their influence—their “grand commonality.”

2. Introducing “Hati-Colt” based on WXML or Heart and Art of Literature

Since 20th century, literary criticism in the West and then in the East has become a very complex and even difficult matter with “grand diversity.” Different theories one after another enter and exit on the literary stage; criticism is an academic discipline and research enterprise universally at universities. Literary criticism with a large quantity of terminology and complexity in operation has striven to become a science, with its fact-oriented, analytical, logical, systematic and objective characteristics emphasized by literary researchers. Although I for one do not believe that literary criticism is a science—simply because criticism involves evaluation and evaluation is bound to be subjective to a certain extent, we have no reason to reject a literary theory (including a critical theory of literature) with the above-mentioned scientific qualities.

As regards the accusation that traditional Chinese criticism is vague, lacking analysis and conceptual system, and therefore unscientific and unsuitable for modern-day literary discourse, I opine differently. For all the benefits I have earned from Western criticism ancient or modern, I ought to say that much of the traditional Chinese criticism is very valuable for its brilliant ideas, its high analytical quality, its systematic presentation and its potential for contribution to a common poetics. For this reason I have developed a theory of literature based upon the ideas in China’s paramount classic on literature, *Wenxin Diaolong* (hereafter *WXML*), written about 1500 years ago by Liu Xie. First of all, a few words about *WXML*: It is a book of theory and criticism characterized by its magnificent magnitude and comprehensive coverage; it analyzes and evaluates literature; is systematic in presentation. Its main ideas are: literature is an artistic expression of the “heart” (literature is the art of language); literature has pragmatic values; to excel, a literary work should be innovative.

In the process of constructing this theory, other ancient and modern concepts are drawn from China and the West as materials for support, illumination, supplementation and East-West comparison. This theory can thus be considered as a study in comparative poetics.

This theory I label “Hati-Colt,” in which “Hati” means “Heart-art and Tradition-innovation,” and “Colt” means “Chinese-oriented literary theory.” Here “heart” is a translation of the Chinese word *qing* meaning the emotion, inner idea, content or substance of a literary work; while “art” is a translation of the Chinese word *cai* meaning the rhetoric, language, form or technique of it. As to “tradition,” it is from the Chinese word *tong*; and “innovation” is from the Chinese word *bian*. Both “*qingcai*” and “*tongbian*” are chapter titles in the 50-chapter *WXML*. The theory is so called because its two terms “heart-art” and “tradition-innovation” can most aptly serve as the backbone of the entire theory; they should also be credited for their strength in neatly coordinating the major ingredients of the theory. I need to point out by the way that *WXML* is itself a systematic discourse on literature; however, its organization of contents is not perfect

7 *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* (*Guanzhui bian*) was published in 1979 by Zhonghua Book Company. For a brief introduction to Qian Zhongshu’s thought and a general discussion of “grand commonality” (*datong*) between Chinese and Western poetics, please consult Wong Wai-leung. “Sameness of hearts and minds of peoples by the East sea and by the West sea—on the ‘Grand commonality’ of Chinese and Western cultures”.

8 *Ibid.*

in the sense that there have been disputes concerning the division of the entire fifty chapters into proper categories among modern experts on this classic. With all these explanations, it should be clear that “Hati-Colt” is not my own invention, but rather a restructuring (and at times interpretation) of the basic contents in *WXDL* with the additions of various Chinese and Western ideas of literature.

“Hati-Colt” has five main parts, namely,

- (I) “Heart-art” (content and form);
- (II) “Heart-art,” “style” and “genre”;
- (III) “Analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism);
- (IV) “Tradition-innovation” (evaluation through comparison of various works/authors);
- (V) “Great values of literature”

Further division of contents of “Hati-Colt” is as follows:

(I) “Heart-art” (content and form)

(1) “Heart”: “It is endowed with seven [various] emotions; when moved, they are naturally expressed in words.”

(2) “Art”: It is seen everywhere—“in the sun and moon, in the mountain and river” and “in the books of the sages.”

(3) “Heart” occupies the main position and “art” is subordinate in literature; ideally “heart” comes first and “art” follows.

[The concept of “the oyster produces pearls when diseased” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of tragedy and that of psycho-analysis in the West.]

[From “heart” to “art,” the concept of “imagination” is involved, which is comparable to the same Western concept.]

(II) “Heart-art,” “style” and “genre”

(1) “Physical world”; “time”; “talent”; “learning”—factors casting impacts on the “heart-art” and style of a literary work

(2) Classification of “styles”

[The style “sublime” in *WXDL* is comparable to Longinus’s “sublimity” and to Matthew Arnold’s “grand style.”]

(3) Classification of “genres”

[The concept “physical world” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of archetypal criticism, and that of “humorous and comical” to melodramatic theories in the West.]

(III) “Analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism)

(1) “Difficulty in appraisal”; “difficulty in encountering a discerning critic”

(A) Difficulty in “deep understanding of a work”

(B) “Each critic holding fast to his own interpretation”

[This is comparable to theories of reader’s response and reception aesthetics in the West.]

(2) “Objective and balanced judgments” (ideal attitude in criticism)

(3) First four points of the “Six-point” theory

(A) “Theme-structure-style-genre”

[The emphasis on structure is comparable to the Aristotelian concept of structure.]

(B) “Subject-matter and ideas”

(C) “Rhetoric”

(D) “Musicality”

[Principles of “rhetoric” and “musicality” are comparable to traditional rhetoric, 20th century Russian Formalism and New Criticism in the West. This part of “Hati-Colt” can be enriched by narrative theories in the West which may come under the heading “theme-structure-style-genre.” By the same token, feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, neo-historicism, and gay-lesbian-queer theories, etc, can be put under the umbrella of “subject-matter and ideas.”]

(IV) “Tradition and innovation” (comparing the performance of authors and their works)

- (1) The last two points of the “Six-point” theory
 - (A) “Conformity and counter-conformity”
 - (B) “Tradition and innovation”[The concept “tradition and innovation” is comparable to the ideas in T.S. Eliot’s widely influential essay “Traditional and the Individual Talent.”]
- (2) “Tradition and innovation”; literary history; literary canon; comparative literature
 - (A) “Time changes and literature in content and form also changes.” (literary history)
 - (B) “A classic is that which reigns supreme and does not perish.” (literary canon)
 - (C) Comparative literature[Comparative approach in criticism is commonly found in WXDL but obviously there was no such discipline as comparative literature in Liu Xie’s time.]

(V) “Great values and functions of literature”

- (1) “Glorifying the sages and promoting such virtues as benevolence and filial piety” (contributions of literature to the society)
[These ideas are comparable to the pragmatic theories in the West including Marxism.]
- (2) “Devotion to literature being the only way to achievement and fame” (attainment of fame by means of literature)

With the above added sub-divisions, this framework is still a simple structure. The reader is referred to my fifty-thousand-character article written in Chinese which, to appear in a journal, is a largely amplified version of the above skeleton (hereafter “amplification”). In this skeleton, words, phrases and sentences in quotation marks (“”) are all from *WXDL*⁹; in the “amplification,” major ideas and related quotations are also from *WXDL* and other Chinese treatises on literature (which are to be combined and compared with their Western counterparts). This signifies that “Hati-Colt” has strong Chinese characteristics. It should be noted that the Chinese philosophical concept *yin-yang* (connoting a binary opposition as well as a binary cooperation) is also in the theory since both of the key terms “heart-art” and “tradition-innovation” are with such a *yin-yang* nature. With all its “Chineseness,” this theory (both the skeleton and the “amplification”) also has strong Western characteristics because, apart from the existence of Western terms and concepts in the theory, almost all of its key words and concepts can be similarly or at least roughly expressed in English, a very important Western language.

Translation can never be perfect; inaccurate translation is found everywhere. Translation may even become a “creative treason” against the original text, as Xie Tianzhen has argued. (Xie 13) Furthermore, terms appearing identical or similar in Chinese and in a Western language are not necessarily identical or similar. We also need to bear in mind that a translated term may carry a certain amount of national “colors” of the target language, as Cao Shunqing’s “variation theory” (*bianyi xue*) has maintained. (Cao 153) In spite of what have just been mentioned, this theory aspires to be a common poetics, which is based upon the afore-said “grand commonality” principle (although this theory does not overlook differences between the East Sea and the West Sea); it is a poetics combining the Chinese and Western essential elements in literary study. Even if one is opposed to the idea of “grand commonality” and the reliability of translation, I still contend that in the above skeleton of the theory, we as theorists and critics can find common grounds for our dialogues, and that no one would deny that all of its key terms represent common points of interest and common issues for discussion in any literary discourse, be it Western or Oriental.

⁹ See also Wong Waileung, “Heart-art and tradition-innovation: construction of a Chinese-Western literary theory based on *Wenxin diaolong*” to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Cultural Studies and Literary Theory* published by Sichuan University Press.

3. Application of “Hati-Colt” and the “Six-point” principle as a critical system

For the whole contents of “Hati-Colt,” please refer to the “amplification.” Instead of elaboration on the contents of “Hati-Colt,” let us here have some glimpses of the applicability of the theory. Discourse in rhetoric is a major element in *WXDL*; among its fifty chapters, there are at least five devoted to rhetorical figures including simile-metaphor, hyperbole and antithesis. These three major figures in rhetoric have been cherished by critics since Aristotle in ancient Greece to the 20th century New Critics. We may use Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* as an example to demonstrate the applicability of a relevant concept in *WXDL*. Shakespearean scholars agree that *Romeo and Juliet (RJ)* is particularly rich in rhetoric among all the works of the playwright; there have been monographs and articles analyzing wordplay, oxymoron (language of paradox) and other figures of speech in this drama. With the concept of “parallel-verbal-pairing/ antithetical-verbal-pairing” (*lici*) in *WXDL* as a tool for analysis, we discover a feature in *RJ* that is otherwise overlooked. In this play, phrases and sentences frequently appear in “pairs,” which are strictly or loosely symmetrical both in syntax and in meaning.

In Act 1 Scene 1, the Prince of Verona has this to say when he reprimands the feuding young people :

That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
with purple fountains issuing from your veins ,

“Purple fountains issuing from your veins” and “fire of your pernicious rage,” though not symmetrical in syntax, are an antithetical verbal pair, “fountains” and “fire” being opposite in physical nature. The father of Romeo inquires about the cause of the feud, asking “Who set the ancient quarrel new abroad?” Here “ancient quarrel” and “new abroad,” symmetrical in syntax, are also a pair. Many more pairs follow in the dialogues or soliloquies of the play. Perhaps the most quotable one is this:

Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books;
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks. (II,ii)

Here “toward love” vs “from love” and “from their books [meaning “from school”]” vs “toward school” form the core of the *lici* of this couplet. To be sure, the above-quoted phrases or sentences are not *lici* in the strict sense of the Chinese term; still, the perception of this Chinese term would certainly sharpen the eye of the critic in discerning an important ingredient of the rhetoric in *RJ* which has not been noted by a Western critic. Furthermore, as Robert O. Evans has argued that oxymoron in *RJ* contributes to forming the theme and structure of the play which is about love-hatred and life-death, one may venture to say that, in addition to the antithetical nature of love-hatred and life-death in *RJ*, the acts of matching, pairing and coupling of the two young lovers Romeo and Juliet might be linked to the eminent existence of *lici*. The abundant use of the rhetorical device *lici* also plays an important role in achieving a luxuriant style of this drama.¹⁰

Martin Luther King’s famous speech “I Have a Dream” is another example. It is well known and analyzed that this speech is heavily loaded with similes and metaphors such as “great beacon light of hope,” “flames of withering injustice,” “joyous daybreak,” “long night of captivity,” “lonely island of poverty” and “great vaults of opportunity.” Again, applying the concept of *lici* in *WXDL*, we would say that while the simile-metaphor figure is certainly important in catching the ears or eyes of the audience, the device of “antithetical-verbal-pairing” has added a striking effect to the speech. King has his similes-metaphors posited in antithetical pairs, such as “great beacon light of hope” vs “flames of withering injustice”; “joyous daybreak” vs “long night of captivity”; “lonely island of poverty” vs “great vaults of opportunity.” Here *lici*,

¹⁰ For *Romeo and Juliet* in the light of *WXDL*, and the statement from Evans, see also Wong Waileung. “Applying Chinese theories to the criticism of Western literature: an analysis of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* using Liu Xie’s concepts”.

which frequently joins hand in hand with simile-metaphor, is the most important rhetorical figure in this address. From the two instances, one concerning *RJ* and the other King's oration, we see that the use of antithesis as a rhetorical device is common in Chinese and Western literature; we further discover that by applying the *lici* concept in practical criticism, we have a better understanding of how the theme of antithesis is used.¹¹

As stated in "Hati-Colt," "promoting such virtues as benevolence and filial piety" is a function that a work of literature should perform if it is deemed valuable. The Korean TV series *Daejanggeum* (or *DJG*, debut in 2003) is such a work that would win high praise from the author of *WXDL* if he were a viewer. Well-structured with a line of characters properly delineated, the melodrama *DJG* is elegantly produced with colourful costume, delicate cooking, herbal medicine, natural landscape, comic figures and an enduring romance; above all, with a heroine embodying all Confucian virtues and great beauty. The drama is most ably wrought to achieve the style *yali* (elegant and beautiful) that is highly regarded in *WXDL*. Although we could interpret *DJG* in the light of various Western critical theories, *WXDL* has indeed provided an appropriate critical base for analyzing and evaluating this Korean TV series that has been tremendously popular in Asian countries.¹²

As a Chinese-oriented literary theory, "Hati-Colt" has doubtlessly proven itself very valuable in dealing with Chinese literature. Take Qu Yuan's masterpiece "Encountering Sorrows" ("Lisao") for instance. Experts on the great ancient poet and his works have different opinions regarding the lyrical and narrative structures of this long poem, the problem being that for centuries there has been no consensus as to how to divide the entire poem into small sections or paragraphs. I myself have tried to find a clear line of progression of events and emotions in the poem but failed. This failure might be attributed to an authorial lack of orderly design of the work. Liu Xie has warned that "if the author indulges himself in words, he, being prolix, would suffer from confusion". This might be the case of Qu Yuan while writing his "Lisao." The heart of the poet was apparently sorrowful, grieved, puzzled and confused in his tragic encountering of life; he did not work his experiences and emotions into an orderly structure. I contrast Qu Yuan's case with those of Du Fu and Dante, both saddened and very likely puzzled in their hearts when putting their life experiences in words, but the principle of orderly structure was upheld and carried out in their writings of "Qiuqing" ("Autumn Meditation") and *Divine Commedia* respectively.¹³

"Hati-colt" is proved very valuable in treating modern Chinese literature as well. Let us here apply the theory to the works of the contemporary poet-essayist-critic Yu Guangzhong, who is versatile, prolific and widely admired and influential in the Chinese communities around the world, and see how the ancient theorist Liu Xie could contribute to our task. In an article "The *WXDL* [The Heart and Art] of Yu Guangzhong" written in Chinese¹⁴, I "open" Yu's heart to reveal his themes of love, patriotism, politics, diaspora and environmental protection, etc., and illustrate his art of literature as rich imagery (Yu is a master of simile and metaphor), clarity and readability (which is not generally existent in contemporary poetry written in Chinese) without sacrificing bountifulness of artistic significance. Concerning his craftsmanship of imagery, I invoke a passage in *WXDL* to describe his performance: "To the eye, it is brocade or painting; to the ears, sonorous music; it is sweet and mellow in taste, and fragrant as scented pendants [flowers]. In these achievements, one reaches the pinnacle of literary writing." Yu has established a literary style by blending the Chinese and Western traditions and then producing fresh pieces of art of his own—he is like a superb craftsman carving dragons (the words *diaolong* in the title of *WXDL* can mean "carving dragons"). Yu Guangzhong's works demonstrate great diversity in content and skill; one sentence in *WXDL* aptly captures the brilliance of this poet-essayist: "with splendid language and high-flying spirit, he is a singing phoenix

11 For King's "I Have a Dream" viewed in the light of *WXDL*, see also Wong Waileung. "Let the carved dragon fly—examples of applying theories in *Wenxin diaolong* to modern Western literature".

12 See also Wong Waileung. "Korean TV series *Daejanggeum* viewed in the light of *Wenxin diaolong*".

13 See also Wong Waileung. "On the structure of Qu Yuan's 'Encountering Sorrows' ('Li Sao'): a commentary based on the theories in *Wenxin diaolong*".

14 Wong Waileung. "The *WXDL* [The Heart and Art] of Yu Guangzhong".

in the literary sky.” In this piece of criticism I do not hesitate to summon the help of 20th century theories such as post-colonialism to reveal the “heart” of Yu’s writing; this maneuver is exactly in line with the way I have taken in constructing “Hati-Colt”: it is *WXDL*-oriented while enriching itself with other Chinese and Western critical concepts.

4. “Hati-Colt” as a common poetics

In “Hati-Colt”, emphasis is given to the “Six-point” (*liuguan*) principle as a system of practical criticism. Critics since the 19th century have hoped to make literary criticism a science; now it is still an art, at best a semi-science, or a “sweet-science.” Of course we can use basically scientific methods to analyze the “heart” and “art” of a literary work, including the type of imagery it presents, the number and type of allusion it has, the number and type of simile-metaphor it employs, the point-of-view it uses as a narrative, the school of thought or philosophy it embodies, and so on; when we come to evaluation, the scientific method fails because evaluation is often a matter of taste, a matter of subjective judgment. Can a critic be objective? It is very difficult but he can try to be less subjective. *WXDL* advises that “One can be considered a good musician only after one has played a thousand tunes, and a collector of arms can be considered a connoisseur only after he has seen a thousand swords. So broad experience and learning are *sine qua non* of true wisdom.” It also maintains that a good critic should “judge impartially, like a balance; and reflect [the reality] without distortion, like a mirror.”¹⁵

We could borrow the word “anatomy” from Northrop Frye’s seminal *Anatomy of Criticism* to describe the operation of the “Six-point” principle. A work of literature should not be judged from a single point of view, but from as many points as we think appropriate. As charted above, there are six aspects: “theme-structure-style-genre”; “subject-matter and ideas”; “rhetoric”; “musicality” “conformity and counter-conformity”; and “tradition and innovation.” The “Six-point” principle is meant to be comprehensive and systematic, suitable for anatomizing and evaluating literature traditional and modern, Chinese as well as Western.

The fact that modern-day theories such as Marxism, feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, and Gay-lesbian-queer theories were not in the mind of the author of *WXDL* and thus apparently absent from his book is not necessarily a problem if we remember, as afore-mentioned, these Western theories could be included in one of the six points, i.e., “subject-matter and ideas.” If the Confucian-honored values in *WXDL* seem to be at odds with the thought of a Western author who believes in Christianity, there again is a solution: Liu Xie advocates that literature should, again as quoted in the chart, “glorify the sages and promote such virtues as benevolence and filial piety.” Here “sages” are the “hidden God,” be it Christian or Islamic or belonging to some other religions¹⁶, and we believe that human virtues do not exclude honesty, courage, justice, sympathy, etc.

I have in the past two decades written critical essays employing concepts and terms in *WXDL* with Western concepts and terms incorporated (but the writing of the “amplification” and this present article was just completed in recent months). Chinese and Western elements meet in my critical endeavors without any conflict. In particular, I have produced a number of essays using the “Six-point” methodology in a point-by-point systematic manner¹⁷; however, since a systematic methodology may turn mechanical and monotonous, I did not encourage myself to frequently do practical criticism in this way. Keeping the possibility of the practice becoming mechanical and monotonous in mind, we can still take up the practice of the “Six-point” methodology in teaching undergraduates how to analyze and evaluate in a comprehensive manner a piece of literature; of course, the students should be warned that substantial evaluation cannot be achieved

15 Two quotations here are both from the chapter “zhiiyin” in *WXDL*. In this paper, quotations from *WXDL* are my own translations or those by Vincent Yu-chung Shih; please refer to Shih, translated and annotated, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*.

16 I borrow the term “the hidden God” from Cleanth Brooks’s book title, *The Hidden God* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1963).

17 The first article I published using the “Six-point” methodology was written in Chinese. This article has an English version: “A Look at Pai Hsien-yung’s ‘Ashes’ through Liu Hsieh’s ‘Six-point’ Theory”.

without a wide breadth of learning of literary works.

Criticism is, in the words of Douglas Bush, “to define and analyze both the substantive materials and the aesthetic components of a particular work, both being considered as the means of expressing a theme; it seeks also to interpret that theme and to assess the total value of the work in itself and in relation to comparable works.” (703) All the key elements in Bush’s statement are included in the “Hati-Colt.” It is my belief that a proper application of critical principles in “Hati-Colt” will do justice to a work of literature. However, if one finds this Chinese-oriented theory inadequate in any respect, one can supplement it. Again quoting Bush’s opinion, when it is found that the old literary history, the history of ideas and myth-and-symbol critics do not contain any criteria of aesthetic value, the critic “may acquire such criteria from elsewhere and use them” in his practical criticism.(702) To put it metaphorically, if we would like to develop more theoretical sub-branches and leaves, “Hati-Colt” is a huge growing tree capable of doing so; if we would like to accommodate more critical concepts, it is a big umbrella capable of doing so; if we would like to cover more headings of literary discourse, “Hati-Colt” is an extra-large-size hat (“hat” from the abbreviation “Hati”) capable of doing so. It is, in short, an open-ended theoretical system.

The establishment of this “Six-point” methodology and, more importantly, the construction of the whole theory of literary art “Hati-Colt,” to speak from the bottom of my heart, is a rebuttal of the accusation that traditional Chinese literary criticism is handicapped by vagueness, lack of analysis and system, and is unsuitable for modern usage. Chinese scholars including comparatists like Wang Ning have urged that Chinese literary theories should go to the world (83) or that we should develop a theory of literature with our own features. I well understand that my “Hati-Colt” is but a prototype and there is room for enhancement and adjustment. Having put forth the skeleton of the theory (in a drafted version) in the 1990s and having repeatedly applied concepts and terms in *WXDL* including the “Six-point” methodology in my critical practices, my humble voice intended to do “poetic justice” to traditional Chinese poetics has been heard and supported by dozens of academics.¹⁸ I hope to receive even more responses in the future. Most importantly, I hope that *WXDL*, the “carved dragon” will become a flying dragon, first flying over the land of China and then further and further reaching across the entire globe.

Appendix I: On “difficult criticism”

There is a kind of criticism which may be labeled “difficult criticism”: it usually comes with a great amount of new technical terms, mostly fashionable at the time of writing the piece of criticism, or of the author’s own coinage; the terms are often not clearly defined; there are usually long and complex sentences; the theme of the text is difficult to grasp. A number of critics are opposed to “difficult criticism”; for example, Douglas Bush in 1963 complained that texts of criticism are filled with “horrid pseudo-scientific diction embedded in shapeless, jagged, cacophonous sentences”; he also remarked that “jargon does not make simple ideas scientific and profound; it only inspires profound distrust of the user’s aesthetic sensitivity.” (The statements are quoted from Douglas Bush, “Literary criticism and Literary History,” in W.J. Bate, ed., *Criticism: The Major Text*, enlarged edition, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1970; This article is a speech delivered at the Ninth Congress International Federation for Modern Languages and Literature held at New York University, August 25 to 31, 1963.)

Another complaint is from C.T. Hsia夏志清 who in 1970s said that the theory of structuralism is “somewhat like calculus; it is several times more difficult than algebra and geometry that we had studied in high school.” Please refer to C.T. Hsia’s book 《人的文学》 published in 1977 by 纯文学出版社 in台北, p.126-127.)

Still another one is from Qian Zhongshu钱锺书 who remarked in 1980 in a personal letter to this author that there has been misuses of jargons in present-day criticism, quoting an European scholar reprimanding

¹⁸ I would like to take this opportunity to announce that my new book entitled *Wenxin Diaolong: A Chinese-oriented Theory and its Application* (*Wenxin Diaolong: tixi yu yingyong*) which includes most of my articles mentioned in this paper is planned for publication in October, 2016.

manding his peers whose “technical terms are pushed to and fro, but the investigation stands still.”

The persistently fashionable “difficult criticism” reached a ridiculous “climax” when Professor Alan Sokal had his submitted and reviewed article published in the *Social Text* spring/summer 1996 “Science Wars” issue. Entitled “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity,” Sokal’s article is in fact a hoax, its author identifying it as “a pastiche of left-wing cant, fawning references, grandiose quotations, and outright nonsense... structured around the silliest quotations [by post-modernist academics] he could find about mathematics and physics.” This kind of “criticism” is more than difficult; it is “outright nonsense” but it had passed through peer-reviews and got published. “Difficult criticism” continued to appear after Sokal’s Hoax.

Wayne Booth in 2003 wrote to deplore the loss of intelligibility in critics’ writing. In a letter to “The Future Editors of *Critical Inquiry*” published in the Winter 2004 issue of *Critical Inquiry*, Booth sadly stated that in *Critical Inquiry* “a surprising number of current entries leave me (and other older readers I’ve talked with) utterly confused and turned away”; he wished that he could have taught [some VIP critics whose names are omitted in this present quotation] how to construct intelligible sentences and paragraphs”; he urged the journal to “publish no article that the editors themselves don’t fully understand, even if the author happens to be famous.” (pp. 3501-352)

A considerable number of Chinese academics have welcome Western criticism in a wholesale manner; they study their works (often through less-than-accurate translations), and write their papers which are often less than intelligible. Sometimes they complain about the “difficulty” of Western critics like Jacques Derrida but admire and follow their theories anyway.

Appendix II : Terms in “Hati-Colt” with Chinese characters and *hanyu pingyin* inserted

In order not to bother the reader who does not read Chinese with the original Chinese terms in *hanyu pingyin*, all those terms are omitted in the main text. They are now supplied in the following.

- (I) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art” (content and form);
- (II) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art”, “*ti*体” or “style” and “*wenbi*文笔” or “classification of genres”;
- (III) “*pouqing xicai*剖情析采” or “analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism);
- (IV) “*tongbian*通变” or “tradition-innovation” (evaluation through comparison of various works/authors);
- (V) “*wente*文德” or “values of literature” (functions of literature).

Further division of contents of “Hati-Colt” is as follows:

(I) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art” (content and form)

- (1) “*qing*情” or “heart”: It is endowed with seven emotions; when moved, they are expressed in words.
- (2) “*cai*采” or “art”: It is seen everywhere--- in the sun and moon, in the mountain and river and in the books of the sages.

(3) “*qing*情” or “heart” occupies the main position and “art” is subordinate in literature; ideally “heart” comes first and “art” follows. (discussion on relationships between content and form)

[The concept of “*bangbing cheng zhu*蚌病成珠” or “the oyster produces pearl when diseased” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of tragedy and that of psycho-analysis in the West.]

[From “*qing*情” or “heart” to “*cai*采” or “art”, the concept of “*shensi*神思” or “imagination” is involved, which is comparable to the same Western concept.]

(II) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art”, “*ti*体” or “style”, and “*wenbi*文笔” or “genre”

(1) “*wuse*物色” or “physical world”; “*shixu*时序” or “time”; “*caiqi*才气” or “talent”; “*xuexi*学习” or “learning”— factors casting influences on the “heart-art” and style of a literary work.

(2) classification of “*ti*体” or “style”

[The style “*zhuangli*壮丽” is comparable to Longinus’s “sublimity” and to Matthew Arnold’s “grand style.”]

(3) “*lunwen xubi*论文叙笔” or “classification of genres”

[The concept of “wuse物色” or “physical world” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of archetypal criticism, and that of “xie谐” or “humorous and comical” to melodramatic theories in the West.]

(III) “pouqing xicai剖情析采” or “analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism)

(1) “wengqing nan jian 文情难鉴” or “difficulty in appraisal”; “zhiyin nan feng知音难逢” or “difficulty in encountering a discerning critic”

(A) difficulty in “pi wen ru qing披文入情” or “deep understanding of a work”

(B) “ge zhi yiyu zhi jie各执一隅之解” or “each critic holding fast to his own interpretation.”

[This is comparable to theories of reader’s response and reception aesthetics in the West.]

(2) “pingli ruo heng, zhaoci ru jing平理若衡,照辞如镜” or “objective and balanced judgments” (ideal attitude in criticism)

(3) the first four points of the “liuguan六观” or “Six-point” theory

(A) “weiti位体” or “theme-structure-style-genre”

[The emphasis on structure is comparable to the Aristotelian concept of structure.]

(B) “shiyi事义” or “subject-matter and ideas”

(C) “zhici置辞” or “rhetoric”

(D) “gongshang宫商” or “musicality”

[“zhici置辞” (rhetoric) and “gongshang宫商” (musicality) are comparable to traditional rhetoric and 20th century Russian Formalism and New Criticism in the West; this part of “Hati-Colt” can be enriched by narrative theory in the West which may come under the heading “weiti位体” (theme-structure-style-genre); by the same token, feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, neo-historicism, and Gay-lesbian-queer theories, etc, can be put under the umbrella of “shiyi事义” or “subject-matter and ideas”.]

(IV) “tongbian通变” or “tradition and innovation” (comparing the performances of authors and their works)

(1) the last two points of the “liuguan六观” or “Six-point” theory

(A) “qizheng奇正” or “conformity and counter- conformity”

(B) “tongbian通变” or “tradition and innovation”

[The concept “tongbian通变” or “tradition and innovation” is comparable to the ideas in T.S. Eliot’s widely influential essay “Traditional and Individual Talent.”]

(2) “tongbian通变”; literary history; literary canon; comparative literature

(A) “shiyun jiao yi, zhiwen dai bian时运交移, 质文代变” or “Time changes and literature in content and form also changes.” (literary history)

(B) “hengjiu zhidao, bukan hongjiao恒久至道, 不刊鸿教” or “a classic is that which reigns supreme and does not perish.” (literary canon)

(C) comparative literature

[Comparative approach in criticism is commonly found in *WXDL* but obviously there was no such discipline as comparative literature in Liu Xie’s time.]

(V) “wende文德” (values and functions of literature)

(1) “guangcai xuansheng, bingyaorenxiao光采玄圣, 炳耀仁孝” or “glorifying the sages and promoting such virtues as benevolence and filial piety” (contributions of literature to the society/nation)

[These ideas are comparable to the pragmatic theories in the West including Marxism.]

(2) “tengsheng feishi, zhizuo eryi腾声飞实, 制作而已” or “devotion to literature being the only way to achievement and fame” (attainment of fame by means of literature)

Note:

This paper is in the main an abridged version of my article written in Chinese and entitled 《“情

采通变”：以《文心雕龙》为基础建构中西合璧的文学理论体系》(“Heart-art and tradition-innovation: Construction of a Chinese-Western Literary Theory Based on *Wenxin diaolong*”). With fifty thousand characters in length, this article will appear in a recent issue of《中外文化与文论》(*Cultural Studies and Literary Theory*) published by Sichuan University Press. Apart from the abridged content of the original article, certain ideas related to literary criticism are added in this paper.

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THE GLOSA: A GENRE TO BE NOTICED FOR ITS CONSTRUCTIVE VALUES

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Abstract:

There are literary genres, the sonnet and the novel, for example, that have been noticed for their special ability to convey specific human and social experiences. Because of the emphasis in literary criticism on the formal aspects of the glosa, this genre has not been noticed for one of its salient characteristics: its reliable usefulness to poets as a vehicle for promoting human and social goodness. Originating in 15th century Spain, with the benefit of translation, in time it has spread internationally. An examination of its history, with analysis of some of its key moments, will reveal that inherent in its formal structure is the capacity to contribute to exposing ways of thinking and acting that are beneficial to people. This is so wherever the glosa is practised. The functioning of two minds, that of the creator of the *texto* and that of the composer of the glosa who selects the harmonious *texto* and thus publicizes it, establishes spontaneously an example and a symbol of conduct that is integrative and constructive. This, in practice, has caused the genre to tend to associate itself decisively with goodness, a value especially needed in our time, and therefore to deserve promotion.

Keywords: genre, glosa, goodness, history, integrative, Spanish America

At this stage in literary history there can be no surprise when a preference is expressed for one of the literary genres in relation to its efficacy in conveying a special reality. William Wordsworth, for instance, illustrating with a sonnet, spoke up for this genre's outstanding ability to convey an emotion, reminding us of how great poets have so used it.¹ And Mikhail Bakhtin showed the unique attributes enjoyed by the novel that equip it, in the hands of a novelist such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, to convey an entire epoch. Their comments have garnered far more approbation than dissent throughout the years. It would perhaps be also useful to identify a literary genre that possesses a special capacity to represent consistently well, not an emotion or a social time and space, but rather a value, one such as social goodness. This task might well beckon the efforts of colleagues in the humanities who are attracted by the idea of goodness and its attainment as a constituent of the inspiration for human existence. To my knowledge no such genre has as yet been identified; and one that I believe may be advanced to occupy this position, the glosa, is only now, in the present study, undergoing the kind of honestly representative examination that would so qualify its candidacy.

The glosa, as it has been predominantly practised from the sixteenth century until today, is a work in which the poet takes from an earlier poet a *texto* consisting usually of four lines and invents a ten-line stanza from each of those lines, with each stanza ending successively with one of the borrowed lines until all four are used up and are fully integrated into the newly created glosa which demonstrates consistencies

of meter and rhyme. The conventional rhyme scheme is ABBAACCDDC. I illustrate the genre with one of my poems in which I approximate, in English, the salient features:

Glosa

Cantemos, pues, querido,
pisando el látigo caído
del puño del amo vencido,
una canción que nadie haya cantado.
“Elegía a Jacques Roumain”
Elegías
Nicolás Guillén

[Let's sing, then, dear friend,
trampling the whip now released
from the fist of the conquered master,
a song that no one has sung.]

Nicolás Guillén, the Cuban, paid his due,
in verses profoundly felt, to his departed
Jacques Roumain whose work had barely started
with his transcendent *Masters of the Dew*.
The noble Haitian like very few
had shown the need to end
the incessant and worsening trend
to castigate Haiti in every way.
The Cuban poet at last could say:
Let's sing, then, dear friend.

For Cuba ended its own castigation,
the principal one, others still persist;
and it has known how to resist
and shed its servile stagnation.
A scientific and cultured nation,
kind to those with pain increased
and in oppression still unceasing,
Cuba for such countries stands reliant,
for good causes ever defiant,
trampling the whip now released.

And so to Haiti Cuba hurried;
infant mortality rates so atrocious
gave no time for being cautious
about bloodshed there that could be lurid.
Canada, invited to help, worried
about this and that, saw no disaster.
Cuba now acted even faster;
hundreds of doctors curing all kinds of rabies,
giving joy and training, saving mothers and babies

from the fist of the conquered master.

The coup and kidnapping of Aristide
brought greater dangers to the fore;
and Canada, so dilatory before,
helps now with all speed in the misdeed.
They patrol and shoot from tank or steed,
while Cubans bring light to places far flung;
greening bare hills, they seem to belong.
Scientists not soldiers, victory they're bringing.
Jacques joins the people in hopefully singing
a song that no one has sung.

In 1943 the German scholar Hans Janner produced his study, "La glosa española: estudio histórico de su métrica y de sus temas," bringing to modern light through his careful scrutiny important aspects of this poetic genre which, because of its characteristically affable and gentle qualities, is salutary for humanity and merits the regard of the humanities. Although these traits could have been recognized as soon as the glosa appeared in the second half of the fifteenth century, it is its persistent moderating presence beyond 1943 and up to our time that may account for the difference in emphasis between Janner's reading of the genre and mine. He made the focus of his study the stringent formal demands made by the glosa in the course of its evolution from the time of its unsteady inception to the polished and settled state it achieved in the Spanish Golden Age. Hence the prominence of the word and the idea of virtuosity in his essay, indicating the considerable formal accomplishment required of the genre's practitioners. Janner, however, prepared the way for another aspect of the glosa to be brought to the fore: that is, its capacity to evoke, with very rare exceptions, positive, humane acts and emotions that seem to be a concomitant function of its specific poetic form.²

The glosa came into being in Spain at a time when poetry was bedeviled by widespread decadence, as was the society itself. Poets known widely to their contemporaries as Juan Poeta (Juan de Valladolid), El Ropero (Antón de Montero) and El Comendador Román were using verse to attack each other in the most scurrilous terms, some of it racially self-deprecating.³ It was Román who, responding to a request from Juana de Portugal, the lonely Queen of Enrique IV of Castile, to interpret a poem sent to her by the Duque de Alba, comforted her with the first glosa⁴ in which the texto is taken from another poet. But only one line of the original poem: "Nunca fue pena mayor" [Never was there greater pain], a line that has become famous in Spanish poetry, appears in Román's glosa at this early stage of the development of a genre that still maintained much of the medieval limited exegetic identity contained in the idea of gloss as clarifying translation.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the Spanish kingdom being united, its religion consecrated and its imperial appetite stimulated, the glosa began to attain the status of national patrimony as an integral part of the poetic heritage. The expanding usage of the glosa during the next century and a half led to Juan Díaz Rengifo's standardization of the genre. The four-line texto, taken from fellow poets or from brief rhymed compositions (*coplas*) existing anonymously as testimonies to the wisdom and humanitarianism of the Spanish people, became the basis for the creation of four *décimas* (ten-line stanzas). The humanitarian trait emerged in the glosa as practised by the majority of the great poets of the Golden Age.

From Cervantes's early *Poesías sueltas* (1569-86) to *El viaje del Parnaso* (1614), his last book of poetry, and from the first book of his first novel, *La Galatea*, to the second part of *Don Quijote*, he produces glosas like a congenial Spaniard of his time, with consummate mastery, employing them in heartening and positive ways, with sympathy for the common people, as he also does with the one recited by the young don Lorenzo that brought such fulsome praise from Don Quijote (*Oc* 1334). With superb skill he attuned his verses to the gentle and dulcet tones of Garcilaso de la Vega, when in the first book of *La Galatea* he presents a shepherd-

ess who, “después que por algún espacio hubo sosegado el afligido pecho, al son del agua que mansamente corría, acomodando a su propósito una copla antigua, con suave y delicada voz cantó esta glosa” (*Oc* 625) [after having calmed her grieving bosom for a while, accompanied by the sweet sound of the water that gently flowed by, suiting to her purpose some ancient verses, with smooth and delicate voice she sang this glosa]. He proceeds to build his glosa on the following texto, in a spirit of deep consolation, and not caring precisely whether he used crossed or embraced rhyme in his *redondillas* (four-line rhymed stanzas):

Ya la esperanza es perdida,
y un solo bien me consuela:
que el tiempo, que pasa y vuela,
llevará presto la vida.
[All hope is already gone,
and to console me but this I find:
time being fleeting and kind,
will soon with my life have flown.]

The most prolific of the Golden Age poets in the production of glosas is Lope de Vega (1562-1635), who scattered these poems throughout his literary work, intercalating them into it so that they play harmonious roles in a variety of circumstances. Always sensitive to the tastes of his people, he showed that the genre is capable of projecting a great range of uplifting personal and national sentiments and situations. He makes it accompany the central themes of his theatre: religion and honor, history and political unity. Like his Golden Age contemporaries, he lived at a time when war after war was being waged by Spain, producing riches for foreign and local financiers and austerity, misery and sacrifice for the general populace, including poets. The wealth extracted from the Spanish-American colonies was being misspent; and divisiveness rather than desired social harmony made interpersonal relations unstable. In such circumstances, with his pronounced nationalist orientation, and as a champion of ideas that strengthen unity to the extent of being precociously democratic, Lope pays explicit tribute to the glosa as a genre that exemplified conviviality and that was born and flourished among the Spanish people. In his time there were frequent contests involving broad-based participation among creators of glosas: and, on witnessing one of these, on the occasion of the beatification of San Isidro, the farm laborer and patron saint of Madrid, in 1620, he declared, with evident great pride: “Deseosos estaban los oyentes de oír glosas, propia y antiquísima composición de España, no usada jamás de otra nación ninguna” (Janer 232) [The people wanted to hear glosas, a true and ancient Spanish genre, not practised ever in any other nation whatsoever].

Lope’s acts of poetic piety seem to have more than made up for his failures to obey the sacred decrees regarding intimate amorous relations, earning him the title of Frey from the Pope. Among his numerous glosas are several—sixteen of them in volume 13 of the collection of his *Obras sueltas* [Separate Works]—that are classified as “Rimas sacras” [Sacred Rhymes] and that have the clear mission of encouraging his fellow citizens to aspire to lives of wisdom and goodness. The superb artistry of his use of the glosa in this sense in his plays has been well observed.⁵

The people in general struggled to overcome the social handicaps caused by an authoritarian monarchical system whose leaders in the seventeenth century, Kings Philip III (1598-1621), Philip IV (1621-1665), Charles II (1665-1700), cared mainly that their subjects observed religious doctrine and supported war efforts.⁶ The resulting chaotic greed and vastly unequal distribution of wealth engendered social difficulties that were a heavy burden for the available vehicles of popular culture, such as the glosa, to bear and so uphold the virtues of friendship, nobility and unity.

There were also unchallengeable handicaps. For example, the racism fostered and enforced by the Inquisition, precluded any real friendship between the Christian mainstream poets and the superbly inventive Luis de Góngora, a Jew whose stature was later to rise markedly. (Cervantes himself had revealed the cor-

ollary of the bias when he characterized Juan de Ochoa, one of his colleagues, as “amigo/ por poeta y cristiano verdadero” *Oc*, 70 [a friend/ for being a poet and a true Christian]). The predilection often shown by Lope and Cervantes for positive humanitarian values, which included a keen appreciation of the glosa, was not sufficient to keep their friendship from being sporadically tested by the hostile currents of their time.⁷ From very early in Lope’s career, the two exchanged compliments. In 1585 Cervantes included Lope for strong praise in the “Canto de Calíope” (748); and, in Lope’s *La Arcadia* of 1598 (642), the pastoral genre and Cervantes as one of its skilled exponents (as we have seen by his framing of his glosa in *La Galatea*) receive an explicit compliment.

The cordiality suffered a blow in 1605 with the publication of Part I of *Don Quijote*, when Lope imagined that he was the target of certain negative allusions made in the novel’s prologue. Cervantes, in turn, suffered anxiety and resentment, including the suspicion that Lope, and not Jerónimo de Pasamonte, seemingly the real culprit, had written the fake preemptive second part of *Don Quijote*.⁸ The plague of fakeries, dissimulation and desperate rivalries that was nurtured by hugely disproportionate personal ambition and the quest first for domination and then for survival that came to infect all levels of Spanish society within and without the Peninsula, and that was a cause of the country’s decline, ultimately enervated the spirit of cooperativeness on which the glosa thrives. The rewarding result of this notorious fakery is Cervantes’s masterful use of it in the second part of *Don Quijote*, a usage that illustrates this author’s extraordinary capacity for an ability about which Edward Bullough theorized brilliantly a hundred years ago in his essay “‘Psychical Distance’ as a Factor in Art and an Esthetic Principle.” Bullough reflected enduringly well on the process by which artists make for themselves the psychological space to create pleasant works, even from troubling realities, such as Cervantes does with this fakery. Cervantes demonstrated this gift in surmounting artistically not only personal matters of this sort but also in his seminal contribution to creating the literary Golden Age out of a very dreary reality.

Reconciliation was achieved between Cervantes and Lope. In his *El viaje del Parnaso* Cervantes selects Lope for his team of good poets, distinguishing him in one of the splendid tercets that comprise the strophic basis of that book:

Llovió otra nube al gran Lope de Vega,
poeta insigne, a cuyo verso o prosa
ninguno le aventaja, ni aun le llega. (74)
[Another cloud rained on the great Lope de Vega,
distinguished poet, whose verse or prose
no one surpasses, or even equals.]

Lope made a conciliatory gesture toward Cervantes, one in which the glosa genre would be centrally involved, although with a subtlety that demands scrutiny, since the precise way in which the glosa functions here has not been clearly perceived.

On the nineteenth of April, 1616, three days before he died of poverty, loneliness and weariness, Cervantes, the writer who had raised to new heights the prose fiction of his literary age, dedicated his last work, the novel *Persiles y Sigismunda*, to Don Pedro Fernández de Castro. The dedication is swamped in pathos. Cervantes, the great artist, in his weakened state, takes the trouble to include, following Fernández de Castro’s name, the aristocrat’s titles, announced in thirty-six words, while taking his final leave as simply “Criado de vuesa excelencia, Miguel de Cervantes” [Servant of your excellency, Miguel de Cervantes]. He begins the dedication itself by referring to a traditional source of textos for glosas:

Aquellas coplas antiguas, que fueron en su tiempo celebradas, que comienzan:
Puesto ya el pie en el estribo,
[Those ancient verses, which were famous in their time, and begin:

With one foot already in the stirrup,
 and he continues:
 quisiera yo no vinieran tan a pelo en esta mi epístola, porque casi con las mismas palabras
 las puedo comenzar, diciendo:
 Puesto ya el pie en el estribo,
 con las ansias de la muerte,
 gran señor, ésta te escribo. (1527)
 [I would wish that they not fit so appropriately in this letter of mine, because with almost the
 same words I can begin, saying:
 With one foot already in the stirrup,
 with worries about death,
 great gentleman, I write this to you.]

To the original lines of the copla, more adopted than adapted by Cervantes (“gran señor” is substituted for “Señora, aquesta” as the only change), Lope adds the two that continue the sentiment:

pues partir no puedo vivo,
 cuanto más volver a verte.
 [since I cannot leave alive,
 or worse ever see you again.]

and makes this five-line stanza the text of a glosa that prepares the denouement of one of his most accomplished and popular plays, *El caballero de Olmedo*.

The public that listens to a glosa in the course of a play is inclined to do so with the custom of judging its compliance with the norms of the genre. In that process, because of the virtuosity involved in absorbing seamlessly the text into the new work, the glosa tends to attract attention to itself, to be a “show-piece” or even a “show-stopper,” as Victor Dixon observed (74) in the course of his study of the use of the glosa in Lope’s play *El castigo sin venganza*. How does Lope integrate this glosa into *El caballero de Olmedo* so that it intensifies and moves forward the emotion of the play and in so doing not allow the five *décimas* to be conspicuously autonomous? He gives it a role in a tense parting dialogue between Alonso and his beloved Inés, with the protagonist’s words conveying precipitous antitheses—“parto y quedo” [I leave and stay], “muerto y vivo” [dead and alive], “triste en mis alegrías” [sad in my happiness], “amor y miedo” [love and fear], with the predominance of “morir,” “muerto,” “muerte,” in the dialogue—all elaborating on the idea of “Puesto ya el pie en el estribo” [With one foot already in the stirrup], integrating it into the pathos of the moment of the play. Lope is so successful at the artistry of making the glosa effective and unobtrusive at the same time that in an introduction to the play, Amando Isasi Angulo, with no mention of the word glosa, in writing of the verses it occupies, merely states: “Don Alonso (2142-2256) se entrevista con doña Inés en una de las escenas más emotivas de la obra”⁹ [Don Alonso (2142-2256) dialogues with Doña Inés in one of the play’s most emotional scenes]. Lope’s other achievement here is to suggest, through this re-use of the copla, so sadly used some four years earlier by Cervantes,¹⁰ the uniting of the pathos of Alonso with that of the author of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, and so give to the glosa in this case the additional noble role of being a statement of Lope’s definitive reconciliation with Cervantes, his friend.¹¹

In the course of research on the glosa, one will find several of them attributed to Francisco Quevedo. José Manuel Blecua, in his carefully compiled edition of Quevedo’s poetry, withholds, with good reason, credence from these attributions.¹² He does include in his collection the well-known poem “Padre nuestro (glosado)” [Our Father (glossed)] (I, 336-39), a poem in which Quevedo makes room for the application of a prestigious core of Christian liturgy to the condition of economic misery being faced by Spain, one that, as he showed too in the novel genre, was crying out for change. His poem is of such brilliance that it

may be seen as an archetype for twentieth-century poems such as Pablo Neruda's "La United Fruit Co.," Nicolás Guillén's "A la Virgen de la Caridad" and several of Ernesto Cardinal's poems in which religious trope is invoked in the quest for intercession. Quevedo's use of "glosado" in the title has misled some critics into classifying the poem as a glosa. One critic has been so intent on giving the poem recognition as an orthodox glosa that he has seen it to be written in *décimas* (Trapero 105). The poem, in fact, is an orthodox *silva*, composed of endecasylabic and heptasyllabic lines, in stanzas of irregular lengths, but with strategic marginal attachments of quotations from "The Lord's Prayer," that give the poem the function of a gloss.

Quevedo's irascible temperament did not predispose him to the congeniality that would make him amenable to the predominant spirit of the glosa. He employed with great skill other poetic genres to revel in his persistent bullying of Góngora, and he could not refrain from hurling darts at Lope with whom he had the best relationship among his great peers.¹³ His preferred conversation was, as he said in his sonnet "Desde la torre" (1, 253-54) [From the tower], with the dead poets, and so the warm feeling of comradeship that ignites the glosa did not radiate in him.

The glosa as a genre would not continue to flourish in Spain beyond a few decades after 1680. The baroque wave, with Góngora on its crest, that Lope and Quevedo had tried to calm, later had Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681) to contend with. He chose a moderate approach, achieving traditional technical excellence while incorporating some gongoristic mannerisms in daring ways: for instance, when relying on elliptical phrases he gives recognition to the Spanish capital as a place of fruitful labour in the poem "A Madrid, por la dicha de ser su patrono San Isidro Labrador: Glosa" [To Madrid, because of the happiness brought about by Saint Isidro Labrador being your patron saint: Glosa]. After the innovative contributions to the genre by Calderón, in which there is no hint of the cruelty to be found in some of his plays, *El médico de su honra* [The surgeon of his honour], for example, the glosa in Spain lost its glow, as did other literary genres.

The fall in the production of glosas in Spain was compensated for by the pleasure that other countries had in adding the genre to their national repertoires. Lope would very likely have been pleased to know that, when the glosa began to be cultivated in other countries and languages, it displayed the same wholesome, beneficent manners it had consistently shown at home. Glosas by Vincent Voiture and Jean-François Sarasin became famous by making their calming appearance in the tempestuous atmosphere of Parisian literary salons during the early years of the reign of Louis XIV, based on issues that few outside of France would have understood. One by Sarasin, "Glose à Monsieur Esprit: sur le sonnet de Monsieur Benserade" [Glosa for Mr. Spirit: on the sonnet by Mr. Benserade] served to heal the deep rift caused by hostile and partisan-provoking sonnets by Voiture ("Sonnet d'Uranie" [Sonnet on Uranie]) and Benserade ("Sur Job" [On Job]).

Much more ubiquitous was the presence of the glosa in Germany, principally because it attracted the attention of leading theorists, poets and anthologists of the Romantic period in that country. Strongly representative of this group is Friedrich Christian Rassmann (1772-1831) who, in three anthologies of works by German poets of the first three decades of the nineteenth century, revealed the lasting zeal that dozens of these poets, Rassmann himself included, demonstrated for the glosa, looking back to the peak of its Golden Age popularity.¹⁴

The eighteenth century brought a heightened degree of restlessness, which manifested itself in experiments with new forms and applications of the glosa in its diminished usage in Spain. The poem "Décima y glosa" (1782) (Aguilar 165-68) by Tomás de Iriarte (1750-1791) may be taken to represent the mood of expansionist Enlightenment and desire for change in Spain. The formal novelty, announced in the title, is the use of a *décima* and not a *redondilla* as the *texto*, which is glossed with ten, not four, *décimas*. This expansion allows for a glosa of wide coverage, reflected in the breadth of the vocabulary to convey contemporary awareness of a surging miscellany of customs, foods, occupations, countries and place names.

After the versatile, extensive and magisterial use to which the *décima* was put during the *Siglo de Oro*, it went on to enjoy great popularity in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in the form of

the *espinela*, with its enduring rhyme scheme ABBAACCDDC. Not only have the poets who are generally recognized as being learned, beginning notably with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, embraced it, but so too has the vast public that appreciates poetry and treasures the rhythm, the music, the sense and the eloquence of verse. It may be said that the glosa is the *décima* with the added capacity to reach out and make a connection; it is the *décima* with arms whose function is to embrace. The obligatorily tight relationship between texto and glosa, a relationship absent in the standard *décima*, affords the poet scope for demonstrating, beyond the formal prowess, a quality that is fundamental for poetry and an indispensable requirement for the glosa: the gift for parallel or analogical vision. Judging the quality of this vision is one of the well-founded tasks of the readers of glosas. The merger and harmonizing of plural voices—that or those of the texto in addition to that of the later poet—broadens the coverage and strengthens the cogency and impact of the presented perspective.

The widespread use of the glosa in the Americas coincided with tempestuous political times, times marked by the resolve and the passions of the Independence movement. If a “Décima y glosa” that evidenced baroque characteristics appeared in Spain in 1782, in the same year there appeared in Peru another “Décima y glosa” (Santa Cruz 142-44), anonymously written. In this case the glosa in ten *décimas* addresses a momentous issue arising from the resistance to Spanish colonial control, specifically the rebellion led by Túpac Amaru Condorcanqui (1738-1781). José Antonio de Arecha, the Spanish administrator who responded brutally to this development, is reprimanded in this glosa for doing grave and violent harm to Peru. Yet the poem does not show unconditional partisanship to Túpac Amaru; and, as is clear in several contemporary orthodox four-*décima* forms of the glosa, the indigenous leader is censured for the violence that he too had been seen to perpetrate.

But this genre in Spanish America adjusts flexibly to historical developments; and by 1810 the glosa “Arequipa ha dado el sí” [Arequipa has given its approval] (Santa Cruz 151-52) welcomes the Andean independence struggle begun in Arequipa and Potosí and ridicules those among the Creole population who, because they are counterrevolutionaries, Hispanophiles or opportunists, hesitate between allying themselves with Simón Bolívar or with the Spanish viceroy. In the course of his book, *La décima en el Perú*, Santa Cruz illustrates the expansion of themes for which the glosa in his country serves as vehicle; and there we find humorous, picaresque, love, historical and sacred glosas, including those that derive from the experience of the black communities.¹⁵ All of these come to form the anticolonial glosas that in turn are linked to the grand *silvas* of Andrés Bello and José Joaquín de Olmedo in those times of the resuscitation of autochthonous values. Among the glosas produced in Ecuador at that time is one inspired to formal novelty by the dream of unity, equality and cultural integration among the Andean people. In this case, the texto is a *redondilla*, rhyming ABCB, the first line being in Quechua, the next one in Spanish, with this alternation and rhyme scheme continuing throughout the four *redondillas* of the glosa.¹⁶

By taking the textos of his glosas from core poems by José Martí and Nicolás Guillén, respectively, the Cuban poet Waldo Leyva anchors his quest for nation-building on firm foundations. Guillén himself, master of several poetic forms, had dedicated his only glosa, written in 1946, to cementing relations with the leading Venezuelan poet Andrés Eloy Blanco, a relationship that would have prophetic cordial national dimensions.¹⁷

In the last several decades there have been some fertile incursions into the glosa genre in the English-speaking world, above all in North America; but it hasn't been taken up with the rigor shown by the Germans in the early nineteenth century. The use of the glosa in English has revealed two distinct patterns concerning prosody. One is in keeping with the Spanish norm that is firmly established in the sixteenth century and used by the great poets of the *Siglo de Oro*. The proponents of the other pattern of the glosa, initially and principally Page and then others such as Anderson and Dawn, hold that it proceeds from fourteenth-century Spain and that only three lines of a ten-line stanza—the sixth, ninth and tenth, the last taken from the glossed texto—must rhyme. I have searched the likely sources—the *Cancionero general de Castilla, 1511*, the *Cancionero de Stúñiga*, the *Cancionero de Baena*, and the *Cancionero castellano del siglo*

XV, and have not been able to find any glosa that fits this description. Nor do Janner, José Montero Reguera and Adolfo Jiménez Benítez in their studies of the early glosa vindicate this account of the provenance and description of the glosa.

The person who has used this form most extensively is the Canadian poet P. K. Page (1915-2013). She has produced a book of fourteen glosas with textos from North American and European poets, except for her inclusion of the Chilean Pablo Neruda, and belonging to the twentieth century, except for Sappho. It is true that her history of the genre is questionable and the prosody, with its diminished end rhymes, lacks the full musicality of the *espinela*. Nevertheless, there is in her glosas the always fruitful four-line texto, which her ten-line stanzas exhaust successively and seamlessly, caressing them. There is also the pleasing gentle rhythm of her improvised and approximated *décimas*. All these features cause a reader to overlook the limited rhyme and marvel at the flexibility achieved by Page within this suavely centripetal genre. It is clear from her use of the glosa that she understood and remained true to the spirit of its origins, to that association with positive pleasantness and genuine humaneness that has marked it from the time of its birth.

One of her glosas, “Planet Earth,” in which she uses a texto from Pablo Neruda, and which deals with care for the earth, was selected to be part of a United Nations reading series titled “Dialogue Among Civilizations Through Poetry.” The poem was read at places around the world that were seen as “international ground,” including the United Nations Building in New York, a spot on Mount Everest, and a site in Antarctica.¹⁸

A legacy left to us by P. K. Page that is to be appreciated is her use of the Spanish word “glosa” instead of “gloss” to denote the poetic form in an English-language context. This usage merges two powerful language groups while it shows faithfulness to the source. It will also have a unifying effect that encourages translation among people who are interested in the genre. Researching the word “glosa” through such instruments as the Internet will no doubt lead them to her work as well as to glosas in either language, such as two recent regional and eminently notable ones that I have come upon in that medium. One is in English by Darren Anderson, with the texto from W. H. Auden, advocating peace in Northern Ireland. It is in the literary tradition of Rubén Darío’s “Pax” (1253-54) which, with its first line “Io vo gridando pace, pace, pace!” [I go shouting peace, peace, peace!], deepens to Petrarch the humanist and humanitarian ties. The other, of one year later (June, 2013), is by the Venezuelan poet Freddy Enrique González Castillo. It is a tribute to the Liberator Simón Bolívar that has evoked many positive responses, testifying to the current lively appreciation of the genre.¹⁹

Finally, we return to the glosa in Spain where we find an achievement that almost compensates for the lengthy period of apathy that might have made Lope anxious about the very survival of the genre in the place where it was born and for a long time flourished unrivalled by any other country. The poet responsible for the effort to revive the genre was perhaps driven by a mixture of conservative and revolutionary instincts, because the task involved going back to a tradition but with the mission of transforming it in a way that produced a new accomplishment and revealed new possibilities for the genre. In this case, the Spanish poet Gerardo Diego (1896-1987) composed his wondrous *Glosa a Villamediana* (1961), in which he created a glosa of fourteen endecasyllabic sonnets, using as their texto a sonnet by the Conde de Villamediana (1582-1622), and ending each sonnet of the substantial glosa successively with a line from Villamediana’s sonnet. But this creation should not be seen as one that stands isolatedly in Diego’s poetic production, for he has produced four other remarkable glosas. Two of them, in particular, because they refer explicitly to literary history, are to be noticed as precursors of his *Glosa a Villamediana*.²⁰ Together the three systematically evoke various periods in the development of the glosa in Spain. The first of these is his “Glosa a Manrique” (*Oc* 1 382-83), in which he goes back to fifteenth-century Spanish poetry, the time of the first glosas, to associate this glosa with glosas of those times. The three-line texto from Jorge Manrique appears only as the closing lines of the eighth and final stanza of the glosa, which is written in *versos de pie quebrado*, a mixture of octosyllabic and tetrasyllabic lines, a pattern that Manrique and several other poets of those times were wont to employ in poems which, like this one, express the yearning for fulfillment in love.

From a later period of his poetry (1938-1968) comes his “Glosa de la purificación” (*Oc* 3 91-92). Fittingly employing a texto from the poet-priest Calderón, it exhibits the epochal religiosity manifested in all these Golden Age poets—Lope, Cervantes, Quevedo—, a religiosity that was always at least latent in Spain, and had reappeared as a concomitant of the Civil War, mainly among the Nationalists. In this glosa, representing the peak of orthodoxy in the Golden Age, the four lines of Calderón’s *redondilla* close successively four pairs of *redondillas*, rather than *décimas*, allowing the composition to combine traditional and novel elements.²¹

Diego’s choice of the specific sonnet for the texto of his fourteen-stanza *Glosa a Villamediana* illustrates several of the special uplifting qualities that characterize the glosa. (His fine gift of discernment is also in evidence in the role he played in bringing the exceptional merits of Góngora to the attention of his compatriots and to the world.)²² The 200 sonnets by Villamediana that might have been available to Diego show the seventeenth-century poet displaying, as Quevedo does in his sonnets, remarkable volatility in his range of moods and attitudes. With regard to women, in particular, he can be venomous, as in his comprehensively misogynist “Definición de la mujer” (219). Diego, notwithstanding the fact that his choice of associates has sometimes troubled many of his compatriots,²³ would have none of that hostility; he selects for his prodigious *Glosa a Villamediana* the sonnet that begins “Milagros en quien sólo están de asiento/ alta deidad y ser esclarecido” [Miracles in whom only high divinity and distinguished beings find their fitting place] (106). This is a sonnet of pure Petrarchan expression of devotion and surrender to beauty, the kind that led Diego to call this Golden Age poet “uno de los más altos poetas de España y quizá el más ardiente y profundo de nuestros poetas del amor” [one of Spain’s greatest poets and perhaps the most ardent and profound of our love poets] (*Oc* 6 861). It is as if the glosa genre determined this choice of texto, and helps us to believe that, if there were an established typology of literary genres based on their capacity to inspire goodness, the character traits of the glosa, its tendency to lead the way to cooperative well-being, would earn for it a commanding place.²⁴ In this humanitarian sense there are devices such as intertextuality, heteronymy and “translation,” that are not sufficiently autonomous or consistent in their positive associations to attain the generic status of the glosa.²⁵

This genre, with its confirming, reaffirming, two-visions-melded-into-one nature, is a reliable and effective helper in building the character of a nation. Looking back at the discussion carried out in this essay, it will be seen that, from the perspective of nationalities, the glosa has told us a great deal about the instructive, edifying, unifying role it has played in Spain, its calming of the mystical passions of the French, its profitable appropriation by the Germans to nurture their spirituality,²⁶ its service in elegantly linking Canada with the top echelons of world poetry, its encouragement of the initially liberating and integrative steps in Latin America and the Caribbean. The role of the glosa in the quest for human happiness and social cohesion has become more pronounced since 1943 and in turn has enabled us to see more clearly this constructive trait even in the earliest glosas. For example, when we perceive, among the proliferation of glosas that accompanied the independence movement in Spanish America, the yearning for unity that included the use of Spanish and Quechua in alternating lines of a glosa, we may think back to the early times: to a glosa in five octaves in Castilian by the fifteenth-century Valencian poet, Mossen Crespí de Valldaura, whose texto is a poem in three quatrains in Valencian by Mossen Jordi de Sant Jordi. (d. 1425) (*Cancionero general* 2, 144). This ancient translinguistic example was no doubt promotive of the desired unity of Spain. A similar translinguistic role may well be reserved for writers in Spanish, Quechua, English, French, Dutch, Papiamentu, Creole, Jamaican and other languages in the course of the natural trend to Latin American and Caribbean integration, making the languages and their speakers more intimate with each other. This function of the glosa may come to be increasingly practised where there are people of different language groups who aspire to know each other better. Lope de Vega would then have had even greater reason to extol the glosa, “propia y antiquísima composición de España,” now at the unifying service of diverse countries in different parts of the New World and beyond.

A principle that may be deduced from the extensive practice of the glosa in different epochs and lati-

tudes is that poetry in which a poet necessarily aligns himself or herself explicitly with the consciousness of another tends to assume a salutary role on behalf of human existence. The public exposure of coinciding intimate visions, which is the essence of the glosa, seems to impel the poet in this creative form toward representing positive, decent values. The demanding and attractive formal aspects of the glosa have throughout the history of the genre been suited to an identifiable and predominant humanitarian, unifying, and uplifting Weltanschauung. The glosa is as linked to these qualities as the sonnet is to the conveyance of emotion or the novel is to the representation of an epoch.

Notes

1 William Wordsworth, "Scorn not the sonnet; Critic you have frowned, [...]"

2 Very few are the exceptions to this function of the glosa compared, for example, to the sonnet. Without much thought, and if Dante, Petrarch, Garcilaso de la Vega, Ronsard, Shakespeare and Pablo Neruda come to mind, we may consider the sonnet to be a characteristically affable and gentle genre. But Lope de Vega, Quevedo, Villamediana and Nicolás Guillén, for example, disturb that picture considerably.

3 See Marithelma Costa.

4 See Scoles and Ravatini.

5 See the fine observations by Victor Dixon (73-76), N.D. Shergold, (278) and Diego Marín (38).

6 Robyn Quijano in 'Erasmian Humanism and Ferdinand of Aragón', *The Campaigner*, 11, 3-4 (1975), 2, 78, describes well how international bankers encouraged, with their loans to Spain, wars that the country could not afford. In time, hopelessly indebted to these bankers, Spain was forced to surrender to them significant parts of its national assets, including fertile lands. In order to gain quick returns, the bankers introduced sheep on these lands, which ruined them for agriculture, turning them into dust bowls and leading to much poverty, two images that are recurrent in Spain's literature of the Golden Age. 'Pecunius nervus bellorum' [Money is the nerve centre of wars] was the advertised credo of Anton Fugger, who was the most important banker during the reigns of the Emperors Charles V and Ferdinand I and King Philip II.

7 Several books have been devoted to the rifts in relations between Cervantes and Lope, most notable among them are those by José Montero Reguera, Helena Percas de Ponseti and Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez. These authors have gone to great, sometimes excessive, pains to adduce evidence of the literary feud between Cervantes and Lope. Percas de Ponseti is the least temperate of them, Pedraza the most so; and he is certainly not to be blamed for anyone thinking that Lope directed "brutal glosas" at Cervantes, as another German critic, Henning Krauss, in a letter to me has erroneously stated, citing Pedraza as his source. Krauss would have been correct had he said "brutal sonnets." In fact, Pedraza makes no mention of the glosa in his book dealing with the feud. He writes discerningly of the prominent searchers for evidence of the feud: "Los cervantistas, siempre fértiles en ver o imaginar alusiones satíricas en el *Quijote*, han señalado otras varias referencias a Lope, que yo no logro vislumbrar. A título de ejemplo, citaré las páginas que dedica Helena Percas de Ponseti (*Cervantes y su concepto del arte. Estudio crítico de algunos aspectos y episodios del Quijote*. Madrid: Gredos, 1975, 332-382) a persuadirnos de que tras el Caballero del Verde Gabán, don Diego de Miranda, se oculta en realidad el padre de la comedia española [Lope de Vega]. Creo que Lope tampoco llegó a darse cuenta del paralelismo. Ni el mismo Cervantes" [The Cervantes specialists, always fertile in detecting or imagining satirical allusions in the *Quijote*, have pointed to several other references to Lope, that I do not manage to perceive. As an example, I will cite the pages that Helena Percas de Ponseti devotes to persuading us that behind el Caballero del Verde Gabán, don Diego de Miranda, hides the father of Spanish drama [Lope de Vega]. I believe that Lope was not aware of the parallelism. Nor was Cervantes himself]. It may well be that an undervaluing of the distinctiveness of the glosa leads to a failure to appreciate its consistent constructive and therefore unifying function between people

and across different cultures. The other prominent peril is, as I will show, the lax reading that confuses it with other poetic forms such as the sonnet or the *décima*.

8 Daniel Eisenberg carries out a carefully reasoned study, one of the most useful of those so often attempted sleuth studies dealing with the Golden Age, in which he seeks to identify a primary cause of the Cervantes–Lope feud, the presumptive and fraudulent author of the fake preemptive Part 2 of *Don Quijote* (119-41).

9 Lope de Vega, *Teatro selecto*, Ed. Amando Isasi Angulo, 442. Another case of insensitivity to the glosa is the fact that Morley and Bruerton, who, in their study of the chronology of Lope de Vega's plays, refer to the verse forms used by him and mention every one except the glosa. Diego Marín, in his very useful *Uso y función de la versificación dramática en Lope de Vega*, also overlooks this fine example of Lope's employment of the "lyrical glosa" with an "emotive tone;" but he does provide examples of this usage of the glosa in two other Lope plays: *El mayor imposible* and *El desprecio agradecido* (38).

10 Isasi, (Lope de Vega, *Teatro selecto*, 456), naming also Morley and Bruerton, give the date of its launching as between 1620, the year of Lope's paean to the glosa as national patrimony, quoted above, and 1625 (600).

11 Helena Percas de Ponseti and José Montero Reguera, in their close examinations of the literary feud between Cervantes and Lope de Vega, give little heed to the times of reconciliation. Instead, particularly with Percas de Ponseti, passages of Cervantes's prose, in all their magisterial use of irony, and not ignoring his poetry, are scrutinized for snipes at Lope. Lope's poetry, in turn, his sonnets especially, is sometimes so openly hostile, even scurrilous, in its treatment of Cervantes, that when he makes a soothing gesture, such as I discover here, one that involves the use of the glosa, neither the gesture nor this generic vehicle are recognized. However, whereas Percas de Ponseti stresses the continuing manifestation of the umbrage felt by Lope long beyond Cervantes's death, an umbrage arising from Cervantes's parodying of him in the *Quijote* of 1615, Montero notices the favorable shift in Lope's regard for Cervantes, beginning with his *Las fortunas de Diana* of 1621, a date that coincides with the period of his writing *El caballero de Olmedo*.

12 In addition to Blecua's relevant notes in his "Índice de poemas atribuidos" (I, 63-80), see his essay "Atribuciones" (I, 81-84).

13 See, with just one of many possible examples from each of the other genres of which he was prolific master, how Quevedo aimed devastating maliciousness at Góngora: in the *décima* (not ever employed by him in a glosa) (III: 231-233), in the *romance* (III: 234-237), in the *soneto* (III: 238) and in the *silva* (III: 246-249). For his attacks on other contemporaries of his, such as Juan Ruiz de Alarcón and Juan Pérez de Montalbán, see Quevedo (III: 250-256) and Jack Parker (*Juan Pérez de Montalbán*, Boston: Twayne, 1975, 23), respectively.

14 Hans Janner, "Friedrich Christian Rassmann y la lírica del Siglo de Oro." Three of Rassmann's anthologies, those of 1817, 1818 and 1824, include glosas. Goethe and Calderón figure strongly among the contributors of textos for these glosas that tend to nurture spirituality.

15 Santa Cruz makes the point that their experience with the sense and rhythms of African poetry predisposed Blacks in these communities to appreciate and compose *décimas* and glosas. The point is certainly substantiated by such poems offered by Rogelio Martínez Furé as "¿Qué me hará el extranjero? [What can the foreigner do to me?]" (1: 259-60) by Benjanzin, King of Dahomey, in the Cuban scholar's two-volume anthology of African poets.

16 Juan León Mera, Ed., *Antología ecuatoriana: Cantares del pueblo ecuatoriano*, 348-49.

17 See Ellis, "El significado de los géneros poéticos empleados por Nicolás Guillén en su poesía escrita en Venezuela."

18 See Deborah Bowen, "How to Honour Dead Poets: P.K. Page and the *Glosa* Form: Recognizing the Influence of Others is Hardly Plagiarism."

19 The power of its attraction for young poets of our time is well demonstrated in the book of glosas, *Where the Words End and My Body Begins* (2015), by Amber Dawn, who is presently adjunct instructor of

creative writing at the University of British Columbia. Her passionate declaration of gratitude to P.K. Page for her *Hologram: A Book of Glosas*, the first book of poetry the young poet was moved to purchase, accompanies her own collection of warm, community-building glosas and speaks eloquently of the genre's tenacity.

20 The other two, perfect *espinelas*, are to be found in *Oc* I: 255-266.

21 When the genre is not about these customary sober tasks, its mission is sometimes to provide humor, as in the case of Cervantes's use of it in one of his *entremeses* (short comic plays), where a deformed glosa consisting solely of two *redondillas* and no texto, created by a soldier, is thought, by a shoemaker, to have been written by Lope (OC 567). In another of the appearances of the glosa, now in the *Quijote* itself, humor is combined with sober commentary in the episode where Don Quijote listens to and comments on an orthodox glosa composed by the young don Lorenzo. Here one might find humorous the hyperbolic praise heaped on the poet; but one should also notice the widespread interest that there was at this time in the glosa. The young poet is a participant in a competition that seems to be attracting widespread participation. Furthermore Don Quijote, in the midst of his extravagant praise of this specific glosa calls the poet "mancebo generoso" [generous young man], indicating that he is contributing to a social good (II, 18).

22 See Gabriele Morelli, Ed.: *Gerardo Diego y el III centenario de Góngora*. I had the pleasure of meeting Diego at a Tertulia in Madrid in 1964. On that occasion he was still being congratulated by his colleagues on his *Glosa a Villamediana* which had appeared three years earlier.

23 This is due mainly to his widely aired collaboration with the Franco regime on some projects.

24 We are not taking into account here such forms as the paean and the dithyramb that are specifically designed and preordained to laud and sing praises. We are thinking of the glosa, a genre that while being open to any possible thematic usage has managed to demonstrate an overwhelming affinity for the kinds of positive associations we have been observing here.

25 An elegant and penetrating study of the use of these devices may be found in María del Carmen Sillato's *Juan Gelman: las estrategias de la otredad*. See also Emma Scoles and Ines Travatini.

26 One should not overlook the significance of the year (1943) in which Jenner turned his attention to the glosa, a year of intense merciless warfare and other inhuman cruelties that cried out for human goodness. In these circumstances Jenner's focus on the formal aspects of the glosa may speak of escapism.

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Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures.

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The revival of the idea of world literature in the field of Comparative Literature—an ongoing process that started at the turn of the 21st century—will surely be remembered by future comparatists as one of the cultural refractions of the global concerns of an emerging unified block of readers—those reading in English—in the face of emerging global instability brought about not by national entities, but by non-national based terrorist movements claiming a cultural origin in the Middle East.

In this political and cultural climate, it is no surprise to find that Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism*, as well as his later explorations into exile and the notion of humanistic criticism, stand at a key intersection of how we think about the world, and world literature, in the present cultural moment.

During the past decade, Aamir Mufti, who was Edward Said's student during his graduate studies at Columbia University and is currently a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, has developed Said's concepts and has made them his own as he critiques the blind spots of the current academic discourse on world literature. His new book, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (2016), is a study of how the Western notion of world literature interacted with the literary tradition of the Indian subcontinent. While Said's seminal book focused mostly on the Western tradition of studies of the Islamic Middle-East and its political implications in the interpretation, translation, introduction and framing of that tradition, Mufti's book analyses the subject of that other great tradition of Western Orientalism: the translation and study the literature of the Indian subcontinent, conceived widely in this book to include works spanning from the Sanskrit classics all the way to the literature of modern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In the close to 300 pages that comprise the book, Mufti further develops concepts that he had previously expounded on in his past notable article "Orientalism and the Institution of World Literature," pub-

lished in the 2010 spring issue of the journal *Critical Inquiry*. There he defended the current validity of Said's critique of Orientalism against what Mufti saw as the inability of recent world literature studies to realize that "something of considerable importance appears to be largely missing: the question of Orientalism" (458).

Mufti, while celebrating the emergence of a renewed concentrated academic focus on works from all over the world under the paradigm of equivalence importance, found fault with the way that some of the major critics writing about this process placed an—in his eyes—overt focus on Western networks of circulation in the initial decade of the world literature studies renewal. Thus, the article was mainly a response to the discourse on world literature set by works such as David Damrosch's *What is World Literature* (2003) and to Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (2007). In the years since, however, there has been a pushback against the current state of world literature studies. These critiques usually take as their point of departure the inherent tensions between the local and the universal that appear within the language of literature itself, that is to say, they usually focus on the role of translation in the emergence of the notion of world literature, and also on the unsettling parallel development of world literature alongside the rise of what is called Global English. Such critiques were by no means new—for example, Lawrence Venuti's *The Scandals of Translation* (1998) or *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999) edited by Susan Bassnett, amongst other works, critiqued the unavoidable role of politics, the exoticization of the other, or the negation of difference that translations of world literature often suffered from.

However, in contrast to his famous article, Mufti's new book can be seen more as a response, partially and indirectly, to Emily Apter's *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslability* (2013). Seen in this light, Mufti's call in the title to "forget English," could be misconstrued to be yet another critique on the impossibility of translation and the inherent insufficiency in the reading of world literature. Yet, Mufti's call to "forget English" is rather like a Japanese *kōan* riddle; English has ceased being a linguistic tool for literature, and has instead already become a *medium* for its discourse. Thus, forgetting English is only possible as a (very productive) thought experiment. In the opening pages of the book, Mufti warns the reader that his book analyses Indian literature in translation as "a subset of that global linguistic reality, namely the situation of English as a global literary vernacular—English not merely as a language of literary expression but as a cultural system with a global reach" (17).

Thus, he puts the notion of an egalitarian global literature order in question; how does the emergence of English as the global transactional language of world literature (with *transactional* in both its mercantile and communicational senses of the word) show the importance of considering Orientalism's role as one of the establishing factors in the creation of a contemporary notion of world literature in the eyes of a global readership? As Mufti states, his "main thesis is thus that a genealogy of world literature leads to Orientalism. A fact that the contemporary discussion appears by its very nature to be incapable of recognizing" (19).

The field of Comparative Literature has become so used to the notion of Orientalism, and to its other intellectual descendants and inheritors in post-colonial studies, that a discussion on just what is meant by the term is needed. Indeed, this must have been Mufti's feeling too, as he dedicates an atypically long prologue—one fifth of the main body of the book—to framing the ideas he wants to develop in the book in relation to both Post-Colonial Studies and to World Literature. In this introduction, he mentions the critiques

on world literature studies present in the works of Gayatri Spivak, Emily Apter and Jonathan Arac; touches on some of the big names of exilic and post-colonial theory such as Eric Auerbach, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon; and finishes with pointing out shortcomings he perceives in the description of the workings of world literature in the studies of comparatists David Damrosch, Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti.

Chapter 1 (“Where in the World is World Literature?”) brings back the question of geography and circulation to the process of the insertion of Indian literature into world literature. Here Mufti starts by what he sees as Casanova’s “most consequential misconception (...) [that] non-Western literary cultures make their first effective appearance in world literary space in the era of decolonization in the middle of the twentieth century” (58). Mufti shows how Indian literature is a prime example of a non-Western literature that had an impact on European literature that antecedes the post-colonial literary trends that Casanova referred to in her book. Mufti follows this by analyzing Franco Moretti’s literary system-based method of analysis of world literature and concluding that while Moretti’s system can be useful towards producing an “account of the structural inequalities in world literary space,” Mufti’s description of world literature circulation systems grants “*greater* powers to the center than is the case in Moretti’s account, since in my view the very modes of conceiving vernacularity and indogeneity are products of the colonial process” (96).

This issue of the mutual tension between what is authentic and what is merely assigned as such is the main problem tackled in Chapter 2 (“Orientalism and the Institution of World Literature”). Here, Mufti surveys the history of Western philology’s search for the roots of Indian literature and its—in Mufti’s eyes—unavoidable relationship with the then nascent cultural ideology of Orientalism that emerged at the beginning of Britain’s stewardship of the Indian continent.

It is in this detailed description of the *a posteriori* construction of a canon of Indian literature that Mufti’s own academic and biographical background converge to produce a convincing narrative of the process by which “the Orientalists’ invention of Indian literature and its insertion into an expanded and transformed world literary space” completely changed the perception of Hindi-Urdu literature itself amongst the educated elite of the continent (111). Mufti argues that even the work that is now considered as the quintessentially canonical Indian text, the poem Bhagavad Gita, reached its current position within the canon due in great part to an “Orientalist process of its extraction from its textual and social contexts and reconstellation at the core of a newly fashioned Indian national tradition” (110). This process was spearheaded by Western orientalists, many of them located within the English bureaucracy tasked with managing the incorporated Indian colonies.

The most important point in this chapter—which will perhaps be the most useful one to scholars interested in the relationship between canon formation, translation, and the politics of world literature—is its assertion that the purportedly egalitarian process by which different works of literature are introduced to world literature “fundamentally [transforms] in the process their internal distribution and coherence, their modes of authorization, and their relationship to the larger social order and social imaginaries in their places of origin” (145). I for one believe that this assertion is true also in the case of the Latin American and Japanese literary canons, amongst others with a wide readership in today’s world literature.

Chapter 3 (“Global English and Its Others”) presents an analysis on the notion of global English “pre-eminent medium of cosmopolitan exchange” (146), and with its rise the appearance of the South-Asian Anglophone novel as one of the forms of the global novel. Here Mufti draws on representative works by authors such as Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Aravind Adiga and Kamila Shamsie, and the tension between the vernacular language of their localities and the international global English in which their oeuvre is written.

Chapter 4 (“Our Philological Home is the Earth: World Literature from Auerbach to Said”) presents a reconsideration of the exilic experience in the creation of the foundational moment of both Orientalism and world literature studies, represented here by the theoretical juxtaposition of the work and milieu of the fathers of these fields, Edward Said and Eric Auerbach. This is the chapter in which Mufti most deftly draws from his wide theoretical background, mentioning the works of Theodor Adorno, Paul de Man, Wal-

ter Benjamin, Levi-Strauss, and even as far back chronologically as the theories of Johann Gottfried Herder and Giambattista Vico. Mufti's analysis of Auerbach's famous dictum that "our philological home is the earth" reveals the complicated genealogy behind the idea of a worldly literary space, and the contradictions brought about by the European origins of this idea, which nonetheless the contemporary critic must embrace in order to engage in the comprehensive and relentless critique for which Mufti exhorts his readers in the epilogue of his book.

"For a ruthless criticism of everything existing," the title of the epilogue of the book, is a paraphrase of the early writings of Karl Marx, but Mufti argues in favor of the similar importance for the cultural critic to have a *de omnibus dubitandum* attitude—be ruthlessly suspicious of everything. But ruthless, specifically, against what? Easy conceptions of world literature held by readers? Use of Western frameworks of thoughts for thinking about world literature? Belated responses by the periphery to cultural and literary trends prevalent in the literature of Global English? Mufti's answer would be against all of the above, because he forcefully argues that the cultural critic must have an "abundance of caution and vigilance, a *critical* attitude, properly speaking, toward any claim of authority (251)." In Mufti's view, the critic must be ruthlessly inquisitive of both, on the one hand, the power and authority of the Western centers of translation and publication, and, on the other, of the claims to native authority and authenticity made by non-Western local informants and scholars.

Mufti has presented here a book that will convince many of his readers of the validity of post-colonial studies and its approaches to world literature studies, while also acting as a powerful mediator against those trends that would see world literature just as the erasure of difference through the flattening process of translation. The ruthless linguistic, political and historical analysis that Mufti's new kind of critic will carry out will lead the field of comparative literature into a renewed 21st century literary criticism worthy of its chronological adjective.

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