

Gesine Müller, Jorge J. Locane and Benjamin Loy (Eds.)
Re-mapping World Literature

Latin American Literatures in the World

Literaturas Latinoamericanas en el Mundo



Edited by / Editado por
Gesine Müller

Volume / Volumen 1

Re-mapping World Literature

Writing, Book Markets and Epistemologies between
Latin America and the Global South

Escrituras, mercados y epistemologías entre América
Latina y el Sur Global

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Gesine Müller, Jorge J. Locane and Benjamin Loy

DE GRUYTER

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme - Grant Agreement Number 646714.



ISBN 978-3-11-054952-2
ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-054957-7
ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-059829-2



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2018 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Typesetting: Compuscript Ltd., Shannon, Ireland
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck
☼ Printed on acid-free paper
Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

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Gesine Müller, Jorge J. Locane and Benjamin Loy

Introduction

The concept at issue in this book is *Weltliteratur*, or World Literature. Theoretical frameworks usually view the now-famous epistolary exchange between Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the young Johann Peter Eckermann as the true foundation of the concept, (though earlier promoters of similar ideas, such as August Wilhelm Schlegel can be cited)¹. Goethe wrote this to Eckermann in a well-known letter in 1827: “National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of World Literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach”². Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as well as Richard Moulton and Erich Auerbach, among many others, also all contributed to the category from their respective historical moments and theoretical perspectives. Marx and Engels, of course, took a materialist point of view that emphasized the expansion of the capitalist economic project and its progressive conquest of the world as a market. Richard Moulton and Erich Auerbach, on the other hand, came from a humanistic philological perspective that, as Jérôme David has put it in his reflections on the different genealogies of World Literature, “derived from the anxious preoccupation with what the literary works *mean*” (2013: 14) and focused very early on the problems of translation and canonization that would become crucial for the conceptual debates of our time.

In the late 1990s, the concept was revitalized; undoubtedly in step with the historical transformations propelled by the contemporary phase of globalization, as well as the expanding bibliography of World Literature itself. New descriptive and normative models were proposed. Pascale Casanova with her *La République Mondiale des Lettres* (1999), Franco Moretti in his explorations of “distant reading” and David Damrosch with his widely discussed *What is World Literature?* (2003) are among the most quoted – and most questioned – researchers of this new theoretical wave, which is rooted in comparative literature studies. More recent publications, such as Emily Apter’s *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013), Pheng Cheah’s *What is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (2016), and *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* (2016) by Aamir Mufti, critically revise the foundational ideas of the

1 See the study on concepts of humanist cosmopolitanism and World Literature around 1800 by Peter Goßens (2011).

2 “Nationalliteratur will jetzt nicht viel sagen, die Epoche der Weltliteratur ist an der Zeit, und jeder muß jetzt dazu wirken, diese Epoche zu beschleunigen” (Eckermann 1968: 205).

concept, without necessarily dismissing the paradigm completely. This is possible because World Literature, by covering a broad and open semantic spectrum, allows for the application of postcolonial approaches. One such approach is embodied, among others, by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who attempts to instrumentalize the concept programmatically in order to broaden the narrow Western canon and the problematic implications of World Literature in favor of an alternative notion of “planetarity”. Localized or regional literary studies, on the other hand, have also made several attempts to question or complement the formulas of World Literature through a critical shifting of the gaze which has focused on Latin America, Africa or Asia. Among these, at least three publications auto-attribute a place of enunciation in Latin America: *América Latina en la “literatura mundial”* (2006), edited by Ignacio Sánchez Prado; *Utopías críticas: la literatura mundial según América Latina* (2012), which was a special edition of the magazine 1616: *Anuario de Literatura Comparada*, and *América Latina y la literatura mundial: mercado editorial, redes globales y la invención de un continente* (2015), edited by Gesine Müller and Dunia Gras. The same can be said of the individual works, *Latinoamérica y la literatura mundial* (2013), by Gioconda Marún, *Cosmopolitan Desires. Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America* (2014), by Mariano Siskind, and *Beyond Bolaño: The Global Latin American Novel*, by Héctor Hoyos (2015).

So, far from being a fixed entity, the category manifests itself as a work in progress, a disputed signifier. The debate surrounding and nourishing World Literature is in robust health, and all contributors to this volume have enriched it with valuable hypotheses from different perspectives. Other contributors, for their part, have tried to establish connections between Latin America and other parts of the world beyond the (post)colonial tie: *Moros en la costa. Orientalismo en Latinoamérica* (2008), edited by Silvia Nagy-Zekmi, the volumes *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond* (2007) and *Peripheral Transmodernities: South-to-South Dialogues between the Luso-Hispanic World and “the Orient”* (2012), edited by Ignacio López-Calvo, and *Sur/South: Poetics and Politics of Thinking Latin America/India* (2016), edited by Susanne Klengel and Alexandra Ortiz Wallner, are among them.

As implied by the title, this book delves into this last line of research and collects a group of essays with the aim of exploring possible and effective inter-connections between Latin America and the so-called Global South. However, if it is true that literature can be thought of as part of an apparatus of production with a worldwide reach, it is important not to forget that this system is marked by inequality. As Franco Moretti has noted, this system is “one, and unequal: one literature (*Weltliteratur*, singular, as in Goethe and Marx), or perhaps, better, one world literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system which is

different from what Goethe and Marx had hoped for, because it's profoundly unequal" (Moretti 2000: 55–56). If we wish not to implicate ourselves in some kind of culturist idealism, then thinking about the system requires an analysis of the geopolitical order and the implied material dimensions, as well as the power-relations at play, as Stefan Helgesson and Pieter Vermeulen argue in their volume *Institutions of World Literature* (2016).

After the Fall of the Wall, capitalism succeeded in securing a position for itself as the whole globe's hegemonic structure. In doing so, it unified material and symbolic markets under operational guidelines that it promoted as universals. While this did dilute the East versus West tension (with its vanishing point in the so-called "Third World"), it at the same time allowed new forms of conflict to take shape. Post- and neo-colonial forms of thought remained entrenched, and were reinforced. In recent years the concept of the "Global South" has gained ground, with the support of researchers such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos and others. It refers to the geopolitical and epistemological fabric that unifies an area of the world – principally, that which was subjected to colonialism – but which may include the South contained within North. These areas have been subjected to the designs of modernity and have displayed a certain degree of insurgence, but also discontinuity and conflict with each other. "The 'Global South'", argue Caroline Levander and Walter Mignolo, "is not an existing entity to be described by different disciplines, but an entity that has been invented in the struggle and conflicts between imperial global domination and emancipatory and decolonial forces that do not acquiesce with global designs" (2011: 3). In this way, the term does not lose its programmatic character, but on the contrary presents itself as a tool aimed at problematizing the hegemonic world order. This means that in the geopolitical and epistemological South, alternative representations that demand visibility can come into being: "[F]rom the perspective of the inhabitants, (and we say consciously inhabitants rather than 'citizens,' regional or global)", Levander and Mignolo go on, "the 'Global South' is the location where new visions of the future are emerging and where the global political and decolonial society is at work" (2011: 3). A demand for visibility – precisely the aim of this contribution to the field.

We propose, therefore, to examine the possibility of "re-mapping" World Literature with a perspective focused on a dynamic and, to use a term coined by Ottmar Ette, "movement-historically" approach to investigate the links and trajectories that interconnect and energize world regions like the Global South, which have been marginalized by most of the recent studies on the topic of World Literature. This is certainly a different perception of *mapping* World Literature as in the case, for example, of Mads Rosendahl Thomsen's book of the same title that grounded (in a very stimulating way, to be sure) its mappings "on using international canonization as an analytical source" (2008: 139). Our

task is admittedly not free of traps, conflicts or paradoxes. As researchers based in many cases at institutions in Europe and the United States, we are aware of our geographic location in the North, yet we insist on a concerted relocation of our gaze. Until recently, China was relegated to a place among countries subjected to colonial relations. Now it has become a global economy that competes with entrenched imperial economic powers. We know that what at first blush can be interpreted as a South/South link usually disguises a direct and unavoidable bridge to the North. We do not attempt to ignore this and claim innocence. However, in the face of this risk, we are still committed to an enlightening and critical debate based on a theory that does not ignore its own programmatic character. Just as the British Empire, in its era, opted to organize the time zones of the world around an axis that took its own location as a central reference point, just as Pascale Casanova decided to locate the hub of literary production in Paris, we have decided, as a starting point, to locate our focus in the geopolitical and epistemological South. A South that, at least hypothetically, can also be conceived as a relatively unified space of aesthetic, economic, and epistemological exchange. What aesthetic forms were exported from Latin America to India? How is Indian literature transformed when it is transposed to planes of Latin American expectations? Is there a market in symbolic goods that, in effect, connects Africa to Latin America? If not, what would the material infrastructure that would permit one look like? What knowledge, awareness, and representations of the world have traveled the Pacific, connecting Asia and Latin America? Do these frameworks permit the categorization of world literatures under other theoretical premises? These, and many other questions in this vein, are the concrete impetus that prompted this book.

The contents of this volume are organized into three parts, three axes of analysis. In the first, “Writing”, Ignacio López-Calvo (Merced) in his article, “Worlding and decolonizing the literary world-system: Asian-Latin American literature as an alternative type of *Weltliteratur*”, draws on a wide range of literary texts of recent Asian-Latin American Literature to propose his idea of an alternative World Literature as writing and reading practices that move beyond the framework of the national and of Eurocentrism, being molded instead by a critical, planetary consciousness. Without ignoring the fact that the chances of reaching the cultural capital of common “highbrow” and/or commercialized texts of World Literature are virtually inexistent for “minor” literary productions due to their lack of translations and circulations, López-Calvo strengthens the idea of taking into account the kind of literatures that steer the worldviews of East and West into engagement with each other in a productive decolonial and cross-cultural encounter, exhibiting a new deterritorialized global sensitivity that goes beyond national and even hemispheric borders.

In his highly critical and self-reflexive article on the exploration of World Literature and the material making “of the world” (including art and criticism), entitled “Global supply chain literature vs. extractivism”, Héctor Hoyos (Stanford) aims to formulate the rudiments of a global corpus of texts, films, and artworks to discuss new forms of parallelisms of goods and cultural productions. Claiming the critical deployment of resources of World Literature to fill the vacuum of storytelling in supply chains, Hoyos draws on a wide range of examples, mostly from Latin America, to illustrate the potential of a materialist approach to World Literature for discussion of the problematic implications of global consumerism and supply chains with their potentially devastating effects.

In her article “Between Latin America and the Arab world: Rodrigo Rey Rosa and Alberto Ruy Sánchez in Morocco”, Tahia Abdel Nasser (Cairo) examines the literary and cultural encounters between Latin America and the Arab world as modelled in the novels of Guatemalan writer Rodrigo Rey Rosa and Mexican author Alberto Ruy Sánchez. While the former, according to her argument, exhibits a series of misunderstandings and misconceptions between Latin America and North Africa, the latter reworks the large tradition of Latin American travel literature and Orientalism to create a shared heritage between Mexico and Morocco tracing the interconnectivity and the cultural and historical proximity of the two countries and continents.

The article by Ignacio Sánchez Prado (St. Louis) entitled “África en la imaginación literaria mexicana. Exotismo, desconexión y los límites materiales de la ‘epistemología del Sur’”, focuses on a group of Mexican narrations with African content to show the limits of any approach based on idealistic cosmopolitanisms. He suggests that these kinds of constructions ignore the lack of material connections between the different nodes of the Global South and leads therefore to epistemological dysphorias and contradictions. Through the examination of his literary corpus, Sánchez Prado observes a mutual illegibility of the literatures of the Global South due to the lack of literary infrastructure, the presence of paradigms such as Orientalism and the colonial gaze in World Literature, the mediation of imperial and publishing centers in the construction of imaginaries of the South, and the impossibility of constructing a literary epistemology without the basis of material connections between literatures. In dialogue with idealistic models of World Literature, he arrives at the conclusion that a material connection would be the condition for a design of a literary cartography for the Global South.

In the article “Rubén Darío: la sutura de los mundos”, Daniel Link (Buenos Aires) examines the literary interventions of Ruben Darío as crucial contributions to a non-hierarchical World Literature. He proposes an approach to Darío that refutes the classical interpretations focused on a Eurocentric set-up in order to present an alternative reading. According to Link, Darío promoted a cultural

program founded on a “becoming” black, Indian, Chinese, Caupolicán or Eulalia and not on our discovery that we belong to one of these categories. In doing so, he not only offered a way of overcoming colonial limitations, but also the Eurocentric perspective. This operation must be read as a disruption of the world literary map of his time, but the strategies he employs render impossible even the idea of a map, which would have to be replaced by that of a network. In his conclusion, Link shows that this graphic (re)definition of the literary and cultural relations is still applicable and could be taken as a counter-model for the hegemonic theories of World Literature.

In his article, “The precarious state of the art: Writing the Global South and critical cosmopolitanism in the works of J.M. Coetzee and Roberto Bolaño”, Benjamin Loy (Cologne) provides a comparative reading of several works of two authors at whose core lies a problematization of an affirmative stance towards (world) literature as a medium of historical affirmation and cosmopolitan positioning, which dovetails with many discourses in the current debates. As Loy seeks to prove, the pessimistic view of the world and of history in Bolaño and Coetzee stems not least from the experiences that many of their “cultivated” (Western) protagonists confront in the marginalized, precarious spaces of the Global South, ranging from South Africa to Mexico. Instead of traditional Western inscribing of meaning, the literary exploration of the fragile realities of life in the Global South is where the recognition of the radical inadequacy of supposedly cosmopolitan and universalist concepts emanates from and what makes necessary new artistic approaches to the multiple material asymmetries in human living conditions in the context of contemporary globalization embodied in the so-called *cosmopolitanism of fragility*.

Under the header “Book Markets”, the second axis focuses on the editorial policies and the links established by the publishing industry. In his text, “Literatura mundial en biblioburro. Un caso procomún de circulación literaria”, César Domínguez (Santiago de Compostela) examines critically one of the key concepts of World Literature studies: circulation as it was introduced for consideration by David Damrosch. He argues from two perspectives – the first positing that the examination of circulation in the current capitalist framework cannot ignore the intervention of big publishing houses and their inherent interests. Yet he suggests in a second move that not all kinds of circulation should be analyzed under the economic paradigm. As an example he presents the interesting case of a roaming library, which circulates on two donkeys in the Colombian department Magdalena: the so called biblioburro. Since the end of 1990s, Luis Soriano, the project manager and librarian, has transported books from around the world to a population with high rates of illiteracy. Domínguez concludes that this case, among hypothetical others, shows that along with the undeniable dimension of

World Literature as product of a globalization from above and as an elitist cosmopolitanism, there are also other concepts of World Literature that escape the economic logic of global and market-driven circulation of books and that are born with the impulse of a globalization from below and a critical cosmopolitanism.

In her article, “El derecho a la literatura (mundial y traducida). Sobre el sueño translitológico de la UNESCO”, Susanne Klengel (Berlin) examines the ambitious translation program known as “UNESCO Collection of Representative Works” as it was presented in its catalog in the year 2000. In the immediate Postwar, UNESCO established a humanistic project in collaboration with publishing houses to promote the translation of literary works from the whole world into other languages. Since its original purpose was to make known the “classics”, it opened a fundamental debate about the Eurocentric perspective that dominated the traditional constructions of canons. This debate then led to a more comprehensive concept, that of “representative works”, which attempted to enshrine the place of works from Latin America and the Arab World. In spite of the authentic aperture that this project brought along, the author concludes that alternative canons cannot be constructed artificially by institutions.

Gesine Müller’s (Cologne) text, “Re-mapping World Literature from Macondo”, provides an analysis of the canonical work of Gabriel García Márquez that serves as a model case for tracing canonization processes in the Global South. Focusing on his best known book *Cien años de soledad*, Müller draws on the work’s reception in the USA (as starting point for his worldwide reception), India, and China, as well as the Arab World and Russia. Within this context, she examines the several stages of his reception in these countries, including the publication of translations. Additionally, she questions to what degree the realm of the aesthetic reveals specific intertextual references between García Márquez and particular authors of the Global South like Salman Rushdie or Mo Yan, who were simultaneously crucial for the promotion of the Colombian author’s work.

Teng Wei (Guangzhou), in her study “Pablo Neruda in contemporary China: Translation between national and international Politics (1949–1979)”, approaches the micro- and macroperspectives of political backgrounds, as well as personal friendships and animosity in relation to the translation history of Pablo Neruda during the Chinese socialist era (1949–1979). In her case study on the Chilean Nobel laureate, she uncovers the various kinds of misreading and rewriting in the process of translation and reception of his work, and discusses the complicated and subtle relationship between translation, ideology and national/international politics to describe the role that national and international politics played in Socialist China’s translation history of Latin American Literature.

In his article, “Por una sociología de las ausencias en la literatura mundial”, Jorge J. Locane (Cologne) offers a critical approach to the concept

of World Literature based on the idea of circulation beyond the national field of emergence. Departing from a perspective that tries to appeal to the difference marked by the geopolitical positioning, his article attempts to open a line of questioning addressed precisely to those literatures which do not circulate, that is to say those that, in the totalistic gaze, belong to the narrow order of the local and which therefore lack value in the world dominion. As a theoretical framework for this non-Eurocentric perspective, he proposes, rather than a Bourdieu-oriented sociology of literature, a reformulation of the sociology of absences, a model originally coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos. The sociology of absences – according to his argument – would be a useful strategy for assigning visibility to local literatures, which are contextually dependent and for that very reason bear specific cultural, political, and aesthetic traits. These literatures together would give rise to a world cultural landscape capable of being characterized as genuinely diverse. In concrete terms, this use of the sociology of absences would be tasked with revealing and restoring the value of localized publishing, of that which does not transcend, of that which in recent years has been embodied, as a reaction to the emergence of publishing corporations, by small projects known as “independent”. In short, Locane argues for a radical type of bibliodiversity as a programmatic agenda for a sociology of absences in World Literature.

Gustavo Guerrero's (Paris) article is entitled “La Croix du Sud (1945–1970): génesis y contextos de la primera colección francesa de literatura latinoamericana”. He reconstructs the history of the collection created by Roger Caillois for Gallimard and argues that his implicit aim was to reinforce the direct connections between France and Latin-American countries in the geopolitical reconfiguration that occurred after the Second World War. This also implies a project of symbolic construction of Latin America that was in crisis following the Cuban Revolution and the emergence of critical publishers and editorial projects like Julliard, Maurice Nadeau, François Maspero, Christian Bourgois, Le Seuil, and Robert Lafon. As Guerrero observes in his last point, the translation and publication of peripheral literatures in world cultural centers such as Paris does not necessarily presuppose a process of recognition and rupture of the colonial dependences, but is rather another expression of the symbolic battle for the control of the representation of the world.

The third and final section, entitled “Epistemologies”, is focused on the circulation of knowledge, ideas and concepts. In his article “World literature or Earth literature? Remarks on a distinction” Robert Stockhammer (Munich) offers a terminological discussion to test out the philological and philosophical implications and abilities of these concepts to open different perspectives on the relation of literature and globality. Fusing historical approaches by Goethe, Hegel, and Heidegger with

central contributions to the current debates on World Literature by scholars like Emily Apter, Gayatri Spivak, and David Damrosch, as well as literary texts by Oskar Pastior and Johann Peter Hebel, Stockhammer aims to highlight the fact that any “wholeness”, as implied and often presupposed in the concept of World Literature, has to be constructed. In this sense, the concept of “Earth literature” may offer a gesture of resistance against overly hasty “sense-making” in the context of globalization and current debates on World Literature.

Stefan Helgesson’s (Stockholm) article, “The World-Literary formation of Antonio Candido”, reads the work of the Brazilian literary critic against the backdrop of current theoretical approaches in World Literature to illustrate how Candido consistently combines a supposedly universal but *de facto* Eurocentric conception of literature with a historicizing sensitivity towards the locally grounded ways in which literature evolves, especially in colonial and postcolonial Brazil. Rather than considering this doubleness in his thinking as a contradiction, Helgesson argues that it invites a conceptual-historical analysis of how (world) “literature”, pressured by social conflict, becomes semantically layered.

In his article, “On the concept figure of the Global South, and ecological narrative promises and deceptions”, Hermann Herlinghaus (Freiburg) reflects on the challenges that the Global South represents on hermeneutic, conceptual, and ethical levels for the discursive logics of “qualified” criticism in the way it has developed from “normalized” lettered citizenship, or canonical representations in the centers of modernity. Evoking several scenarios taken from contemporary Latin American literature, Herlinghaus aims to investigate cases of “abnormal interpretation” and provides anti-canonical readings and mis-translations of established cultural and literary concepts like “magical realism” or “fantastic writing” to explore the ways in which these categories of interpretation are still suitable for understanding the literary stance of the “Hemispheric South”.

With her article, “Orientalismo y realismo mágico al revés. Juan Rulfo y Salman Rushdie o los desafíos del Sur global para la literatura mundial”, Vittoria Borsò (Düsseldorf) provides an analysis of *Midnight’s Children*, by Salman Rushdie, that goes beyond the simplistic established perspective center-periphery dynamics. She argues that the creative dialogue between Indian and Latin American writers (in particular with Juan Rulfo) has led, on the one hand, to a disarticulation of Orientalism by a mimesis that ironizes its own logic and economy, and which, on the other hand, emphasizes the analogy between Orientalism and magical realism as a projection of Eurocentric exoticism. She also suggests that this connection has given place to an alternative concept of magic, and even of culture and history, which could be (re)defined as the virtual force

inherent in any living being whose potentials are fed and grown by their intuitive and affective relationships with the concrete environment in which they are anchored.

In his article, “Hacia una teoría de la circulación, con énfasis en la circulación de las ideas”, Eduardo Devés (Santiago de Chile) provides a theoretical model centered on the concept of circulation which might also be useful for World Literature studies. He argues that a theory of circulation permits the explanation and understanding of the way in which the human condition is constituted, and how it becomes oppressive for other humans and the natural world, but also how emancipations and equilibria can be developed. This is a way of thinking that aims to go beyond national states, even centers and peripheries in the traditional sense, and instead puts focus on the networking of ideas that connect different locations of the world in both dependant as well as emancipated ways.

To conclude, Ottmar Ette’s (Potsdam) article “TransArea Tangier: The city and the literatures of the world” traces a century-encompassing panorama of the Moroccan city as point of intersection and transit-space for the exchange of not only goods and merchandise, travelers and refugees, but also of those forms and norms of a way of life that has in Tangier for centuries, even millennia, developed and coalesced in a very particular way. In his movement-historically approach, he discusses a variety of texts and authors, ranging from Ibn Battuta’s insights into religious convivence in 14th century, to micronarratives by Roland Barthes and Severo Sarduy, that grasp Tangier as a polylogical place to which a stringent occidental logic of identity and identification can only be applied *ad absurdum*.

The three proposed axes represent, among other possibilities, three entry points into a debate that is beginning to focalize and could lead to considerable findings. This book is the product of an international colloquium that took place in Cologne at the beginning of 2017 as part of the research program of the Consolidator Grant of the European Research Council “Reading Global: Constructions of World Literature and Latin America”. We would like to thank the Global South Studies Centers at the University of Cologne for the cooperation and our project members Yehua Chen, Silja Helber, and Judith Illerhaus for their organizational support, as well as Jordan Lee Schnee and Lee Holt for the proofreading and editorial support. As a result of the meeting, which brought together some of the researchers and specialists who are most involved in this field of analysis and now with the publication of this book, we aim to explore analytical avenues that lead from Latin America to other regions of the Global South and vice-versa. We hope we have met this goal and that this publication will serve to stimulate further investigation in this burgeoning field.

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1: Writing

Ignacio López-Calvo

Worlding and decolonizing the literary world-system: Asian-Latin American literature as an alternative type of *Weltliteratur*

Because these accounts of world literature reduce worldliness to global processes of marketing, circulation, and distribution, they efface literature's temporal dimension, its world-making power as a structure of address that announces a subject and a process that imparts meaning.

(Cheah 2014: 326)

Where is the worldliness in a literary text¹? Is this worldliness inseparable from globalization, global circulation, translation into English, and unequal power relations between Western cores and non-Western peripheries? In this essay, I challenge the notion of world literature as a market commodity (in the case of peripheral literatures, they suffer unequal, hegemonic market conditions and power relations) and propose instead the idea of world literature as writing and reading practices that move beyond the framework of the national and of Eurocentrism, being molded instead by a critical, planetary consciousness. World literature would then become a decolonial literature beyond Eurocentric models, a literature that opens up the world beyond obsolete colonial models. In other words, this new concept would turn the concept of world literature into the opposite of Eurocentric literature, into an open challenge to traditional Eurocentrism. Through this reformulation of the concept of world literature, which represents a change in cognitive mapping from the Eurocentric/local to the decolonial/international/global and takes into account literature's temporal dimension as mentioned by Pheng Cheah in the epigraph, I also propose a re-conceptualization of Asian-Latin American cultural production and, by extension, other “minor” literatures as an alternative type of *Weltliteratur*.

As is well known, the term *Weltliteratur* or “world literature” is normally applied, rather than to the sum of all the literature produced in the world, to

¹ I would like to thank Nelson Maldonado-Torres for his feedback on my thesis on world literature during a conference in Jeju island, South Korea.

works that *circulate* beyond the national borders of the country where they were written. In David Damrosch's terms,

I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in the original language [...] a work only has an *effective* life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture [...] world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike. (2003: 4–5)

Damrosch later adds that “literature stays within its national or regional tradition when it usually loses in translation, whereas works become world literature when they gain on balance in translation, stylistic losses offset by an expansion in depth as they increase their range” (Damrosch 2003: 289). In contrast with the old-fashioned Eurocentric conception of the literary world-system as a canon of European masterpieces within their own national traditions, the definition of world literature by Damrosch, Moretti and others now enjoys a more global outreach. The Internet, as may be expected, has also made the circulation of international texts much more accessible, both in their original languages and in translation. However, I believe that circulation itself should not be a requisite for a text to attain the rank of world literature.

Some of the first recorded reflections on world literature came from the German writer and statesman Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Curiously, as Anis Shivani points out, his proto-comparative literature reflections, which were “part of his project of charging German literature with enough doses of internationalism to overcome the dominance of France” (Shivani 2013) came as a reaction to reading Chinese literature in translation on January 31, 1827:

The people think, act, and feel almost exactly as we do, and very soon one senses that one is like them, except that with them everything happens more cleanly, lucidly, and morally. With them everything is reasonable, steady, and without great passion or poetic verve and in this respect is very similar to my Hermann und Dorothea as well as to the English novels of Richardson. It differs, however, in that with them external nature always lives side by side with the human figures. (Cited in Shivani 2013)

Therefore, east-west cross-cultural dialogues have been at the root of Weltliteratur debates since the coining of the term. Along the lines of this East-West paradigm, Emily Apter, in her criticism of Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, states:

A competitive model of literary world-systems drafted from Moretti's evolutionary teleology might at the very least prove useful in addressing the need for viable paradigms of

East-West comparatism. As Asia and Euro-America increasingly position themselves as bipolar models of one-worldedness, each vying to outflank the other in becoming the sole arbiter or default mode for the terms of cultural comparison, survivalism comes back into play, albeit in a rebarbatively Malthusian mode. (2009: 53)

In this essay, I suggest that Asian-Latin American literature, as a paramount non-Eurocentric body of work, can extend links and bridges to soften, beyond withered orientalist approaches, this purported rivalry between the Asian and Euro-American world-systems vying for literary hegemony in the twenty-first century.

If we accept Damrosch's definition of world literature, focusing exclusively on the publishing industry, global patterns of textual mobility, the world literary market, power struggles or the number of translations, virtually none of the literary production by Latin American authors of Asian descent, on which this essay focuses, can be included within the metaphoric concept of the World Republic of Letters (to use Pascale Casanova's concept), as this literary corpus has undoubtedly not reached the status and cultural capital of the conventional literary world-system. By contrast if, as Damrosch himself claims, "Since the mid-1990s, the classical and masterpiece approaches have increasingly been supplemented by an emphasis on a view of world literature as a set of windows on the world", and authors in world literature anthologies "need not be dominant figures even in their home culture" (Damrosch 2009: 5–6), then this marginal literary production fulfills this basic paradigm of the definition of world literature. It indeed offers non-Eurocentric and oftentimes decolonial windows, not only to the axiologies and aesthetic values of Latin America and the Far East, but also to the hybrid, border thinking or the cosmopolitan worldview of Nikkei (overseas Japanese) and *Tusán* (Chinese-Latin American) minority communities.

Furthermore, taking into account the second earliest recorded definition of world literature (after that of Goethe), that of Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, one realizes that their notion of worldliness is delinked from market developments and circumscribed, instead, to a celebrated internationalization of literature beyond national borders: "And as in material, so also in intellectual production. 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" (Marx/Engels 2005: 11). From this perspective, if we focus, like Marx and Engels, on literature that goes beyond local and national limitations and thus reject the aforementioned conventional, Eurocentric definitions, Asian-Latin American literature may be easily considered within this ranking. The same approach is justified if we accept Pheng Cheah's proposal: "I seek to develop an alternative notion of world literature as an active power of world making that

contests the world made by capitalist globalization: that is, world literature is reconceived as a site of processes of worlding and as an agent that participates and intervenes in these processes” (Cheah 2014: 303). This perspective reformulates the concept of world literature to refer instead to globally oriented authors who address their writings to a world audience; that is, those whose opuses have a global reach beyond Eurocentrism, not in the literary market, but in their global sensitivity and consciousness, through the settings where they take place and the worldviews they present. After all, as Shivani states, “A certain *placelessness* – not to be confused with notions of artistic pseudo-exile – seems to be essential to appreciate world literature” (Shivani 2013). In a similar vein, Nicholas Birns and Juan E. De Castro, in their re-articulation of the Chilean Roberto Bolaño’s opus as world literature, state: “Not just Bolaño’s recognition but also his material is global. As a writer he covers the entire world” (Birns/de Castro 2017: 8). They then proceed to explore Bolaño’s representation of Africa, Asia, Europe, the United States, Latin America, and claim that “Bolaño’s world literary status in many ways has to do with how he is part of so many cultural formations, and does not seem to be bound by one identity: both Mexican and Chilean, American and European, poet and novelist” (Birns/de Castro 2017: 11). Asian-Latin American literature tends to share this same non-Eurocentric coverage of vast regions of the planet in their settings and is often unbound by single identities, negotiating not only several national, transnational and cultural identities, but also strategically entering and leaving them according to the sociopolitical and economic circumstances, as I have explained elsewhere.

This change in perspective, which sidesteps essentialist approaches related to the notion of multiculturalism, widens the theoretical and critical scope of world literature by providing world literary status to the works of those Asian-Latin American authors who move from narrow-minded national circumscription to decolonial, global contexts. Indeed, this literary corpus often responds to an either post-national (close to a non-Eurocentric cosmopolitanism) or to a transnational approach. In the last iteration, it provides peripheral, south-to-south dialogues with other regions of the global south (for example, south-to-south cultural exchanges between China on the one hand and Cuba, Peru, or Mexico on the other; likewise between (pre-Meiji Restoration) Japan with Peru or Brazil, or addresses, from the outside, the readers and concerns of the metropolitan, north-Atlantic, hegemonic centers (the case of the dialogues and identification with European and Asian cultures that characterize the writings of the Sino-Peruvian women authors Julia Wong and Sui Yun). After all, “transcultural comparison” is a category that Damrosch finds indispensable for a text in order to enter world-literature status, in addition to being read as literature, translated, and circulating beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin. Likewise, in the same way

that the apparent intention of addressing global issues from a non-Eurocentric perspective and reaching global audiences beyond national readerships does not necessarily translate per se into a wide international distribution of these works, one could also argue that success in the global market should not automatically provide a work with literary world ranking.

These evolving global-south dynamics are apparent in the works of those Sino-Latin American authors whose worldviews fuse the Latin American reality in which they live with the Chinese cultural values and literary traditions inherited from their ancestors. If we consider that Japan was also part of the global south until the Meiji Restoration, which began in 1868 and would achieve the modernization of the country by the end of the nineteenth century, some Nippo-Latin American authors could also be considered within this south-to-south category. The expanded study of the intercultural connections between literary works by Asian-Latin American authors and the worldviews of the rest of the global south (particularly those of the distant and diverse cultures of East Asia) can, therefore, become an effective critical intervention in current debates over world literature. It can lead us to conceive a good part of Asian-Latin American cultural production as world literature, beyond the traditional sociology of the dependency on European and North American publishing centers, marketing strategies, canonizing institutions, and international literary prizes. In addition, this decolonial cultural production often offers a contrasting view of, and sometimes even a response to, the traditional orientalism (or a more benign one, in some cases, as Julia Kushigian showed in her *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*) that has characterized numerous Latin American literary texts from the time of Rubén Darío and other *modernistas*².

² The publications dealing with orientalism in Latin America and the Caribbean include the following studies: Julia Kushigian's *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition: In Dialogue with Borges, Paz, and Sarduy* (1991), Araceli Tinajero's *Orientalismo en el modernismo hispanoamericano* (2003), Axel Gasquet's *Oriente al Sur. El orientalismo literario argentino de Esteban Echeverría a Roberto Arlt* (2007) and *El llamado de Oriente. Historia cultural del orientalismo argentino (1900–1950)*, as well as my edited volumes *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond* (2007), *One World Periphery Reads the Other: Knowing the "Oriental" in the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula* (2009), and *Peripheral Transmodernities: South-to-South Dialogues between the Luso-Hispanic World and "the Orient"* (2012). Many other books have been devoted to cultural production by and about Hispanic authors of Asian ancestry, including Debbie Lee-DiStefano's *Three Asian-Hispanic Writers from Peru: Doris Moromisato, José Watanabe, Siu Kam Wen* (2008), Rebecca Riger Tsurumi's *The Closed Hand: Images of the Japanese in Modern Peruvian Literature* (2012), Koichi Hagimoto's *Between Empires: Martí, Rizal, and the Intercolonial Alliance* (2013), and my *Imaging the Chinese in Cuban Literature and Culture* (2008), *The Affinity of the Eye: Writing Nikkei in Peru* (2013), and *Dragons in the Land of the Condor: Writing Tusán in Peru* (2014).

This alternative approach transforms Damrosch's concept of world literature as a mode of circulation and reading into an internationalized, non-Eurocentric cosmopolitan, or post-national mode of writing that, in some cases, attempts to think *from* both the West and the East. In his own words, it becomes "a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time" (Damrosch 2003: 282). As a caveat, the East addressed in these writings may be a real-life one or may well be imagined or even idealized, for instance, the nostalgic re-creation of the exotic world of his Chinese ancestors in the Chinese Cuban Regino Pedroso's poetry collection of "Chinese poems", *El ciruelo de Yuan Pei Fu* (1955), the Chinese Peruvian Siu Kam Wen's short-story collection *La primera espada del imperio* (1988), or the novel *La eternidad del instante* (2004) by the Cuban Zoé Valdés, who also claims Chinese ancestry. On occasion, therefore, their representation of Asian spaces and worldviews is tainted by self-orientalization and the latent idealization or exoticization of the cultural refinement of their ancestors' culture in detrimental contrast with local Latin American cultures. In other words, I am aware of the potential danger of falling into essentialism when discussing Eastern and Western worldviews. As Zhang Longxi elucidates,

Those differences, however, do not fall neatly along the lines of a simple East-West divide, or the borderline of cultural identities. In fact, members of the same culture may hold very different views and argue with one another, while agreement may sometimes come from people faraway and long ago, living under very different cultural and social conditions. (2009: 70)

In general terms, either the Middle East or the Far East has traditionally been conceived as the ultimate Other of the West, because of their major cultural differences and contrasting views of knowing and being in the world. Since Asian-Latin American cultural production tends to look outside the Eurocentric, national framework, it can extend a useful bridge to read across these cultural divides, potentially facilitating global tolerance, understanding, and empathy. This further step toward deterritorializing the valuing of the literary capital of Latin American works may also offer a window to the emerging decolonial discourses and epistemologies of diasporic minority groups, such as those of Sino-Latin Americans and the Latin American Nikkei. Part of this literary production, which tackles thorny episodes of the Asian diaspora's experience in Latin America – including the coolie trade, semi-slavery on plantation and guano mines, the 1940 riots in Lima, forced displacement in Peru, Brazil and Mexico, deportation and internment during World War II, and the 1940s terrorism of the Nikkei group Shindo Remnei in Brazil – becomes a strategic tool against epistemic violence and erasure from the national consciousness. These works, which historicize the Asian immigrant experience in Latin America and the Caribbean,

dare to contest worn-out stereotypes (often orientalist stereotypes, in the case of Asian-Latin American literature) and to negotiate evolving ethnic and national identities, beyond the stagnation of presumed fixed (often Eurocentric) identities. In Cheah's words,

This distinction between global connectedness through the spatial diffusion and extensiveness achieved through media and market processes and belonging to a shared world corresponds to the fundamental contradiction between globalization and cosmopolitanism: although globalization creates the material conditions for a community of the greatest extension possible, capitalism radically undermines the achievement of a genuinely human world. The globe is not a world. This is a necessary premise if the cosmopolitan vocation of world literature can be meaningful today. (2014: 319)

Paradoxically, Asian-Latin American literature claims both cultural difference and a place in the national projects of their respective countries, all the while attempting (in vain so far) to find their place in world literature (as traditionally understood) and access to global markets.

In both Nippo-Latin American and Sino-Latin American literary works, one can observe the rejection of the traditional ethnic politics by which minority groups are supposed to accommodate to mainstream society's values. The frequent description of international landscapes and urbanscapes reflects this same global sense of attachment. Their border thinking also responds to their rejection of the epistemic racism that reduces their inherited Chinese/Tusán or Japanese/Nikkei belief systems as mere myth or folklore. In a sense, Asian-Latin American literature, without entirely rejecting Western modernity, offers the possibility of an alternative modernity, a counter-narrative to the nationalist modernities of their Latin American country and their ancestors' countries in East Asia. Furthermore, as I have explored elsewhere, in the case of the cultural production by Nippo-Peruvians and Nippo-Brazilians, some works propose their Nikkei community, often imagined as a perfect reflection of the work ethics and resiliency of the Japanese in Japan, or Japanese society as role models for majority Brazilians and Peruvians. These strategic cultural politics that unveil the supposed need for the Nipponization of Brazil, encouraging their fellow citizens to learn from Japanese or Nikkei patriotism, civility and work ethics is noticeable as, for example, in the *dekasegi*³ "temporary worker" Agenor Kakazu's *Crônicas*

³ The *dekasegi* phenomenon here refers to the "inverse" migration of the second diaspora of Latin American Nikkei moving to Japan to work in mid-size factories, which began at the end of the 1980s. At one point, 250,000 Brazilian Nikkei had moved to Japan, but many have now returned to Brazil after the 2008 economic recession in Japan.

de um Garoto que Também Amava Os Beatles e Os Rolling Stones and in Silvio Sam's *Sonhos Que De Cá Segui*.

But of course, there is a lot of heterogeneity within Asian-Latin American literature. Along with this anti-epistemicidal approach and the proposal to Nipponize Latin American countries, many other works in this minor (sometimes invisible) literature, opt for a more post-national and cosmopolitan approach. Thus, several of the works by Peruvian Nikkei authors (Fernando Iwasaki and Carlos Yushimito or the Tusán women writers Julia Wong and Sui Yun) while proudly celebrating their Asian cultural heritage, distance themselves even further from national outlooks, offering instead a rooted, non-Eurocentric cosmopolitan and post-national approach⁴. Rather than accommodating to mainstream society's values, they choose to display an international and transnational self-identification in their writings through the description of their travels (Wong, for example, has lived in Peru, Argentina, Germany, Macau, and Hong Kong, among other places) and the international settings of their poems and narratives. Another strategy used by Tusán authors such as Julia Wong and Sui Yun, who lived several years in countries other than their native Peru, is to place themselves in the interstices between national borders by resorting to code-switching in English, German, and other European languages, beyond their native Spanish, or by writing entire poems in those languages. In certain poems, their cosmopolitan outlook and non-Eurocentric, planetary consciousness lead them to delink themselves from national projects and to rhetorically reject their native country, Peru⁵. This type of worldly literature, therefore, has the potential of forging cosmopolitan, intercultural tolerance by revealing the differences and similarities of human values across time and cultures – be they of the south-to-south or of the core-peripheries variety.

Thus, their collective thinking beyond fixed (Eurocentric) ethnic or national identities, beyond the national bounds of Peru and China, brings them closer to the aforementioned alternative idea of a decolonial world literature. Their own western axiologies dialog with the inherited Asian cultural values of their ancestors in a fruitful cross-cultural enrichment, strategically moving in and out of their Peruvianness and/or Chineseness. Like Julia Wong's, Sui Yun's poetry expresses

⁴ For close readings of Asian-Latin American authors' works, see my books *Imaging the Chinese in Cuban Literature and Culture* (2008), *The Affinity of the Eye: Writing Nikkei in Peru* (2013), *Dragons in the Land of the Condor: Writing Tusán in Peru* (2014), and *Saudades of Japan and Brazil: Contested Modernities in Lusophone Nikkei Cultural Production* (forthcoming 2018).

⁵ Their countryman, Siu Kam Wen, who lives in Hawaii, has also pursued the world citizenship that characterizes world literature by translating by himself some of his own novels into English.

a similar rooted cosmopolitanism, making the different countries where she has lived (Peru, Spain, the United States, Paris, and Germany) her home and identifying with pluriversal values beyond those of her native Peru. In my view, rather than passive objects circulating worldwide at the mercy of market-driven world systems and power struggles between core and global-south periphery, these examples of Asian-Latin American literature constitute a viable, alternative type of *Weltliteratur*, of a non-Eurocentric worldliness in literary texts that reflects world citizenship and that can potentially contribute to create a planetary sensibility.

Along these lines, in contrast with other Peruvian Nikkei authors, like Doris Moromisato in her poetry collections *Chambala era un camino* (1999) and *Diario de la mujer esponja* (2004), who often display ethno-nationalistic pride (Okinawan in her case), several of the short stories included in Carlos Yushimito's *Las islas* (2006) and *Lecciones para un niño que llega tarde* (2011), for example, take place in Brazil (a country he had never visited when writing the stories) and other places, rather than in his native Peru; these often have no relation with his ethnic Japanese heritage, thus celebrating a post-nationalist and post-identitarian approach. Consequently, when Yushimito was asked in an interview about his relationship with Peruvian literature, he responded:

I believe that my relationship with it is as extraterritorial as with any other. I have never felt comfortable with national margins, because I do not think there is a limit when it comes to reading. Perhaps there are limits with respect to the sensitivity it evokes, which brings you closer to an author than to another but, of course, this configures a completely different cartography that dismantles the political maps that we have made an effort to build. (Guerrero 2011: 14)⁶

As to the use of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* (shantytowns) or the Brazilian *sertões* (the northeastern semiarid backcountry) as the settings in many of his stories, Yushimito, in another interview, interprets his choice within the framework of his generation's literature:

Perhaps now we see everything through a different lens which makes us read outside the tradition of national literatures – a tradition which wasn't defined exclusively by the spaces that were represented (be they local or cosmopolitan), but rather by the urge or need to write in order to understand or question national identities. This was already partly the

6 "Creo que mi relación con ella es tan extraterritorial como con cualquier otra. Nunca me he sentido cómodo con los márgenes nacionales, porque no creo que haya un límite en la lectura. Quizá hay límites en la sensibilidad que reúne, que te aproxima a un autor más que a otro, pero desde luego eso configura una cartografía completamente distinta, que desmonta los mapas políticos que nos hemos esforzado en construir".

intention of previous generations, but with Bolaño and perhaps with ourselves as substitutes (I hesitate to use the word “heirs”), the idea of identity starts to shift, becoming less stable, less certain. This leads us to question not just the role of the state but also of other institutions. And that means we have a greater affinity with some authors than with others. What I mean is that it’s possible to continue being a Peruvian or Mexican or Panamanian writer without giving up that national label, but also without giving up our individual roles, which find common ties in language, imagination and expectations. (*Granta* 2010)

Yushimito’s Brazilian literary setting is merely an allegorical, imagined scenario that he finds suitable for exploring universal themes, including his own country’s problems. In his own words, “when I accepted the fact that there was a need for the stories to take place there and not elsewhere, what I wanted to do was to venture into fiction itself, to delight by re-inventing Brazil on the basis of my own referents and even of my own ignorance, which were what finally allow me to give them life” (Ruiz-Ortega 2010)⁷. From the point of departure of ignorance, the author looks outside the national, even when he is dealing with problematic social issues that affect his native country.

Latin American social groups of Asian ancestry typically belong to the middle or upper classes, and are often conceived as “model minorities” (using the problematic American notion of the term). As a result, they do not suffer the same level of economic and sociopolitical marginalization of other minority groups in the region. Their cultural production is nonetheless part of a struggle against epistemicide – in this case, the attempted erasure of ancestral culture at different stages of these communities’ history through the government’s imposition of forced assimilation policies – that can be contextualized alongside the peripheral struggles of other global south epistemologies. One such example is the struggle against the epistemicidal campaign launched by the Getúlio Vargas’s (1882–1954) regime in Brazil, known as *Estado Novo* (New State; 1937–1945), which prohibited the possession or use of any printed material in Japanese, the teaching of Japanese language, and its use in public. Against this epistemic violence, while sometimes claiming cultural belonging in a Latin American country, some Asian-Latin American authors (particularly those born in Latin America) also appropriate the millenary cultural traditions of their ancestors as a strategic tool to mark their social group’s cultural differences and epistemological privilege. Asian-Latin American authors’ appropriation of Asian literary traditions, such as the

7 “Cuando acepté la necesidad de que las historias sucedieran ahí y no en alguna otra parte, lo que quise fue aventurarme en su propia ficción, regodearme inventando el Brasil a partir de mis propios referentes e incluso de mi propio desconocimiento, que era la mayor licencia para darle finalmente vida”.

use of (the concept of, rather than the techniques of) haiku by Nikkei poets José Watanabe and Nicolás Matayoshi in Peru and Teruko Oda in Brazil, which tends to yield hybrid products that drastically alter the original literary practice. Oda, for example, innovates traditional haiku by introducing similes and the voice of the poetic “I”, as well as by focusing on an often personified Brazilian nature and the quintessential Brazilian yearning known as *saudade*. In turn, Watanabe admitted the hybrid nature of his haiku in an interview with Randy Muth: “I do not write haiku. But the spirit is perhaps in my poems, which are a bit longer, learning that language somehow dictates the poems. The poem is already written in nature and one only has to pick it up” (Watanabe 2009)⁸. However, Watanabe claimed that his verses shared the spirit of haiku, which he wrote avoiding dramatization and without reaching conclusions. Furthermore, in another interview, this time with Rebecca Riger Tsurumi, he identified precisely this dialogue with Japanese haiku as his own distinctive trait as a poet: “I have been influenced by haiku poetry. This is what makes me different. I write re-created haiku” (Tsurumi 2012: 242)⁹. Therefore, in spite of the abundance of cultural translations in this literature, it should not be assumed that all Nikkei and *Tusán* Latin American authors are necessarily familiar with or proficient in Asian literary and cultural traditions or, even less so, that they share the same cultural worldviews and literary traits with the Chinese in China or the Japanese in Japan. It is well known that the traffic in ideas and worldviews between East and West has traditionally been much more complicated matter. The legibility among cultures is more evident, however, when dealing with authors born and raised in Asia, and who later moved to Latin America, authors like Chinese-born Siu Kam Wen or Japanese-born Seiichi Higashide, author of the fascinating testimonial *Namida no Adiósu: Nikkei Peru imin, Beikoku kyosei shuyo no ki* (1981) (Translated into English with the title *Adiós to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps*, 2000).

By contrast, authors like the Japanese Peruvian Fernando Iwasaki, understandably tired of reading reviews about their work that “find” Asian traits in their writing (it often happens with interpretations of Watanabe’s poetry as well), strive to distance themselves from an Asian identity only to end up peppering their opus with repeated references to their Asian heritage – if only from

⁸ “No escribo Haiku. Pero el espíritu tal vez sí está en mis poemas que son un poco más largos, el aprender que la naturaleza de alguna manera nos dicta los poemas. El poema ya está escrito en la naturaleza y uno solamente tiene que recogerlo”.

⁹ “Tengo una influencia de poesía de haiku. Esto es lo que me hace diferente. Escribo haiku recreado”.

an ironic perspective – thus bringing attention to an aspect that was supposedly being avoided. In this context, Iwasaki's caricaturization of Japanese stereotypes in the short-story collection *España, aparte de mí estos premios* (2009) is part of his attempt to de-ethnify his writing. Yet, if one takes into account that, besides this text, three others – the historical study *Extremo Oriente y el Perú en el siglo XVI* (2005), the short story “La sombra del guerrero”, (2008) and the long essay *Mi poncho es un kimono flamenco* (2005) – also deal with Japanese issues and characters, it is not difficult to point out the failure of his attempt at de-ethnification. Be it as it may, as already stated, the contact zones between Asian and Latin American peripheral epistemologies in this literary corpus should not be taken for granted, as they are sometimes disconnected, imagined, or blatantly contrived.

As an example of the aforementioned non-Eurocentric, global, post-national citizenship and planetary sensibility, Iwasaki often reminds his interlocutors that he refuses to identify with any single national identity: neither the Peruvian identity of his country of birth, nor the Japanese identity of his ancestors, nor the Spanish identity of his host country. In fact, he finds having multiple identities a more comfortable status. Thus, in his essay “La visa múltiple como identidad en la narrativa peruana contemporánea”, included in *Mi poncho es un kimono flamenco*, Iwasaki asks: “Why does one have to be from just one country when one can be from all and from none?” (Iwasaki 2005: 45)¹⁰. He then sarcastically rejects the omnipresent literary or philological border customs where national identity must be shown: “I do not accept cultural border customs and I do not acknowledge anyone's authority to require the literary passport ... what I intend to have is a multiple and undefined identity – Peruvian, Japanese, Italian, and Spanish, with its respective passports – to the dismay of literary critics” (Iwasaki 2005: 48)¹¹. Finally, in another essay of the same collection titled “*Die kartoffelblüte* o la flor de papa”, he again celebrates literary transnationalism: “To travel the world with a Spanish passport, while having a Japanese surname and being born in Peru, has turned me into a living refutation of regionalisms, identities, and traditional outfits” (Iwasaki 2005: 51)¹². In another piece, “El escritor

10 “¿Por qué hay que ser de un solo país cuando se puede ser de todos y de ninguno?”.

11 “No acepto las aduanas culturales y no le reconozco a nadie la autoridad de exigir el pasaporte literario... lo que me propongo tener es una identidad múltiple e indefinida–peruana, japonesa, italiana y española, con sus respectivos pasaportes – para horror de los críticos literarios”.

12 “Viajar por el mundo con un pasaporte español, teniendo un apellido japonés y habiendo nacido en Perú, me ha convertido en una refutación viviente de los regionalismos, las identidades y los trajes típicos”.

‘comunitario’. Fútbol, identidad y literatura”, he celebrates being an expatriate: “exile and rootlessness are wonderful for artists, poets, writers, and soccer players in order to discover the illusions and limitations that come with national identity”¹³ (Iwasaki 2007: 45). This type of global thinking reflects precisely the non-Eurocentric worldliness in Asian-Latin American thinking and writing that I am proposing as an alternative type of world literature.

The transnationalism of Asian-Latin American literature is particularly evident in *dekasegi* narratives, such as the Peruvian Nikkei Augusto Higa’s testimonial *Japón no da dos oportunidades* (1994), which narrates the author’s negative experience as a temporary worker in Japan, or similar – albeit more positive and optimistic – texts by Brazilian Nikkei about their own *dekasegi* experiences, including Kakazu’s chronicle collection *Crônicas de um Garoto* (1988) and Silvio Sam’s novel *Sonhos que de Cá Segui* (1997). As I have explored elsewhere, while establishing links between Eastern and Western cultures, these testimonials and novels also become vehicles for claiming full citizenship and for proving their authors’ true Latin Americanness as well as that of their ethnic groups. These feel concomitantly rejected as *gaijin* (foreigners) in Japan and guilty for having abandoned their native countries in times of drastic economic depression. In fact, some of these authors openly distance themselves from the Japanese culture of their ancestors together with that of their host country, claiming instead to share a common history with the mainstream societies in their Latin countries or even with indigenous groups in Peru or Japan¹⁴.

Indeed, we sometimes see the identification of déclassé *dekasegi* now working in Japanese middle-size factories with the marginalization of indigenous people in Peru. In Ricardo Ganaja’s testimonial *Okinawa, el reino de la cortesía, y testimonio de un peruano okinawense* (2008), we find a condemnation of the treatment received by Latin American *dekasegi* in Japan: “if they think that you are *dekasegi*, you are just like an indigenous person who just came down from the mountains to Lima”¹⁵ (Ganaja 2008: 124). The author subsequently pledges kindness to indigenous people after his return to Peru. In fact, throughout the book, the marginalization of *dekasegi* and Okinawans in Japan constantly reminds him of that of indigenous people in his country. Similarly,

13 “A los artistas, poetas, escritores y futbolistas nos vienen de maravilla el destierro y el desarraigo para descubrir los espejismos y las limitaciones de la identidad nacional”.

14 Curiously, Alberto Fujimori used a populist strategy during the 1990 Peruvian presidential elections to reach power; he would often wear indigenous garb to present himself as an ally of indigenous people, in contrast to his political opponent, Mario Vargas Llosa, whom he accused of representing the white oligarchy.

15 “Si ellos piensan que eres *dekasegi* eres como el serrano recién bajado a Lima”.

both Julia Wong and Sui Yun strategically identify in their works with Andean indigenous culture and Amazonian indigenous culture respectively. In any case, the mobility of these *dekasegi* transmigrants, shuttling back and forth between Japan and Brazil or Peru, has created strong links between the motherland and the distant host country that are often highlighted in their testimonials.

A common trait of Asian-Latin American literature is its attempt to empathetically connect the reader to a culture and time different from those of the contemporary Latin America where this cultural production was produced, be it the inherited Asian culture of the authors' ancestors, their Nikkei and Túsán ethnocultural worldviews, or the countries they have visited or lived in. This often leads to a deterritorialized global sensitivity that goes beyond national and even hemispheric borders, which does not necessarily mean that the literary text is de-nationalized, but rather that it became at least bi-nationalized and, in many cases, multi-nationalized. This approach, along with their collective critique of hegemonic Western modernity, their border thinking, and the cosmopolitan, post-national, planetary sense of place manifested in much of Asian-Latin American literature, positions this literary corpus well as a candidate to represent a new, decolonial understanding of world literature. Moving beyond the economic reductionism that only looks at markets or sociological interpretations, it focuses instead on hegemonic literary capitals in the West and the politics of English translation. Asian-Latin American literature provides, in addition, a channel of cultural and spiritual understanding between Western and Eastern worldviews.

As Cheah, arguing against analogies that describe world literature exclusively as a passive product of circulation and market exchange, points out, "Perhaps all sociological accounts of world literature necessarily attenuate the worldly force of literature by reducing its worldliness to social forces as exemplified by market processes" (Cheah 2014: 316). In this sense, Asian-Latin American literature's transnationalism returns agency to the reader who, while no longer a mere consumer, will have a potentially transformative access to a window to the – perhaps new for her – non-Eurocentric cosmovisions of distant cultures or ethnocultural minority groups. It thus allows for cultural and historical differences, along with geopolitical specificities, to be highlighted and respected. Concomitantly, yet in another manifestation of the potential transformative agency of literature, the cultural capital collected in and produced by these worldly texts (the new sense I propose), also contributes to increasing the sometimes much-needed self-esteem of historically silenced minority communities.

In conclusion, how is it that much of this untranslated, non-commodified Asian-Latin American literature, which has very limited access to world literary networks, can achieve the status of world literature? In my view, through

the dialectical way in which this minor literary production moves beyond the Eurocentric/national to, instead, veer the worldviews of East and West into engaging each other in a productive decolonial and cross-cultural encounter (at times blending them to create an in-between third space of communication). It contributes to the creation of a non-Eurocentric world consciousness, thus becoming a literature that may be considered *Weltliteratur*. The study of Asian-Latin American literature, knowledges and memory (mostly produced in Latin America, but also written by *dekasegi* in Japan and by other Asian-Latin American emigrants in different regions, like Siu Kam Wen in Hawaii), which looks toward East Asia, can prevent us from the risk, raised by Emily Apter, of “producing a facile globalism in which distinct literary worlds are flattened to fit homogenous paradigms of laws of comparability” (2009: 57). Although at times permeated by contradictions, self-orientalization, and a will to power and representation, Asian-Latin American literature still has the potential to offer a rich contribution to cross-cultural understanding, an ethical enterprise that is often associated with the definition of world literature, without necessarily falling into utopian, visionary speech.

If one considers world literature in the term’s alternative sense (a literature with a non-Eurocentric, decolonial, planetary, global consciousness beyond national projects), these works, coupled with those of other “minor” literatures, have the potential to change the cartography of the global literary field. They also open their national literary canons to more transnational approaches and even to question the official discourse of mestizo national identities (Andean countries, for example) or the black and white dichotomies prevalent in Brazil or the Caribbean basin. Yet, so far, this cosmopolitan impetus has clashed with what Oswaldo Zavala has called “the insurmountable limitation of the ‘world literature’ paradigm as a system that reproduces the silences and the exclusions of the dominant English-language global editorial market, dependent on and conditioned by the scarce number of translations” (2017: 82). In other words, currently, when literature is not “legitimized” by being translated into English – the case with most of Asian-Latin American literature – its chances of reaching the cultural capital of world literature rankings are virtually inexistent. For this mindset to change, or to bypass cultural hegemony and commodification, we would have to change the meaning of “world” (i.e., a non-Eurocentric world) in “world literature”. Were literary critics to rethink the agenda of world literature and what it is that furnishes worldliness to a literary text, this alternative understanding of the concept of world literature would give back transformative agency to these minor literatures that are often essential to a diasporic, minority discourse in search for place within their own countries and national literary canons.

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Héctor Hoyos

Global supply chain literature vs. extractivism

My purpose in this brief essay is to formulate the rudiments of a corpus that works against the accumulation of surplus value in supply chains. Increasingly sophisticated – read: exploitative – contemporary supply chains crisscross several continents with exacting precision. While upper management has a perspicuous view of supply chains, views from the ground are partial at best. Indeed, something that allows capitalists to extract hyperbolic margins from unsuspecting producers and consumers is their exploitees' lack of awareness of the scripted paths from raw material to purchased product, where the chain ends, and of its continuation, often unwieldy, from use to waste. I hold no illusion that piecing together stories about traveling goods and their afterlives will spark worldwide revolution. But I do find it salutary, in today's largely post-political world literature criticism, to engage with stuff – literally.

For a working definition of a supply chain, consider a pencil: its supply chain encompasses all logistics from sourcing wood and graphite, through assembly, to the sale that brings it to an end customer (Petroski 1992) (CSCMP 2017). Ecologically responsible manufacturers would factor in their calculations what happens to the object afterwards, notably decomposition or lack thereof, as in the case of plastic. Before globalization – a technosocial process of integration that gained speed around 1989, the spur for the critical revival of world literature – most of those steps happened locally. (Yes, there was trade along the Silk Road centuries ago, but at a radically different order of magnitude). Extractivism has intensified accordingly. It is an economic model where some nations specialize in producing raw goods, while others in manufacturing products (Acosta 2017). Purportedly, this leads to increased overall efficiency, but it in fact solidifies an uneven scheme where profit differentials can never be leveled out. Extractivism and supply chains compound to maintain global inequality even despite net growth.

World literature is not alien to this problematic. Consider *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engel's seminal 1848 work, which provides one of the first notes on record of the term *Weltliteratur*. Famously, the authors describe how “new wants” require satisfaction from distant lands, leading to economic

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interdependence (Marx/Engels 2012: 77). “And as in material, so also in intellectual production”, they go on to claim, adding that “National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature”¹. Approaching the passage dialectically requires appreciating its internal contradictions, implied sublations and overall teleology. I read it both as celebration of an unintended favorable consequence of the consolidation of the bourgeoisie at a global level *and* as budding critique of its emerging, integrated culture. It should give us pause that the manifesto should end on the still-unheeded call for proletarians of the world to unite. The international bourgeoisie was already several steps ahead of that. One side of the argument is the invocation of a proletarian world literature, of which the manifesto itself would serve as an illustration; the other a condemnation of world literature altogether. The heights and abysses of later socialist realism can be seen under the light of this contradiction, be they state-sanctioned (Maxim Gorky), anti-state (George Orwell), or stateless (Roberto Arlt).

Others are better suited to dwell on Marxian exegesis or social realist literary historiography. In what follows, I’d like to sketch a different way of building on the parallelism of goods and literature. It is not exactly descriptive, in the way that Bourdieuan sociologies of literature, themselves beholden to the isomorphism of *Weltmarkt* and *Weltliteratur*, are. Rather, salvaging for a different era the fundamentals of socialist realism and adopting them as methodological guidelines, I seek to use cultural production to expose social reality and thereby participate, however modestly, in its transformation. I take my cues from Latin American avant la lettre new materialism (Fernando Ortiz) and from contemporary sources including Bruno Latour, Jane Bennett, Bill Brown and Maurizia Boscagli. Think of this: it is ironic, to say the least, that the seemingly abstract, speculative action of pondering literature and biopolitics should take place on a very concrete laptop computer. The latter is always already a reification of transnational social relations and biopolitical entanglements, including coltan from Congo and lithium from Bolivia. As its nether parts report: “Designed by Apple in California. Assembled in China”. As much a product of human ingenuity as the novel is, the computer speaks to the global condition in an entirely different key.

¹ “An die Stelle der alten lokalen und nationalen Selbstgenügsamkeit und Abgeschlossenheit tritt ein allseitiger Verkehr, eine allseitige Abhängigkeit der Nationen voneinander. Und wie in der materiellen, so auch in der geistigen Produktion. Die geistigen Erzeugnisse der einzelnen Nationen werden Gemeingut. Die nationale Einseitigkeit und Beschränktheit wird mehr und mehr unmöglich, und aus den vielen nationalen und lokalen Literaturen bildet sich eine Weltliteratur” (Marx/Engels 1848: 6).

We could ignore it as an externality to “spiritual” production (a misunderstanding best captured in the German agglutination *Geisteswissenschaften*), ruminate humanistically on its role on how we think (à la Friedrich Kittler), or engage it in its own terms. As I see it, literature can turn a blind eye to its conditions of production, or on the other hand, call them into question.

My point of departure is the Chilean Alejandro Zambra’s 2008 short story “Historia de un computador”, the subject of an earlier piece (Hoyos 2015). The story throbs with desire, as captured in the relationship that a couple, Max and Claudia, establishes with their home’s desktop computer. First, it brings them together. It even gets treated as a child, entitled to its own room. Then, a software update leads to deleted memories; passwords unlocked to painful revelations. In one version of the story, digital pornography incites sexual violence. The couple’s relationship waxes and wanes as the computer reaches its maximum functionality and integration with their lives. When it becomes obsolete, so does their love. When teaching this story to my students, I ask them, teasingly: “What is your favorite brand of Chilean computers?” “None” is the right answer, as there is comparatively little in the way of Chilean cars, airplanes, or other advanced, high-surplus-value products. And yet Zambra’s story, already tinted with nostalgia for a time when daily computation was limited to the living room, has been taken up by avid readers in its successful translations to several languages. If one realizes, moreover, that personal computers are but a chapter in the long history of computation, and that they are ideologically conditioned – computation needs not be “personal”, i.e. individualist – then it becomes apparent that Zambra, from Santiago, is driving technological commodity fetishism to its exhaustion.

The computer in that story does not end, as is most often the case in real life, in an e-waste yard, but forgotten in the cellar of a house in Temuco. Max’s son, Sebastián, makes an *ex machina* appearance late in the story, pun intended; he lives there with his mom. (A nod to the skeletons in the closet of Chilean patriarchy and dictatorship). The point is well taken that literature can estrange our relationship to computers. In this case, by inscribing them into stories more complex than planned obsolescence, parodied here. I have followed this trail in the work of a more famous countryman of Zambra’s: Roberto Bolaño. As you’ll recall from the 2004 classic 2666, toward the end of “The Part About About Fate”, on the verge of the long tirade of crime narratives that constitutes the notorious fourth section of the novel, a hard-to-place voice notes that “the secret of the world” lies in the ongoing murders of women along the U.S.-Mexico border. It would be a fool’s errand to give a narrow interpretation to this *ars poetica*. Chris Andrews, Osvaldo Zavala, and others have pointed at the enormous economic forces unleashed along the border as the novel’s real culprits; Sergio González Ramírez, who wrote the original account of the dead that Bolaño overlays his fictional

narrative on had already done so for the crimes themselves. As it happens, Klaus Haas, a person of interest in the investigations and the nephew of Archimboldi – the lost German classic whose search provides the gargantuan novel unity of action – owns a computer store.

I find this meaningful. Here the wants of the forlorn, well-established European academics of the first part align themselves with the broader wants of the market and, inconclusively, with the wants of one or several killers. They all travel to distant lands to satisfy them. Detective Epifanio Galindo cross-examines women who work for Haas – read Hate. He is flirtatious, belittling, and oddly caring. He investigates the murder of their co-worker, Estrella Ruiz Sandoval, and wants to know if she was an habitu   of nightclubs. The intimation and misogynistic overtone is that somehow she had it coming. A co-worker categorically denies the accusation:

Estrella wanted to know things about computers, she wanted to learn, she wanted to get ahead, said the girl. Computers, computers, I don't believe a word you're saying, cupcake, said Epifanio. I'm not your fucking cupcake, said the girl. (Bola  o 2008: 469)²

The woman's self-assured, defiant stance is met with the patronizing, derogatory "tortita" (translated here as cupcake), Mexican slang for "fatty", "vagina", or "lesbian" (nuances the translation misses). Women in the computer store are defying gender roles. Estrella herself used to work in a maquiladora: by working for Haas, she has moved up in the world. In Epifanio's eyes, Madonna-whore Manicheism becomes butch-victim. Hence the disdain for his interviewee. Meanwhile, when Haas is thrown to prison, justly or not, he introduces himself to the hardened *narcos* there as "a computer expert who started his own business" (Bola  o 2008: 484)³. Bola  o has a knack for making the most mundane phrase seem eerie, and this is one such occasion. The self-defined computer expert, pardon the prison slang, makes bitches of them all. Computation then provides the link between several compounding factors: the aspirations for social mobility that drive women from the Mexican countryside to a lawless, chauvinist, desert town; a geography ripe for both impunity and deregulation; a global desire for gadgets of all ilk that reshaped northern Mexico in the wake of NAFTA. Scores of brown women sit in a maelstrom of power differentials.

² "Estrella quer  a saber cosas de computadoras, quer  a aprender, quer  a progresar, dijo la muchacha. Tanta computadora, tanta computadora, no me trago una palabra de lo que me dices, tortita, dijo Epifanio. Yo no soy su pinche tortita, dijo la muchacha" (Bola  o 2004: 588).

³ "Un experto en inform  tica que ha levantado su propio negocio" (Bola  o 2004: 606).

2666 sits somewhere between the all-knowing evil computer in Stanley Kubrik's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the fascist propaganda screens in George Orwell's *1984*. Much has been said about its narrative arc from European universities and high culture to its plunge into the depths of Bordertown femicide. I am characterizing this movement, tendentially, as taking us, knowledge workers par excellence, from the spiritual achievements that software like Microsoft Word make possible to hardware and the social conditions of its production. For its part, *Maquilápolis*, Vicky Funari and Sergio de la Torre's eye-opening 2006 documentary, shows a different facet of these same workers. In the haunting opening sequence, we see their disciplined bodies casting shadows on the desert as they replicate the movements they would do in the factory. Uniformed women wave their hands in the air rhythmically, as if carefully operating machinery, miming their daily routine. The film quote from Charlie Chaplin's famous *Modern Times* (1936) sequence is apt. In the silent cinema classic, the conveyor belt is a central element; here it is absent, for the cogs and wheels of these women's employment extend themselves along an invisible assembly line.

What drives goods around the world is added value. More than the sum of its parts, a computer derives profit from every link in the supply chain. The company makes a killing at each transaction, from the mining of mercury and gold in Africa and South America; through the aluminum foundries for the computer's frame and motherboard assembly in China; to its rote software coding in India and its design in Cupertino; to its glorified commercialization in all of these locales. Think of rubber trees coming back to the Amazon, many times more expensive, as truck tires. To get a sense of the magnitude of modern extractivism, multiply this by each of the numerous components in a tech gadget – then bundle and copyright them. Each additional level of accumulation makes the human labor involved in the process more abstract and harder to grasp. As Chellis Glendinnig notes in her 1990 "Notes towards a Neo-Luddite Manifesto", "all technology is political" (Glendinnig 1990). Any computer reflects social relations of production at a global level.

Addressing this requires us to venture beyond the boundaries of Latin Americanist literary criticism, narrowly construed, far beyond auteur documentaries like *Maquinápolis*, across media, genres, and locales. Consider, for the sake of simplicity, the two other crucial moments in computer supply chain literature: mineral extraction and artifact disposal. Regarding the former, prolific genre writer Alberto Vázquez-Figueroa, something of a Spanish Simenon, gives us the 2008 *Coltán*. It is a hard-boiled rewrite of Christie's *Ten Little Indians* (1939) with the board of Dall & Houston, an ersatz Haliburton, as the dying Indians. The premise is smart: Aarohum Al Rashid, a mysterious figure evocative of Islamist insurgents, starts murdering them one by one for not

paying a Robin Hoodesque ransom: re-building Iraqi infrastructure. Coltan comes into play because Dall & Houston has sought to rein back its trade (Vásquez-Figueroa 2008: 79). This leads to plot twists and a chase across the continents that results, unsurprisingly, in the revelation that Al Rashid was a board member all along.

What interests me in this cultural product is how it both denounces and symbolically exploits the coltan trade. Take a character, the Belgian swindler Marcel Valerie. We see through his eyes Congolese child coltan miners for the first time, covered in dust and always at risk of being buried alive in mine shafts, like an “army of ghosts” (Vásquez-Figueroa 2008: 42). Valerie learns from his Kazakh guide that their day shift is worth 20 cents of a Euro; he’s amazed, but not appalled. Seizing a business opportunity, he purchases the mine from the Kazakh for a bargain thirty million euros. With a heavy hand, here Vásquez-Figueroa communicates the mind-bending scalability of modern profit. Yet he is also complicit in what he denounces, for he builds a European bestseller upon sensationalist myths about coltan. As Michael Nest shows in an eponymous 2011 study, it is false that eighty percent of the world reserves are under control of mass rapists in Congo, a legend that once prompted a well-meaning Democratic U.S. senator to say that, “Without knowing it, tens of millions of people in the United States may be putting money in the pockets of some of the worst human rights violators in the world simply by using a cellphone or a laptop computer” (Nest 2011: 2). Alas, if only systemic responsibility were so simple. *Coltán*, the novel, serves as cautionary tale against a certain kind of simplification.

Ironically, simplicity in form can convey ideological complexity. Colombian conceptual artist Antonio Caro presents a powerful, straightforward work of art that comments on mineral extraction: “Minería” (2012). It looks as if the Colombian flag – a stripe of blue sandwiched between two parts of yellow above and one of red below – had forgone its yellow stripe in favor of the word “MINERIA”. Achieving the not-insignificant task of seeing his country’s flag as *objet trouvé*, Caro nods to the color yellow in the flag representing riches, that is, gold. The viewer is reminded that gold does not happen spontaneously, but through laborious, indeed toxic, extraction. The blue of oceans and the red of founders’ blood look orphaned when the yellow of gold retreats into the sans-serif, bulky all caps of the title word, forcefully presiding over the piece. The artwork puts in stark relief that national identity hinges on surrendering natural resources to foreign powers: then for mercantilist, now for digital accumulation. This revisits familiar motifs in Caro’s lifelong, playful rumination on names, symbols, and catchphrases, which includes the pop-art gesture of writing the name “Colombia” in unmistakable “Coca-Cola” font. It solidifies the impression, cultivated throughout his oeuvre, that the country is for sale. Caro extracts and transfers the gold

from the nation's symbolic reserves onto the fraught terrain of contemporary debates on nature and culture.

Carolina Caycedo, born in 1978, pursues similar goals with her *Be Damned* series, notably the piece 2014, “Yuma, or the Land of Friends”. Commissioned for the Berlin biennale, it documents, in Jacques Louis David-like grand format, the construction of a river dam in El Quimbo, Colombia. It is a dizzying experience to stand in front of the work, as if carelessly soaring above the terrain, while also being reminded of one's smallness *vis-à-vis* the towering flat image. High definition depiction, paradoxically, gains the qualities of abstraction. A different kind of found object, the piece originates in a satellite photograph from the exact coordinates of the construction site, seemingly a click away, yet shrouded in lush tropical nature – if not for long. Yuma is the Muisca name for the river. Heidegger famously observed how a dam on the Rhine river turned nature into standing-reserve; Caycedo would agree, with the added component of turning entire displaced, meagerly compensated indigenous and mestizo populations into the same. This is the contemporary, Latin American instantiation of the biopolitics of neoliberalism that Michel Foucault discussed in his late opus, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. It bears noting that all this scarring of the earth happens in the name of the electricity that fuels our gadgets.



Fig. 1: Carolina Caycedo: YUMA, or the Land of Friends, 2014. Digital prints on acrylic glass, satellite images. 580×473 cm, 100x100 cm. Photo: 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Museen Dahlem. Courtesy of the artist.

Vásquez-Figueroa's coltan, Caro's gold, and Caycedo's hydropower stand to gain when set in conversation with each other. The Spaniard might sensationalize more than elucidate, uproot problems in the name of localization, and contribute very meagerly to the genre of the novel, his chosen art form. But he also reveals, by contrast, a certain nationalistic myopia in his Colombian conceptual artist interlocutors. How many nations' flags could, in how many languages, replace their colors with the word "mining"? How many "natural resource" exploitation sites be photographed and exhibited in German galleries? *Coltán*, for better or for worse, reaches out to those other *other* locales. Similarly, what I am attempting to do here is deploy the resources of world literature to fill the vacuum of storytelling in supply chains that, in turn, make world literature even possible. Consider, heuristically, that Zambra's tale about computation does not begin nor end where its plot does. It belongs to a single cultural assemblage with the maquila pre-history and e-wasteyard future of its title gadget; it informs the articles that frequent flying intellectuals, threats of a U.S. aviation authority laptop ban notwithstanding, produce.

Consider computer waste. A quasi-foundational work is the 2008 Pixar animation blockbuster *Wall-E*. The title character is a post-apocalyptic rubbish-sorting robot that, after many adventures, becomes instrumental to the rebirth of planet earth. Much as I regard the film as a masterpiece of the genre, if the medium is the message and the medium is mass entertainment, then the message here is just further commodification. I am moved by the robot's romantic loneliness and his built-up encounter with a feminine, more advanced robot, EVE, endowed with fertility in a barren world. But the extreme embellishment of actual e-wasteyards is hyperbolic (NPR 2017). Particularly when coupled with highly mediated aesthetic practices, dependent on powerful computing, such as corporate computer animation and 3D rendering. (Eric Herhuth has explored this aspect, along with the movie's heteronormalizing thrust, in a seminal 2014 *Cinema Journal* article). There are different, more productive responses, such as the South Korean poet Kim Hyesoon's suitably entitled 2011 collection, *All the Garbage of the World, Unite!* Kim finds gods among the refuse and expresses their divinity with jarring effect, building up to garbled words on the page: "Do you know all the dearest gods that are hanging onto our limbs?/On the seat you left, a wet towel, a wad of gum, a crushed tomato. [...] Yournostrilssingle-dropofapricklynosehairearth god!" (Hyesoon/Choi 2017: n.p.). One could also think of the Zambian Ellen Banda-Akku's witty children's short story "E is for E-Waste" (2013) and the instructive San Francisco activist video "The Story of Electronics" (2011).

On disposal, however, the most thoughtful works I know are Brazilian. Consider Jorge Furtado's 1989 avant-garde documentary, *Ilha das Flores*. Throughout

the thirteen-minute short, a Guy Debord-inspired science documentary sounding voiceover describes the logic of consumerism. Meanwhile, the film follows a tomato from the plot of a Nisei farmer, to a petty bourgeois family kitchen in Porto Alegre, to the namesake wasteland on the outskirts of the city. Crude, iterative images of money changing hands splice the already-staccato sequences, themselves introduced by rudimentary computer graphics. At one point, piles of corpses from Nazi factories of death are shoveled into graves. To a jarring electric-guitar riff, the tomato ends up in a pile of organic waste that feeds the homeless denizens of the garbage dump – though not before a makeshift farmer’s pigs get the first pick.

Clearly, Furtado does not film for the faint of heart. However, his work retains a playful lyricism, lost in Eduardo Coutinho’s later, grittier portrait on a similar subject, *Boca do lixo* (1993), and beautified in Vik Muniz’s paintings with trash and their accompanying documentary, *Waste Land* (2010). (See Ernesto Livon-Grossman for a survey of Brazilian cinema on garbage). Be this as it may, the important links established here are, on the one hand, between freedom and the control of life – Foucault’s dyad – and, on the other, between supply chains and exploitation. The script’s envoi interrupts the by-then established repetition of brain and opposable thumbs as human traits. It introduces freedom as a third, unexpected trait, precisely in the moment when the subject depicted would be, at least in the eyes of the well-to-do, most thoroughly de-humanized. The final lines are a tautology by the modernist poet Cecília Meireles: “Free is the state of one who has freedom. Freedom is a word nourished by human aspirations, that no one can explain, and no one can understand” (my translation)⁴. Rather than a late-romantic invocation of the ineffable or merely an ironic *épater les bourgeois*, the operation at hand is rigorously dialectic. Shopper “freedom” and obscene differentials in value extraction are of a piece.

In this sense, a computer is very much like a tomato. Electronic waste yards in rural China and Bangladesh are smoldering no man’s lands where day laborers “cook” motherboards to scavenge minerals (NPR 2017). Nurturing effective forms of solidarity for our present biopolitical conjuncture must cut across facile oppositions: local-global, digital-analog, producer-consumer, human-nonhuman, organic-inorganic. Mobilizing cultural production to illuminate different moments in exploitative global supply chains, as I have strived to do here, may contribute to this task. The next logical task remains to extend these insights from cultural products that relate mimetically to actual production and consumption to those

4 “Livres é o estado daquele que tem liberdade. Liberdade é uma palavra que o sonho humano alimenta, que não há ninguém que explique e ninguém que não entenda”.

that allude to them only in subtle ways. The wheels of commerce will be there still, covered by a very thin veil. As of late, their movement subsumes more and more of human activities, literature being no exception. Arguably, sharply differentiated accumulation of surplus value will continue to occur whether we describe it or not, challenge it or not. But so will a cognate literary corpus continue to exist, brought about by its own internal logic. Examining it will, at the very least, raise important questions about the autonomy of literature.

Alternatives include addressing a corpus of world literature as handed down to us by critical consensus or by the culture industry. The latter offers fine representatives of literary genres, the former a snapshot of today's society and values; they overlap, partially. But neither necessarily speaks to, borrowing Sheila Jasanoff's term, sociotechnical imaginaries. These vary widely among locales and have significant impact. The harmonizing agenda of world literature may fail to appreciate those aspects. They do not always emerge in a single work but, as I have shown, in a host of works that revolve around a singular object. Heuristically, again, the object in focus has been a computer, including some of its parts and some aspects of its afterlife. It bears noting, in passing, that I write from a place known by the moniker "Silicon Valley", named after the eponymous semiconductor. Most service workers here speak Spanish at home, are more likely to come across a movie like *Wall-E* than any work of highbrow Latin American fiction, and could not afford engineering or literary criticism careers. In more ways than I intuit, the present essay reflects this.

Now, for all that a computer may reflect global social relations of production in its hardware and software, a skeptic might say, the act of *writing* "with" one is free from that backstory. I would disagree, obviously, at various levels, ranging from my understanding of what writing is (here I do side with Kittler), to, more importantly, my commitment to recognizing and engaging with the materiality of cultural production. The goods and literature debate has been framed in terms of parallelism, to various degrees of proximity. I regard it, rather, as a matter of imbrication. To my mind, the question is not whether they are imbricated, but how. Computation is an interesting starting point because it is becoming the *sine qua non* of literary culture, as it is of cinematic culture: a purportedly disembodied process that is in fact very tangible; a seemingly gratuitous affair with vast economic consequences. The most brilliant algorithm has little effect without supply chains and all they entail. Should one ignore this epoch-defining phenomenon? (For its part, "applying" the tools of digital humanities raises the question of who is the agent and who, alas, the tool). Projecting the stories of objects into their real-world material entanglements cultivates a different ethos – one of thinking with literature wherever it may take us. It has been the path charted here, and it is but one of several ways of thinking with, not past, the imbrication.

Paradoxically, reconnecting material and intellectual production may serve well those who seek to “liberate” the former from the latter, as bourgeois piety dictates. “Art for art’s sake” is not achieved by fiat. Of course, it may also rekindle a political streak that the Marxist tradition of world literature has lost to the more tepid Goethean vein. In either case, it is a sensible measure, lest the debate on the global autonomization of literature happen in a denial of historicity. There is similarly much work to do, self-consciously, to not replicate extractivism by plucking from the cultures of the world to build upon them conceptually, thereby adding value, and then shipping them back to their places of provenance as theory. If my essay has, unavoidably, skirted this position, it has done so as a necessary moment in throwing a wrench into ever-expanding forms of accumulation.

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Tahia Abdel Nasser

Between Latin America and the Arab world: Rodrigo Rey Rosa and Alberto Ruy Sánchez in Morocco

In the 1980s, Guatemalan writer Rodrigo Rey Rosa traveled to Morocco where he attended Paul Bowles' creative writing workshop. *La orilla africana* (*The African Shore*, 1999), his novel set in Tangier about a Colombian tourist and a Moroccan, bisects and looks beyond the African and European shores. In 1975, Mexican writer Alberto Ruy Sánchez discovered Essaouira, a Moroccan city that evoked the Sonoran desert of his youth in northern Mexico, and produced a series of novels and a short story collection inspired by the ancient city of Mogador. These works trace several sets of cultural interactions: translations of the Orient in Latin American literature and Latin Americans in the Arab world. Focusing on these cultural encounters and trajectories, I examine some of the networks of literary and cultural exchange between Latin America and the Arab world and the models they offer to World Literature.

Latin American writers who have produced travel literature on North Africa include Domingo Sarmiento, Rubén Darío, Enrique Gómez Carrillo, Roberto Arlt, and Severo Sarduy¹. In 1881, Cuban José Martí, writing for *La Opinión Nacional* in Caracas, commented on the anticolonial revolt in Egypt and expressed admiration for the struggle against British colonialism (Martí 2011: 113–117). Travel literature is not widely practiced in the Hispanic world, observes Rey Rosa (Esposito 2015). While Rey Rosa reinvents the travel genre in his novel set in Tangier, Ruy Sánchez has recreated Essaouira in his fiction. In 2000, Colombian writer Héctor Abad Faciolince traveled to Egypt where he spent two months and wrote a travelogue *Oriente empieza in El Cairo* (*The Orient Begins in Cairo*, 2002) as part of a cultural project *Año O* (2000), a collection of travel literature, commissioned by the Italian publisher Mondadori, and written by Latin American writers such

¹ For Argentine Domingo Sarmiento's evocations of the Orient in *Facundo o civilización y barbarie* (*Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, 1845), see Spence (2007). For further commentary on the chronicles of Guatemalan Enrique Gómez Carrillo, notably *De Marsella a Tokio: sensaciones de Egipto, la India, la China y el Japón* (1906), and Nicaraguan Rubén Darío's *Cuentos y crónicas* (1918), see Ortiz Wallner (2012). For Argentine Roberto Arlt's travels to Morocco in 1935, see Majstorovic (2006). Also, Cuban Severo Sarduy traveled to Morocco and Tunisia (Park 2010: 172).

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as Roberto Bolaño and Rodrigo Rey Rosa about different cities at the start of the millennium². The travelogue, a twenty-first century parody of the nineteenth-century travel genre, offers a Latin American traveler's *voyage en orient*.

These Latin American novels offer South-South conceptions of the Orient and models of comparison in the periphery. Edward Said's foundational study *Orientalism* argues that European conceptions of the Orient are a form of domination based on inequality and asymmetry. For Said, Orientalism is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1978: 3) based on European superiority and imperialism. Latin American Orientalism is largely different from European conceptions of the Orient based on the colonial encounter. Julia Kushigan notes that "Hispanic Orientalism" offers insight into the Hispanic world's long-standing "historical and intellectual contact with the Orient" beyond Western Europe's domination (1991: 2). While Kushigan notes the cultural contact between the Orient and the Hispanic world, characterized by "a spirit of veneration and respect for the Orient unparalleled by other Western European nations" (1991: 3), most notably in works by Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, and Severo Sarduy, examples of Eurocentric Orientalism abound in Latin American cultural production. Hispanic Orientalism, Kushigan argues, opens up exchange with the Orient and uncovers an affinity between literatures that dates back to the Arabic sources of Spanish literature since the twelfth century (1991: 3). In Spanish America, literature evoked the mysticism of the Orient, a fascination with Oriental themes, and made comparisons between Latin America and the Arab world, specifically Argentines and Arabs (Kushigan 1991: 7–8). Argentine Orientalism, particularly the ways in which Arab and non-Arab Argentine writers employed the Orient and the Oriental to create a distinctly Argentine identity, Christina Civantos (2006) notes, offers insight into Latin America's heterogeneous culture. Likewise, Araceli Tinajero (2003) focuses on conceptions of the Far East in Latin American literature that reworks exoticism without imperial domination of the Orient.

Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zones" in *Imperial Eyes* may be adopted to study the encounters in novels by Rey Rosa and Ruy Sánchez where cultural contact is largely different from imperial encounters in "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism and slavery" (Pratt 2008: 7). In these novels, Latin American travelers are far from nostalgic about the Oriental Other, but are rather familiar with Orientalist stereotypes and

² Rey Rosa wrote *El Tren A Travancore (Cartas Indias)* (*The Train to Travancore*, 2002) about his trip to Chennai in 2000.

willfully rework the Orient into Africa beyond the East or the West and an ancient mythical city that connects Latin America to North Africa. Ali Behdad's "belated Orientalism" is a late-nineteenth-century Orientalism based on desire and nostalgia as practices that enabled and perpetuated colonial power. Rather, these novels trace encounters that extend beyond exoticism to contact between Latin America and North Africa.

The travel of Latin American writers to the Arab world offers an Arab-Latin American model of World Literature that focuses on transatlantic exchange. Cultural encounters between Latin America and the Arab world have extended from a long history of Arab migration to Latin America, to Latin American Orientalism, the cultural production of the Arab diaspora in Latin America, and the circulation and translation of Latin American literature in the Arab world. Cultural interactions between Latin America and the Arab world have produced literature that traces new frameworks of South-South comparison. Today, the travel of Latin American writers to North Africa contributes further to these literary and cultural ties.

The Tropics and Africa

Rodrigo Rey Rosa (born in 1958) is one of the foremost writers of Guatemala, whose novels have been translated into English by American author Paul Bowles (1910–99), with a recent translation of *The African Shore* by Yale University Press. Born in Guatemala City, Rey Rosa settled occasionally in Tangier where he enjoyed the friendship of Bowles. In 1980, he enrolled in Bowles' creative writing workshop in Tangier and spent a year in Morocco (Guerrero 2002: 104; Gray 2007: 164). Though Rey Rosa is one of the better-known Central American writers in English, his connections to North Africa are understudied. Rey Rosa is the quintessential cosmopolitan writer whose travels from Guatemala to Morocco to India (and Spain and New York) offer new models of South-South comparison. His novels are infused with the Argentine experimentalism of Jorge Luis Borges in Central America (Esposito 2015), along with Guatemala's violence, all relocated to Morocco.

Rey Rosa reworks contact between Latin America and the Arab world through Third world encounters, in general, and his evocation of Tangier in his novels in particular³. *The African Shore* traverses the Atlantic and the Strait of Gibraltar, creating routes between Latin America and North Africa. Alexandra Ortiz Wallner

3 See the important study by Ottmar Ette and Friederike Pannewick (2006).

notes the reconfiguration of Latin American literature through the presence of the Arab world or the Orient in the Latin American tradition: *The African Shore* reconfigures Spanish American literature to interconnect with the Arab world, or in a broader sense, the Orient in the Spanish American literary tradition (2012: 247). In *The African Shore*, Rey Rosa, aware of the gulf that separates Latin America, the US, Europe, and North Africa (Dalmau 2005: 52), creates cultural and transnational encounters.

The African Shore is unique among Rey Rosa's novels for its focus on contact between Latin America and North Africa. The setting of Morocco, Rey Rosa writes, reworks and departs from Bowles' Tangier: "by 1998 Morocco had become quite different, at least externally from the Morocco that Bowles had written about, or in a way invented. I guess I looked at Morocco, especially Tangier, as a territory that was his. [...] It's important to understand that I wrote this little novel in a state of happiness mixed with nostalgia" and as a "double farewell" to Bowles and Morocco (Esposito 2015). Some of Rey Rosa's novels feature Morocco: *The African Shore* (1999), his only novel set in Tangier and penned in the Hotel Atlas (Gray 2013: 144); *El cojo bueno* (*The Good Cripple*, 1996, translated into English in 2004), set in Guatemala and Morocco; and *Severina*, which includes a Moroccan bookseller. Though *The African Shore* is set in Tangier, Rey Rosa has maintained that where he writes does not matter to him (Gray 2007: 161). Rey Rosa, who lived in Tangier from 1982 to 1992 and spent summers in Tangier until 2001 (Goldman 2013: 74), writes about his recreation of Tangier in *The African Shore*:

I dared to write the book when I realized that the Tangier that Bowles had written about – or better yet, created – had changed so much that it was no longer the same city. [...] When I started writing the novella, I could sense that I would never live in Morocco again. The book became a sort of farewell. But I never thought of Tangier as a home. I've never been at peace at home – but in Tangier I often was. (Goldman 2013: 74)

The African Shore brings into focus contact between Guatemala and Morocco, or Latin America, Africa, and Europe, where tensions, difference, and the legacy of colonialism abound. Rey Rosa recounts:

It was winter and the heating in the Atlas never worked properly, so that when I was invited to spend the rest of my stay in a big 19th-century European house with large gardens in Monte Viejo, and with views of the cliffs that span both pillars of Hercules and the city of Tarifa set into the Spanish coast, I counted myself the luckiest Guatemalan in all Africa. (Gray 2013: 144)

His commentary brings to light the confluence of European, Arab, and African cultures in which a Guatemalan found himself, creating further Latin American ties to Africa.

The African Shore tells the double story of a Colombian tourist stranded in Morocco when he loses his passport and an adolescent Moroccan shepherd, Hamsa, who wishes to migrate to Spain, seemingly separate but interconnected through an enigmatic owl. The Colombian tourist, unnamed for most of the novel, who now has an excuse not to return to Colombia, buys kif, purchases an owl from the market, and courts a young French archeology student, Julie, in Tangier. The Colombian tourist's encounters with Moroccans in Tangier are characterized by distance and otherness. *The African Shore* culminates in the Colombian tourist's passage to Spain and the flight of the owl from Hamsa beyond the African and European shores.

Rey Rosa weaves a relationship between Guatemala (Colombia in the novel) and Morocco, and thus explores contact and encounters in the periphery (García 2009: 22). Rey Rosa makes comparisons between Colombia and Morocco in *The African Shore*, but also writes with an awareness of the polarity between the Moroccan landscape, mostly desert, and Guatemala's "tropical exuberance" (Goldman 2013: 75). Though Rey Rosa has traveled to New York, Morocco, and India, Guatemala is present in his novels (Sánchez 2008). Guatemala casts a long shadow on Morocco, reproduced through the undercurrent of violence among Moroccans, Colombians, and Europeans in *The African Shore*. The theme of violence for Rey Rosa is perennial⁴. For example, *The Good Cripple*, a novel in which a Guatemalan is abducted for ransom and whose foot is amputated and sent to his father, begun at the Hotel Atlas in Tangier, Rey Rosa notes (Esposito 2015), was affected by reports of violence in Guatemala. Rey Rosa evokes the violence that characterizes "that border of all borders: the strait that separates Africa and Europe where they touch the Atlantic", as described in the English translation – the Strait of Gibraltar in which Africans perish as they attempt to cross into Europe. A restrained violence – or what he calls "interior violence" (Posadas 2005) – seeps into the novel, most notably in Hamsa's final proposition to Julie in exchange for the owl and the encounter between the Colombian tourist and his assailant in Spain. Throughout the novel, juxtapositions and comparisons between drugs, crime, and violence in Morocco and in Colombia abound: the Colombian concedes to a Moroccan cab driver that Colombia is "More or less like here"⁵ or "Horrible, in other words" (Rey Rosa 2013: 88)⁶.

The city of Tangier revives conceptions of the East: Tangier is exotic, decadent, and enigmatic (Awaad 2015: 121). In *The African Shore*, Tangier is characterized

⁴ On the theme of violence in Rey Rosa's literature, see Goldman (2013).

⁵ "Más o menos como aquí" (Rey Rosa 2010: 107).

⁶ "Horrible, entonces" (Rey Rosa 2010: 107).

by corruption, smuggling, prostitution, repression, and shantytowns. The topography and culture of Tangier evoke cultural syncretism and its colonial legacy: the city is home to Europeans, Muslims, provincial Moroccans, Africans (who come there to cross the isthmus), and the Colombian. Tangerines are “polyglots”, Rey Rosa notes (Esposito 2015), whose languages evoke an ethnically and culturally mixed heritage. Moreover, the city sets the stage for further encounters and tensions between Europeans, Moroccans, and Colombians. Scenes evoke stereotypes of poverty: “Several begging children circled among the tourists, kissing their hands, their sleeves and the folds of their shirts” (Rey Rosa 2013: 58)⁷. In one of her faxes, the Colombian’s wife reports what his uncle thinks of Tangier: “He says everyone knows it’s one of the sin capitals of the world” (Rey Rosa 2013: 111)⁸. Tangier, a labyrinthine Mediterranean city, looks “Asian” (Rey Rosa 2013: 43), replete with European stores and American food chains. It is not only the locus of Arab, Portuguese, French, and Spanish influences but also where the Latin American traveler is distanced from the familiar (Ortiz Wallner 2012: 246).

The African Shore captures Moroccan-Colombian interactions, allowing us insight into how Colombians and Moroccans read (or misread) each other in the periphery. While Rey Rosa offers the Colombian tourist’s conceptions of Morocco and Moroccans, he also offers Moroccans’ perceptions of foreigners. For Hamsa, foreigners are the Other, seen within the European-Islamic encounter. The way that Hamsa sees the Colombian tourist at the French Madame Choiseul’s house evokes resemblance and difference between the Colombian and Moroccans: “Now a man, who could have been Moroccan but who, judging by his clothes and way of walking, must have been European” (Rey Rosa 2013: 17)⁹. Likewise, a local cab driver mistakes the Colombian for a Moroccan, Tunisian or Egyptian. Though he may pass for a local, his status of foreigner likens him to the colonial European in an example of the periphery seen from the periphery, but through the hegemony of the West (García 2009: 36). The guide Rashid holds stereotypes of the tourist and exploits him, conflating Colombians with Europeans. This is confirmed by the “tourist-traveler” (“el turista-viajero”), who recalls the travelers to the Orient and moves seamlessly between the European community of Tangier and the Medina (Awaad 2015: 125) – the European residences in Monte Viejo, Sidi Mesmudi, and the environs of Tangier. Attracted to Tangier, drawn to sensuality

7 “mientras varios niños pordioseros revoloteaban entre ellos, y besaban sus manos o las mangas o faldas de sus camisas” (Rey Rosa 2010: 75).

8 “Dice que todo el mundo sabe que es una de las capitales de la perdición” (Rey Rosa 2010: 131).

9 “Ahora un hombre, que podía ser un magrebí pero que, a juzgar por la ropa y el andar, debía de ser un europeo” (Rey Rosa 2010: 27).

and drugs but distant from the culture, the Colombian tourist maintains the pose of foreigner or cosmopolitan in a magical city. The Colombian's contact with Moroccans is characterized by otherness: "In front of him, Moroccan heads passed by, then seemed to multiply. [...] Eyes that reminded him of other eyes, but in different faces" (Rey Rosa 2013: 34–35)¹⁰. The Colombian does not attempt to read the Other, but "heads" and "eyes" are a synecdoche for Moroccans. His contact with Hamsa is cursory and he fails to read the young Moroccan's interest in the owl. By the novel's end, he accepts the Moroccan guide Rashid's proposition to cash betting cards in Mellila for a commission and, with a new passport, crosses the Strait of Gibraltar into Spain but instead purchases a ticket to Malaga to slip further into the Peninsula. At that moment, he encounters his double, a Moroccan who says his name is Ángel Tejedor (literally, *weaver*), the Colombian's own name, and accosts him for his passport and the ticket. All encounters converge on the moment in which the Colombian tourist, whose anonymity has hitherto been preserved, encounters Rashid's partner who has followed him to Spain. The encounter epitomizes mutual distrust, an "elemental struggle", and the instinct "that he [his assailant] had to kill him if he was going to become him [the Colombian]" (Rey Rosa 2013: 125)¹¹. The encounter uncovers the name of the Colombian and sets the Moroccan as his "other" (García 2009: 31) and his double. Ottmar Ette notes the triangulation of Colombia-Morocco-France in the novel and its implications for literature in general:

Africa, Europe, and America, or accordingly, Morocco, France, and Colombia, are so interwoven with one another that the transcontinental and transnational dimension in Moroccan Tangier creates a translocal microcosm, so to speak, upon which is superimposed, in a concentrated form, the long history of Spanish and Portuguese, English and French colonialism. (2016: 47)

Rey Rosa is "intimately familiar" with the locales of *The African Shore*, the transnational Central American novel, and the translation between languages and cultures in the "insular world of Tangier" (Ette 2016: 47–48). The encounters that unfold in Tangier and the Central American novel further enmesh cultures and languages, creating a model of transnational literature and Arab-Latin American literary ties.

The African Shore centers on the enigma and exchange of an owl – mystical, magical, but also sinister – that characterizes these Colombian-Moroccan cultural

¹⁰ "Frente a él, las cabezas marroquíes pasaban por la plaza y parecían multiplicarse. [...] Ojos que recordaban otros ojos, pero en caras diferentes" (Rey Rosa 2010: 49).

¹¹ "que el otro necesitaba matarlo para convertirse efectivamente en él" (Rey Rosa 2010: 145).

encounters. Paul Bowles described Rey Rosa in his creative writing workshop thus: “a Guatemalan, who wrote in Spanish” and invented “situations which were generally sinister” (Gray 2013: 140). The owl brings together the characters and intersects the plotlines through interactions that converge upon its possession. It stands for a complex system of exchange, sale, purchase, and resale where the forms of transfer are subject to mistranslation across cultures (García 2009: 41) and offers a set of cultural referents – superstition, bad luck, magic, and ancient knowledge. Purchased by the Colombian and stolen by the Moroccan, a possession that is important to the tourist and an obsession of Hamsa who wishes to create an amulet made from an owl’s eye to fight off sleep and help the smugglers, the owl sees both. In the section “The Owl’s Eyes”, the owl inspects the Colombian with curiosity. The owl splits and brings Ángel and Hamsa together. In the end, the novel refocuses attention on the owl, “coveted by both sides – Christian and Muslim” and “through whose eyes and ears we sometimes see and hear the world, *both* sides of it”, the translator Jeffrey Gray notes (2013: 143). The novel ends with the owl’s flight over the cliff overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar, “between cultures and continents”, and circling beyond African and European shores (Gray 2013: 146).

The novel’s title refers to “the African bank” or “the African side” of the Strait of Gibraltar rather than the European shore, or Spain (Gray 2013: 142). It focuses on the East, on Africa in Latin American-African encounters, and contact in the periphery. The African shore is not only the European shore in Africa but also the border of the Islamic world in Africa and thus can be interpreted as another bank for Central America (Ortiz Wallner 2012: 254). Ortiz Wallner, describing Rey Rosa as “the most universal and cosmopolitan of contemporary Guatemalan writers”, notes “the presence of diverse settings serves to relativize borders, be these national, regional, or continental” (2013: 137). *The African Shore* circumvents borders and renews contact among European, African, Arab, and Latin American cultures in North Africa and Central American literature.

Mexico and Mogador

Alberto Ruy Sánchez (born in 1951) – Mexican novelist, critic, and editor of the prestigious Latin American arts magazine *Artes de México* – has set his novels in Morocco and reworked Arab culture in Spanish. When he undertook a trip to Morocco in 1975, he discovered Mogador, the ancient name for the Moroccan city of Essaouira on the Atlantic coast that would inspire his trilogy – *Los nombres del aire* (*Mogador: The Names of the Air*, 1987), *Los jardines secretos de Mogador* (*The Secret Gardens of Mogador*, 2001), and *En los labios del agua* (*On the Lips*

of the Water, 1996)¹². *En los labios del agua* features a Mexican of Arab origin – a heritage that Ruy Sánchez reworks in his novels.

Mogador, a Moroccan port on the Atlantic coast and an entrance to the Sahara Desert, renamed Essaouira in 1953, is characterized by a mixed culture – Jewish, Muslim, Berber, and Arab (Ruy Sánchez 2006: 261). The city is an emblem of multiculturalism and cultural syncretism. Like the centrality of Tangier in *The African Shore*, Mogador in Ruy Sánchez's novels is a port that links South and North Africa with Europe (Ruy Sánchez 2006: 261) and a city that connects Morocco to Mexico or North Africa to Latin America. Attracted to Morocco, Ruy Sánchez writes:

But why does a Mexican feel compelled to write about Morocco? [...] What Morocco gave me is much more than an interesting location for my stories, as some people tend to believe. And certainly not a northern fascination for the exotic south, described by Edward Said as Orientalism. I come from another south, and that changes everything, allowing me to develop the theory of a possible south-south relationship which I ironically term “Horizontal Orientalism”. (Ruy Sánchez 2006: 261–262)

On his first journey to Mogador Ruy Sánchez relates that he was shocked to discover that it was so distant from Mexico yet so profoundly familiar; it seemed to be “another Mexico” (2006: 262). Moroccans, too, felt the same when they arrived in Mexico, a sentiment which he attributes to a shared legacy: “Our legacy derives from five centuries of mixing Indian and Spanish blood, but we must not overlook the Arabic heritage running through our veins, introduced by the Spaniards” (Ruy Sánchez 2006: 262). Ruy Sánchez traces this legacy to Arab influence in Andalusian Spain and suggests that Mexicans are descended from Berbers in North Africa and Moorish ancestry through contact with Spain – a heritage that can be found in his Mexican *mestizaje* (2006: 264). Arabic in the Spanish language and Arab culture traveled to America through language, *mestizaje*, and craftsmanship (pottery and textiles), and, for him, Morocco and Mexico descend from Andalusian Spain (2006: 266). His discovery of Morocco through “the walled city of Essaouria-Mogador” (2006: 268) uncovered parallels with Mexico, that Morocco and Mexico share a common cultural heritage and that literature expresses that continuity (Benlabah 2004).

Mexico and Morocco are intimately intertwined in Ruy Sánchez's evocation of Arab characters in a Moroccan setting. Ruy Sánchez traces this interconnection to the cultural and historical proximity of Mexico and Morocco, connected by al-Andalus. He notes: “In Morocco, I discovered a cultural territory that borders

¹² *Mogador: The Names of the Air* was translated into Arabic by Fatiha Benlabá and published in Essaouira by Editorial Aliseos (Lahrech 1998).

on my own; an alternate Mexico separated by many seas” (Ruy Sánchez 2000: 68). For him, Mexico and Morocco are descended from Arabic Andalusia and he maintains that there is no exoticism (Ruy Sánchez 2000: 65). Like Rey Rosa, implicit in his endeavor is that literature has no borders. Moreover, he focuses on a shared culture beyond Europe and a form of Orientalism “that is not only clearly horizontal but that flows in two directions” (Ruy Sánchez 2000: 69). As he notes, “If the word *Maghreb* means ‘west,’ and Morocco thus constitutes the Far West of the East, then Mexico is also the Far West of its own continent” (Ruy Sánchez 2000: 69). He suggests that Mexicans are descended from Arabic Andalusian immigrants to America instead of Spanish and indigenous Mexicans, a connection that has consequences for his literature and the model it creates – that of Arab and Latin American interconnections.

The novels of Ruy Sánchez evoke Arab-Islamic culture, reworked in Latin American literature and a product of the discovery of the East on his trip to Morocco, as well as the affinities between Andalusian literature, culture, and the landscape of Mexico and Morocco. These affinities are framed in the notion of “horizontal Orientalism” which calls for South-South exchange through Mexico (Lahrech 1998).

Mogador: The Names of the Air (henceforth *Mogador*) focuses on an Arab woman, Fatma, and her discovery of desire. Set in the ancient city of Mogador, *Mogador* recounts the story of Fatma, a young Moroccan woman so profoundly possessed by desire she looks continually toward the sea. Along with her desire, her melancholy and solitude grow, as though she is possessed so that when people speak of her, “they wouldn’t say ‘there she is,’ but rather, ‘it seems as if she’s there’” (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 30)¹³. The blurb describes the Arab Latin American interactions in the novel thus: a “fusion of Latin American magical realism with Arabic geometric and mystical imagery”. Evocations of Fatma’s sexual awakening intimately capture her sensuality in a manner that evokes the cultural atmosphere of Essaouira and the forms of Latin American literature whereby characters and events are both mundane and magical. *Mogador* is both Orientalist in its evocations of an Arab woman’s desire and extends beyond Latin American Orientalism towards an interconnected Mexican and Moroccan heritage.

Mogador is a magical or fictional city but also a real one. The marvelous city of Mogador uncovers the Muslim roots of Ruy Sánchez’s heritage (Lahrech 1998). Arab-Islamic origins can be traced back to the Spanish colonization of Mexico, to conquistadors in America from al-Andalus in the Iberian Peninsula, among whom were pseudo-conversos of Muslim or Jewish origin who fled Spain and

13 “no decían ‘allá está’, sino ‘allá parece que está’” (Ruy Sánchez 1996: 41).

came with Columbus to the New World (Lahrech 1998). Ruy Sánchez invokes an Arab-Muslim heritage and Arab migration to Latin America – cultural ties that are elaborated by such writers as Jorge Luis Borges, Jorge Amado, and Gabriel García Márquez. For Ruy Sánchez, Mexico inherited the ethnic and cultural mixing that characterized al-Andalus. Mogador evokes his youth in the Sonora desert and Morocco offered him an understanding of Mexican culture and his *mestizaje* (Ruy Sánchez 2006: 272). Like Tangier in Rey Rosa's novel, Mogador connects both sides of the Atlantic. Ruy Sánchez evokes the city of Mogador, the port, and public bath (*hammam*) in the novel. The walled city-port of Mogador is described as a labyrinth of markets and bathhouses:

[T]he principal street, The Way or Street of the Snail, which leads by twists and turns from the walls that surround the island to the central plaza, home to the public baths and to the three temples of the three religions that cohabit the port city. To the people of Mogador, the city was an image of the world: a map of the external, as well as the spiritual, life of men. (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 5–6)¹⁴

Ruy Sánchez's evocations of Mogador and Fatma's desire intimately rework medieval Arabic literature by Tunisian Muhammad al-Nafzawi (*The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight*), Persian philosopher, theologian, and reformer Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, the Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi, and Cordoban theologian Ibn Hazm (Lahrech 1998). Ruy Sánchez's discovery of classical Arabic literature is central to the themes of *Mogador*. *Mogador* was inspired by Andalusian poet, scholar, and theologian Ibn Hazm's masterwork *Ṭawq al-ḥamāmah* (*The Ring of the Dove: A Treatise on the Art and Practice of Arab Love*), a love treatise that inspired Ruy Sánchez's exploration of the language of love, the gaze, and the intensity of desire (Lahrech 1998). In *Mogador*, a young scholar of the Koran is besotted with Fatma and possessed by her in his repose, reading, and prayer. The young man, "a Saracen at heart" (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 18)¹⁵, looks through the Koran for ways to interpret signs in Fatma's behavior. One day he enters the library and opens the case of "forbidden books":

He had already heard mention of the treatise on love and lovers by Ibn Hazm, and holding it in his hands, he went straight to the chapter on *The signs of love made with the eyes*. "The eyes often play the role of messengers and thus convey what is desired. If the other

14 "la calle principal, La Vía o calle Del Caracol, que dando giros lleva de las murallas que rodean toda la isla a la plaza central, donde están los baños públicos y los tres templos de las religiones que conviven en ese Puerto. La ciudad, para la gente de Mogador, era imagen del mundo: un mapa de la vida tanto externa como espiritual de los hombres" (Ruy Sánchez 1996: 17–18).

15 "sarraceno de corazón" (Ruy Sánchez 1996: 30).

four senses are doors that lead to the heart and windows that open onto the soul, sight is, of all the senses, the most subtle and offers the most effective results. The gaze repels and attracts, promises and threatens, reprimands and offers encouragement, commands and forbids. (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 18–19)¹⁶

The young scholar senses that Ibn Hazm's treatise holds the key to the gazes Fatma directs at him. In *The Ring of the Dove*, Ibn Hazm observes the signs of love of which the first is the gaze, parses the variety of the lover's gaze, and remarks upon his unflinching gaze, his affectation of disinterest, his rapt attention, his desire to be in the beloved's company, the confusion and excitement upon the beloved's sudden appearance, or agitation on beholding someone who resembles his beloved or on hearing his beloved's name. Instead, the narrator comments on the signs of Fatma's desire – that they could have formed a poetic inventory of the signs of desire, as Ibn Hazm has interpreted the signs of love. The scholar, while reading these prohibited books, “would discover a deeply-rooted tradition in Arabic-Andalusian literature, the tradition of the *adab* [literature], the treatise that is at once a narrative and a poem, usually based in large part on the personal experience of the author” (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 20–21; emphasis in original)¹⁷. Likewise, Ruy Sánchez draws upon the Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi in “the nine fundamental steps” Fatma takes to master the silence of the nine senses and thus open herself to the world (Ruy Sanchez 1992: 55).

The evocation of love and desire in magical and ancient Mogador, enclosed and exotic, creates an exoticism that characterizes Orientalist literature, especially through the male and foreign gaze directed at women in general and Fatma in particular not only within the prohibited space of women but also of the intimate quarters of the public baths. Ruy Sánchez creates Mogador, “the imaginary city of desire”, in his novels. The narrator (and foreign male author) intimately describes the ritual of the hammam and women's sexual initiation, dreams, and desires. Ruy Sánchez employs the complex geometry of Morocco's architecture to create a structure that evokes desire: “With their marvelous architecture of the

16 “Ya había oído hablar del tratado sobre el amor y los amantes de Ibn Hazm, y cuando lo tuvo en las manos fue directamente hacia el capítulo sobre *Las señas del amor hechas con los ojos*. ‘Los ojos hacen a menudo las veces de mensajeros y con ellos se da a entender lo que se quiere. Si los otros cuatro sentidos son puertas que conducen al corazón y son ventanas hacia el alma, la vista es entre todos el más sutil y el de más eficaces resultados. Con la mirada se aleja y se atrae, se promete y se amenaza, se reprende y se da aliento, se ordena y se veda” (Ruy Sánchez 1996: 30).

17 “descubría una tradición muy arraigada en la literatura arabigoandaluza, la tradición del *adab*: del tratado que es a la vez una narración y un poema, generalmente vívidos, en gran parte, por el autor” (Ruy Sánchez 1996: 32).

initiation into desire, the Arabic public baths, the *Hammam*, become a symbol for Fatma's own initiation in *Los nombres del aire* (Ruy Sánchez 2000: 71; emphasis in original). The narrator violates the sanctity of the public bath frequented by the women of Mogador and Fatma where she encounters Kadiya, a mysterious woman: "What is illicit outside is, inside the Hammam, as unsubstantial as a fruit whose peel dissolves in the air" (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 38)¹⁸. He enters "the forbidden rooms of the Hammam" (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 56)¹⁹ to describe the women's desires. In the section "The Names", the narrator evokes the forbidden and interrupted desires of the inhabitants of Mogador: the melancholy and sensual Fatma who encounters Kadiya in the public baths; Amjrus, the corpulent auctioneer in the fish market whose encounters in a floating brothel and attraction to Fatma express ample desire; Mohammed, a fisherman who courts Fatma and attempts to interpret her gestures and melancholy gaze, instructed by Amjrus into the art of transactions in the fish market, and unaware of the prospect of an illicit transaction; Kadiya, a woman of "nocturnal transactions" (Ruy Sánchez 1992: 89), desired by Fatma, who eludes her. Mexican and Arab-Muslim motifs are interwoven in the novel, creating an interconnection between Mexico and Morocco. These include the magical evocations of desire along with the geometric architecture of the public bath that further inspires that desire.

Arab-Latin American models

Together, Rey Rosa's *The African Shore* and Ruy Sánchez's *Mogador* set out to circumvent and rework Orientalist stereotypes respectively. These novels further contact and exchange between Latin America and the Arab world or North Africa. In *The African Shore*, center and periphery converge in the owl (García 2009: 42) who circles beyond Africa and Europe. In *Mogador*, Ruy Sánchez's evocation of Fatma's desire and sensuality reworks Orientalism through the interconnection of Mexico and Morocco. While the violence of Rey Rosa's novels permeates encounters between cultures in *The African Shore*, desire seeps into Ruy Sánchez's evocation of Morocco.

As Rey Rosa brings into focus misunderstandings and misconceptions between Latin America and North Africa, Ruy Sánchez reworks Orientalism to

¹⁸ "Lo que afuera es ilícito, dentro del *hammam* es tan inconsistente como una fruta cuya cáscara se diluye en el aire" (Ruy Sánchez 1996: 49).

¹⁹ "las salas prohibidas del *hammam*" (Ruy Sánchez 1996: 68).

create a shared heritage between Mexico and Morocco. Rey Rosa and Ruy Sánchez offer a trajectory of Latin American writers who have traveled to Morocco and recreate contact between Latin America and North Africa. Rey Rosa looks beyond the dichotomies structuring his novel. On the other hand, Ruy Sánchez's seemingly Orientalist evocations of an Arab woman in an exotic city and adaptation of Arabic literature serve to intertwine cultures. Both writers bring to light South-South connections and horizontal Orientalism in forms that are instead ways to examine cultural exchange and contact. Indeed, they contribute to a model of Arab and Latin American interconnections in the semi-periphery. More recently, Rey Rosa has extended these connections to the East further in *Fábula asiática* ("An Asian Fable", 2016) where a Mexican writer travels to Tangier and is drawn into the story of a Moroccan boy that takes him from Tangier to Istanbul and thus creates further routes between Latin America and the Middle East²⁰.

Rey Rosa and Ruy Sánchez's travel literature offers a model of comparison that focuses on cultural exchange between Latin America and the Arab world and calls for further practices of World Literature that bring Latin American and Arabic literature into contact. They elaborate a model beyond exoticism toward cultural contact and exchange: Rey Rosa brings to light the triangulation of Latin America, Europe, and North Africa, and Ruy Sánchez creates further ties between Latin America and North Africa through transatlantic routes between Mexico and Morocco.

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²⁰ I am indebted to Alexandra Ortiz Wallner for this insight.

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África en la imaginación literaria mexicana. Exotismo, desconexión y los límites materiales de la “epistemología del Sur”

El referente africano, sea la influencia de sus escritores o la representación de su historia y geografía, ha funcionado siempre en la literatura mexicana a través de una accidentada y discontinua política de la representación que pone en escena los límites del cosmopolitismo literario en general y de la red institucional y simbólica que recibe en nuestros días el nombre de “literatura mundial”. Un ejemplo icónico para lanzar la discusión es el cuento “Tesoro viviente”, de Enrique Serna, parte de la colección *El orgasmógrafo*, originalmente publicada en 2001 (Serna 2016). El cuento narra la historia de una escritora francesa, Amélie, quien es contratada para escribir sobre la literatura de una nación africana ficticia llamada Tekendogo. A pesar de carecer de la más mínima infraestructura que permitiera imaginar la existencia de la literatura nacional, el país ficticio cuenta con un grupo notable de escritores de sustancial presencia pública, ungidos con el título de “tesoro viviente”. Pese a poder contactar a los escritores y al ministerio de cultura, resulta enormemente difícil a Amélie acceder a los libros mismos: la librería central siempre está cerrada y cuando solicita obras recibe vaguedades y, eventualmente, amenazas. Tras una exploración riesgosa y picaresca, Amélie se da cuenta de que los libros publicados en Tekendogo están en blanco, y los autores aceptan participar en la charada como forma de apoyo o cooptación del régimen del dictador Bakuku. Al final de la historia, Amélie elevada al estatus de “tesoro viviente” cuando publica un libro llamado *Alto vacío*. El cuento cierra con la imagen del volumen en una librería: “El escaparate de La Pléiade se engalanó con un ejemplar de *Alto vacío* lujosamente empastado. Para ajustar su libro a las exigencias del régimen sólo tuvo que borrar el aforismo de la primera página” (Serna 2016: 56). El texto de Serna en realidad no es sobre África, sino una fábula sobre un sistema literario autorreferente que produce literatura subvencionada en un país sin lectores reales, una referencia al campo literario mexicano, como ha estudiado Elba Sánchez Rolón (2013: 115–18). Pero el que no sea sobre África es instructivo como punto de partida para mi reflexión: es una ficcionalización completa sobre África posibilitada, precisamente, por la ausencia de un referente africano concreto en la literatura mexicana. Sería bastante difícil imaginar

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el mismo cuento en una ciudad latinoamericana o europea porque el efecto de realidad de su parodia opera, precisamente, en el despliegue irónico de varios estereotipos sobre lo africano. El efecto cómico y alegórico del texto sería imposible si un lector tuviera una noción más clara de la cultura africana o sus mundos literarios. Funciona en la medida en que la ficción de Serna opera sobre un vacío referencial. La forma en que estos vacíos referenciales funcionan es parte de la cuestión que me interesa desarrollar en este texto: lo que sucede cuando uno piensa la teoría de la “literatura mundial” desde la perspectiva de regiones sin lazos institucionales, estéticos y materiales de consideración entre sí.

Una de las discusiones centrales sobre el concepto de “literatura mundial” hoy en día, a más de quince años de su reactivación en la obra de Franco Moretti y Pascale Casanova, radica a mi parecer en la tensión entre su carácter como ideal y su existencia como práctica. Por un lado, la idealización del cosmopolitismo como una “ética en un mundo de extraños” (Appiah 1996) ha concedido al concepto de “literatura mundial” una serie de imperativos respecto a la conexión cultural con culturas y sujetos otros, así como a la construcción, tanto contemporánea como histórica, de un saber estético-ideológico en relación dialéctica con el proceso paralelo de la globalización del capital. En esta dirección apunta, por ejemplo, el trabajo teórico que subyace el más reciente libro de Pheng Cheah, *What is a World?* (2016), cuya lectura de la “literatura mundial” se postula en la relación entre un tiempo “teleológico” derivado de la normatividad moderna del pensamiento hegeliano-marxista, tanto en el gesto utópico y progresivo de la revolución como en su neutralización por el paralelo auge del capitalismo global, y un proceso de construcción de mundos, “worldling”, derivado de la filosofía de Martin Heidegger, que permite pensar en la persistencia de mundos que registran la temporalización en el Ser más allá de los lineamientos del capital (Cheah 2016: 8). Así, la “literatura mundial” sería, en el modelo de Cheah, una forma de pensar esta temporalización del Ser como un espacio de apertura de nuevas temporalidades e identidades progresistas ante la neutralización de lo progresivo frente al capital en la dialéctica histórica de la globalización sugerida por el modelo marxista (Cheah 2016: 9). En el otro lado de la conversación, se consolida una línea de estudio informada por líneas revitalizadas de la sociología de la literatura para atender el problema de las “instituciones de la literatura mundial”, como las llama una reciente colección de ensayos críticos (Helgesson/Vermeulen 2015). Esta línea, de la que se encuentra más cerca mi propio trabajo sobre el tema (Sánchez Prado 2006, 2018), busca enfatizar la idea de que la literatura mundial es ante todo un agregado de prácticas materiales producidas por campos nacionales, regionales y globales de producción cultural informados por dinámicas de capital tanto simbólico (como se observa en la contribución de Gisèle Sapiro (2015), una de las mayores discípulas de Pierre Bourdieu, en torno a

Gallimard) como económico. A este respecto, en su muy importante contribución al volumen, Sarah Brouillette sustenta que “el sistema completo de producción literaria está fundamentalmente determinado por relaciones sociales capitalistas desigualmente desarrolladas” y, por tanto, el estudio de la “literatura mundial” debe enfocarse no en la “comodificación de la diferencia cultural para consumidores de la élite” sino en “el reconocimiento de la división del trabajo bajo el capitalismo y la naturaliza inequitativa y desigual de la producción y recepción literaria” (2015: 93. Mi traducción).

En vista de este debate, el tema de la representación de África en el imaginario literario mexicano al que dedicaré las reflexiones que siguen representa una instancia del desafío metodológico que emerge de la tensión entre ideal y materialidad en los debates de “literatura mundial”. Franco Moretti pareciera zanjar este debate implícitamente cuando argumenta la existencia de dos modos históricos de la “literatura mundial”: uno anterior al siglo XVIII caracterizada por un “mosaico” de culturas locales, separadas y divergentes y una segunda instancia, posterior al siglo XVIII y que el crítico italiano llama el “sistema literario mundial”, conectada por el mercado literario internacional, y caracterizada por procesos de convergencia (2013: 134–35). Sin embargo, esta definición colapsa cuando hacemos un cambio de perspectiva a los procesos de lectura existentes entre un campo que Moretti llamaría “semiperiférico” –el latinoamericano– con un campo poscolonial cuya conexión con el sistema literario mundial es a través de lenguas imperiales, y cuyo ecosistema cultural sigue funcionando en el siglo XXI en un modo de localidades y multilingüismos que el modelo morettiano parece confinar al siglo XVIII –el africano–. En las ciencias sociales, esta perspectiva ha sido teorizada de manera amplia a través de distintos debates que confluyen en lo que Boaventura de Sousa Santos llama “epistemología del Sur”, fundada en un “cosmopolitismo subalterno” que “defiende que el entendimiento del mundo en gran medida excede al entendimiento occidental del mundo y por lo tanto nuestro conocimiento de la globalización es mucho menos global que la globalización en sí misma” (Santos 2009: 180–81). Esto implicaría, según Sousa Santos, una idea que es contraria al tema mismo de la “literatura mundial”: “cuantos más entendimientos no occidentales fueran identificados, más evidente se tornará el hecho de que muchos otros esperan ser identificados y que las comprensiones híbridas, mezclando elementos occidentales y no-occidentales, son virtualmente infinitas”, por lo cual, “la diversidad epistemológica del mundo está todavía por construir” (2009: 181).

La consecuencia para los estudios de “literatura mundial” de este último punto, y que espero hacer visible en los ejemplos de la representación de África en la literatura mexicana, radica precisamente en el hecho de que la literatura es, en tanto objeto estético y epistemológico sustentado por las desigualdades del

trabajo económico y simbólico de la cultura a nivel global, una forma cultural que es “mucho menos global que la globalización misma”. Siempre me ha parecido esencial, desde la perspectiva de los estudios latinoamericanos, resistir modelos de “literatura mundial” que reifican entendimientos eurocéntricos de la producción global, sea en la elevación de la épica del alto modernismo como forma privilegiada del sistema literario mundial (Moretti 1996) o en la constitución de una capital mundial europea como París como meridiano de Greenwich de todo el consumo literario global (Casanova 1999), algo que se expresó claramente en el esfuerzo colectivo de mi libro *América Latina en la “literatura mundial”* (Sánchez Prado 2006). Sin embargo, creo que el péndulo ha oscilado más recientemente hacia el problema opuesto: una noción excesivamente optimista de la forma en que la literatura latinoamericana supera los escollos de la división internacional del trabajo intelectual que con demasiada frecuencia deja de lado las fricciones simbólicas, materiales e institucionales de la mundialización. Un ejemplo fehaciente es la obra de Roberto Bolaño, un autor de origen contracultural cuya emergencia hacia las esferas globales fue posibilitada por diversas escalas del sistema de publicación corporativo (la Editorial Anagrama, la agencia Wylie, recientemente el corporativo Penguin Random House Mondadori), pero cuya literatura con frecuencia es leída como una nueva cifra de lo latinoamericano borrando las complejidades materiales de su existencia como objeto comercial. No me enfocaré en este lado del problema porque ya hay una colección sobre Bolaño dedicada a ello (Birns/De Castro 2016) y porque mi libro en proceso, *Strategic Occidentalism*, se ocupa del problema de la emergencia paralela de una literatura mundial con el proceso de neoliberalización editorial y consolidación corporativa (Sánchez Prado 2018). Sin embargo, los procesos de “convergencia” descritos por Moretti en su concepto de sistema literario mundial resultan en procesos simbólico-estéticos que muestran importantes límites epistemológicos de la “literatura mundial”. Algunos de estos problemas operan en lo que Héctor Hoyos llama con gran tino “la cosmopolítica del escapismo sur-sur” (Hoyos 2015: 65), que describe la distancia entre la libertad de viaje físico de la era contemporánea con la incapacidad de la literatura de dar cuenta de experiencias concretas del movimiento entre fronteras.

En términos más generales, propongo a partir del ejemplo de la representación de África (término que en sí mismo incluye una generalización continental de diversas culturas nacionales y regionales y que es, de entrada, mediado por una episteme colonial) en la literatura mexicana, que la “literatura mundial” no solo está delimitada por las condiciones económicas y materiales de su circulación –punto en el que coincido plenamente con las sociologías bourdieusianas y marxistas de la literatura mundial–. Existe también un límite concreto y material a los repertorios simbólicos de la construcción del mundo que se expresan particularmente en el agregado de las obras literarias que circulan a nivel mundial

y en la constelación de conexiones materiales y lectoras que autores de distintos espacios geográficos tienen con otros espacios geográficos. Mi trabajo sobre “occidentalismo estratégico”, por ejemplo, postula que al estudiar literatura mundial no debe interesarnos solamente la presencia en un autor latinoamericano de la influencia de un autor europeo canónico como Joyce o Proust, sino que debemos enfocarnos en la existencia de referencias disonantes, como el interés de los escritores del Crack en la literatura del *Finis Austriae* o el trabajo de Sergio Pitol como traductor de literatura polaca de los años sesenta. En el caso de las relaciones literarias Sur-Sur, el problema es mucho más complejo porque la falta de relaciones materiales de circulación entre literaturas pone de manifiesto tres de las aporías centrales de la “literatura mundial” como práctica: el carácter aleatorio e idiosincrático de las relaciones literarias entre literaturas más allá de los centros de poder, la persistencia de la mediación colonial e imperial como estructura de sentimiento, los límites del cosmopolitismo de las élites literarias del Sur global en su relación generalmente exotocista hacia otros espacios literarios. Me parece útil traer hacia la literatura latinoamericana una serie de discusiones al respecto de estos temas que han tenido lugar en torno a la literatura anglófona poscolonial. Pienso en particular en tres puntos: la existencia de “lo exótico poscolonial” como red de producción de capital económico y cultural de escritores del Sur global con relación a industrias editoriales y académicas de los centros metropolitanos (Huggan 2001), el posicionamiento del autor de literaturas poscoloniales en nichos específicos del mercado literario neoliberal (Brouillette 2007) y la necesidad de pensar el estereotipo como categoría medular a la estética ética de la literatura mundial y poscolonial y no solo como consecuencia de una supuesta mala representación estética del objeto de la otredad (Chakravorty 2014). La apropiación metodológica que haré de estos puntos toma en cuenta el hecho de que el escritor mexicano no es ni un escritor poscolonial en el sentido anglófono de la palabra, ni tiene en general acceso al sistema hegemónico de publicación al que permite la escritura en inglés o francés. Más bien, como expone Alexander Beecroft, el español constituye una “lengua-mundo regional” con sistemas literarios policéntricos y amplios pero que carecen de la cobertura planetaria y el capital simbólico del inglés y el francés (Beecroft 2015: 267-70). Más bien, me parece relevante pensar en estas tres ideas como descriptores del sistema literario global que media la relación de un escritor del Sur global con la literatura e imaginación de otra esfera geográfica periférica o semiperiférica.

El marco de contacto material e institucional entre las literaturas africanas y la literatura mexicana es sumamente precario. Esto proviene, en parte de los límites mismos de la literatura africana, que, como estudia Brouillette en un texto muy reciente (Brouillette 2017), no responde a la creación de públicos internos al continente, sino a formas de publicación dirigidas o a mercados en los centros

metropolitanos o a la emergencia de ONGs que fomentan la literatura en espacios urbanos muy precisos como Lagos en Nigeria. Por otra parte, es también cierto que los vasos comunicantes extendidos desde México hacia África son sumamente escasos. Si nos mantenemos estrictamente en la era neoliberal, en la que se ubican prácticamente todos los textos que mencionaré a continuación, puede aseverarse con certeza que los únicos escritores africanos de circulación amplia en México son los Premios Nobel sudafricanos J. M. Coetzee y Nadine Gordimer, autores que han sido validados también en su inclusión en la *Geografía de la Novela*, de Carlos Fuentes, junto con Ben Okri, Chinua Achebe y Breyten Breytenbach (Fuentes 1993: 167). Ambos autores fueron publicados en 1992 en México, en una serie de circulación amplia del Consejo Nacional para la Literatura y las Artes, que retomaba libros de editoriales comerciales como Alfaguara o Mondadori para su venta a bajo costo (Gordimer 1990; Coetzee 1992). Por su parte, otro Premio Nobel africano, el nigeriano Wole Soyinka, solo ha circulado en México en ediciones extranjeras y, pese a su trabajo en organizaciones literarias internacionales y su presencia en eventos como el Hay Festival, no es un autor particularmente recurrido en la cultura mexicana. Un último Premio Nobel, el egipcio Naguib Mahfuz, alcanzó un momento de reconocimiento gracias a la adaptación mexicana de dos de sus novelas durante el renacimiento del cine mexicano a inicios de los años noventa: *Principio y Fin* (1993), dirigida por Arturo Ripstein, y *El callejón de los milagros* (1995), dirigida por Jorge Fons, filme que, incidentalmente, lanza la carrera de Salma Hayek en los circuitos internacionales. Pese a la importancia de estos trabajos en el cine mexicano, su existencia no condujo a una particular circulación de la obra de Mahfuz en circuitos estrictamente literarios.

Más allá de los escritores validados por Estocolmo, la aparición de las literaturas africanas en México es, si acaso, escasa y esporádica. Otros autores que han alcanzado reconocimiento crítico y comercial gracias a su articulación a dinámicas poscoloniales de circulación –como Ben Okri, Ngugi wa Thiong’o y Chinua Achebe– son ocasionalmente publicados y comentados en revistas mexicanas (véase, por ejemplo, Okri 2003) y tienen libros publicados por editoriales transnacionales con presencia en librerías mexicanas (véase, por ejemplo, Ngugi 2015). En otros casos, algunos escritores africanos llegan a México a través de los frecuentes festivales y eventos de la diplomacia cultural mexicana, que incluyen una proliferación de ferias de libro, encuentros y otras instancias. Una crónica menciona, por ejemplo, un encuentro de escritores africanos y mexicanos en 1998, donde autores como el camerunés Calixthe Belaya o el tuareg Hawad entablaron un diálogo con escritores como Carlos Monsiváis y Carmen Boullosa (Gugelberg 2001: 101). Sin embargo, en los festivales de mayor envergadura (como el de Guadalajara), las literaturas africanas nunca han ocupado un lugar

preponderante y sus autores nunca han recibido reconocimientos como el Premio FIL en Lenguas Romances (al que podrían ser candidatos autores que escriben en español, francés o portugués). Por lo que respecta a la literatura hispanófona de Guinea Ecuatorial, esta se encuentra tan marginada en México como en todos los otros países latinoamericanos y, salvo una antología producida por la UNAM (Rizo 2011), es de nula circulación en México. La única excepción relevante es la visibilidad que ha adquirido un puñado de escritores de la África lusófona, que recientemente han sido publicados con un moderado grado de éxito por la editorial oaxaqueña Almadía, que goza de amplia distribución y capital simbólico en el medio literario mexicano. La editorial ha publicado un libro del conocido escritor Mia Couto de Mozambique (Couto 2010), aunque hay que reconocer que Couto es un autor de gran reconocimiento internacional cuyas obras se traducen frecuentemente en otros países. Los casos realmente notables son los escritores angoleños Gonçalo Tavares y Ondjaki. Tavares, un escritor nacido en Angola pero basado hace mucho tiempo en Portugal, se ha convertido en una referencia importante en México, y Almadía ha publicado seis de sus libros. Aunque Almadía no fue la primera editorial en traerlo al habla hispana (Mondadori publicó algunos de sus títulos en Barcelona en 2006 y 2007), es a partir de la publicación de *Historias falsas* (Tavares 2008) que el autor entra de lleno al debate mexicano y su interlocución con México ha sido tan central que ha dedicado un libro, *Canciones mexicanas* (Tavares 2013), a ficcionalizar su perspectiva sobre el país. Tavares se ha consolidado como una presencia frecuente en festivales literarios y conversatorios, aunque en términos generales lo ha hecho enfatizando su ciudadanía portuguesa más que su origen africano, ya que en muchos casos su presencia es patrocinada con apoyo del gobierno de Portugal. Más excepcional es el caso de Ondjaki, un joven autor angoleño radicado en Río de Janeiro, cuya obra plantea relaciones más complejas entre África y América Latina. Aunque Ondjaki ya había sido publicado en español en 2007 por la editorial zaragozana Xordica, su novela *Buenos días, camaradas* (Ondjaki 2008), lanzada por Almadía y después republicada en otros países de habla hispana, es de particular interés para el público latinoamericano, al hacer crónica de las misiones cubanas durante la experiencia militar en Angola. Sin embargo, la llegada de Ondjaki (cuyo libro *Los transparentes*, ganador del Premio José Saramago, sería publicado también por Almadía [Ondjaki 2014]) a México se dio por el simple azar de un contacto personal, cuando su traductora, Ana María García Iglesias, proporcionó el manuscrito al escritor mexicano Tryno Maldonado, un autor identificado con la izquierda política y con una posición de reconocimiento en México. Esto lo recuerda el propio Maldonado en su ensayo “Ondjaki, el guerrero angoleño”, donde menciona que el libro fue incluso parte del programa “Bibliotecas de Aula”, a partir del cual el gobierno mexicano ubica obras literarias en salones de clase a lo largo

del sistema educativo nacional (Maldonado 2013). Hay que mencionar que García Iglesias, traductora de prácticamente todos los libros de literatura lusoaficana para Almadía, no es mexicana, sino española, y trabaja de manera independiente en Lisboa. A pesar de esta mediación hay que reconocer que su trabajo ha sido esencial para abrir puertas editoriales a las literaturas africanas en México. Asimismo, Almadía ha comenzado a explorar otra vía al publicar la novela *Nínive* de la escritora sudafricana Henrietta Rose-Innes, siendo en este caso la única editorial de habla hispana en traducirla (Rose-Innes 2015).

Este breve recuento de la escasa existencia de las literaturas africanas en el mercado literario mexicano permite poner sobre la mesa una serie de cuestiones relevantes sobre los puntos ciegos de la idea de “literatura mundial” como ideal y, sobre todo, sobre la forma en que se puede hacer un estudio crítico de la materialidad de las relaciones Sur-Sur en el sistema literario mundial. El primer punto se conecta con el concepto de “gatekeeper” o guardián que ha sido recientemente estudiado por William Marling (2016). Marling observa, desarrollando argumentos de Pierre Bourdieu, que la literatura contemporánea está construida por un conjunto importante de actores (desde amigos y familiares, pasando por agentes, traductores y editores, hasta libreros, agencias del Estado y periodistas) que son esenciales al proceso creativo. A partir de esto, continúa Marling, la pregunta de cómo es que un escritor se convierte en autor de literatura mundial solo puede ser respondida enfocándose en los guardianes, ya que esas conexiones personales y acciones individuales son esenciales para dar cuenta de la habilidad de un escritor para superar obstáculos institucionales e infraestructurales. En estos términos puede interpretarse el rol de Maldonado y García Iglesias en la circulación de Ondjaki: el interés de una traductora en un escritor, la amistad de esta con una figura del campo literario mexicano, y la participación de esta figura en una editorial literaria concreta son pasos que permiten a Ondjaki adquirir una audiencia mexicana, sobre autores africanos mucho más canónicos y de mayor trayectoria. El segundo punto es que, en todos los casos citados arriba, la circulación de un escritor africano en México requiere la mediación de una institución o actor en centros metropolitanos de la literatura (el Premio Nobel, la academia norteamericana, la edición en España o París) o la participación del escritor africano en medios literarios con conexiones más claras con México (como la presencia de Tavares en el campo literario de Portugal o el hecho de que Ondjaki vive en Río de Janeiro y no en Luanda). Lo que no existe es un diálogo directo entre los campos de producción cultural de México y de algún país africano. Finalmente, como se observará al ver las representaciones de África en la literatura mexicana, las literaturas africanas tienen una escasa influencia estética y simbólica en México, así que no hay en lo absoluto una conexión entre la capacidad de los escritores africanos de

representar sus respectivas historias y culturas y el campo de visión que tiene un escritor mexicano promedio para escribir sobre ellas.

No es entonces de sorprender que el modo principal de representación de África en la literatura mexicana parezca derivar de distintos modos comunes de representación del continente en tradiciones euromodernistas. Una de las modalidades más importantes es el orientalismo, patentemente reflejado en el ciclo de novelas e historias sobre Mogador, de Alberto Ruy Sánchez. Inaugurado con la publicación de la novela *Los nombres del aire* en 1987 y reunido recientemente en el volumen *Quinteto de Mogador* (Ruy Sánchez 2015), este ciclo literario consiste en una serie de narrativas de carácter erótico y experimental fundadas en la exploración del deseo, el amor y la belleza a partir de un repertorio de textualidades y estéticas arábigas medievales y clásicas. Mogador hace referencia a un nombre histórico de la ciudad marroquí que a partir del siglo XVIII adquiriría el nombre de Essaouira, y el uso del nombre histórico de la ciudad enfatiza el carácter cultural y subjetivamente construido del espacio. Como señala Abdellatif Limami, el “Mogador que nos ofrece Ruy Sánchez es esencialmente un espacio cerrado y poetizado al máximo” (2002: 116). Así, continúa Limami, “más allá de las referencias al deseo sexual [...] aparecen símbolos que hacen de la ciudad un espacio esencialmente cerrado y reductor, según la psicología de los personajes” (2002: 116–17). En las detalladas notas que ofrece Ruy Sánchez al final del *Quinteto de Mogador* queda claro que el referente africano es tan solo una parte del rompecabezas estético del proyecto. Ruy Sánchez observa que su obsesión nace efectivamente del viaje que llevó a cabo a “Mogador Essaouira en 1975–1976” que caracteriza de “Viaje fundador, viaje descubrimiento”, y se desarrolló “en gran parte mientras vivía en Europa en un gran aislamiento de mi generación de escritores” (2015: 794). Conforme el ciclo avanza, continúa Ruy Sánchez, se van incorporando referencias tanto a géneros culturales árabes como el *adab*, un género escritural andalusí, y la caligrafía, a la vez que se observan influencias de teorías culturales y mitográficas de pensadores europeos como Mircea Eliade (2015: 798–99). Y, conforme avanza aún más el ciclo, el espacio se ficcionaliza aún más: para la escritura de *Los jardines secretos de Mogador*, publicado en el 2000, Ruy Sánchez confiesa estar informado por una variedad de “lugares excepcionales donde la naturaleza se mezcla con la imaginación sensual” lo cual lo lleva a visitar “más de quinientos jardines interesantes y leí acerca de otros cien aproximadamente”, recorriendo geografías que iban “desde la Patagonia chilena hasta los Kew Hardens de Londres pasando por el desierto del Sahara” (2015: 800–801). La finalidad de todo esto es un ciclo literario que utiliza al espacio africano para el desarrollo de lo que Ruy Sánchez caracteriza como “una poética del asombro” que, a su vez, construye “una espiral elemental” (2015: 791).

Esta descripción sin duda evocaría en algunos la conocida intervención crítica de Edward W. Said respecto al orientalismo y el rol que este tipo de imaginario tiene, según el teórico palestino, en la construcción de epistemes colonializantes y discursos de la inferioridad racial (Said 1978). Sin embargo, resulta esencial recordar que el proyecto descrito por Said se funda en una lectura de la relación entre el Occidente y el Oriente construida por la articulación de saber y poder en proyectos de colonización y diferencia racial. Este punto es mucho más problemático cuando se piensa el orientalismo latinoamericano, particularmente el conectado con el mundo islámico, no solo porque no existe relación de dominación entre América Latina y Marruecos, sino también porque ambas culturas tienen raíz histórica común en el Al-Andalus. El propio Ruy Sánchez señala que uno de sus descubrimientos en su viaje a Mogador Essaouira fue darse cuenta “palpablemente de que las huellas de la cultura andalusí en la cultura mexicana son mucho más grandes de lo que se supone comenzando por las que hay en nuestra lengua” (2015: 794). E incluso desafía el argumento de Said. En un artículo titulado “Placer y moral del orientalismo”, Ruy Sánchez desafía la caracterización de Gobineau –y por ende del canon orientalista enjuiciado por Said– como simplemente racista, al plantear que el grado de fascinación y detalle respecto a la cultura oriental no es reducible a los gestos raciales del argumento, y sostiene que “los placeres literarios orientalistas pueden oponerse a la moral orientalista” ya que “No caben en el mismo saco y sus relaciones son sutiles y complejas” (Ruy Sánchez 1988: 137). Mabel Moraña ofrece una versión más teórica de un argumento similar al observar que “las operaciones orientalistas ensayadas a lo largo de toda la historia poscolonial de América Latina experimentan justamente esa heterotopía como un proyecto utópico de descentramiento y desafío a las epistemologías dominantes” (2004: 213). Así, el orientalismo permite a Latinoamérica conectarse “con genealogías espacio-temporales que actúan como contraparte de la racionalidad europea abriendo espacios diversos y plurales, en construcciones que se apoyan tanto en la erudición y la experiencia intercultural como en la fantasía” (2004: 210). De esta manera, Moraña propone ir más allá de Said al observar que la “conexión inter-periférica –entre Oriente y América Latina” no solo existe “vicariamente, a través de los modelos etnocéntricos” sino que también “se elabora desde parámetros condicionados por la experiencia del margen y por la participación deficitaria en los productos de una dominación que relega a las sociedades poscoloniales a los confines de la civilización definida por los modelos de la Europa occidental y extendida a través de la acción imperial, a los territorios de ultramar” (2004: 211).

El *Quinteto de Mogador*, así, muestra que la construcción del espacio africano en la imaginación literaria mexicana opera en parte desde la apropiación de formas de representación literaria que en algunos casos pertenecen

al paradigma europeo, pero que adquieren densidades distintas en el diálogo interperiférico. Por supuesto, es necesario recordar que el orientalismo al que se articula Ruy Sánchez tiene una historia particular en Latinoamérica, la más relevante de las cuales es el orientalismo de Octavio Paz (Kushigian 1991; Sosa 2000), autor al que Ruy Sánchez ha dedicado un libro (Ruy Sánchez 2013), y con el que su obra dialoga estéticamente en términos tanto del concepto del conocimiento literario en general como de la relación entre cultura oriental y erotismo en particular. Ruy Sánchez diseña una versión de Mogador cuyo cuadrante central no es ni la historicidad ni la política ni la colonialidad. Más bien, se trata de un cosmopolitismo imaginado, constituido en el engarzamiento de diversas mediaciones: la traducción occidental de un archivo literario islámico y andalusí que Ruy Sánchez recrea a nivel de estilo y estética; una tradición de pensamiento occidental sobre el Oriente basada en el gesto de trascender y heterogeneizar los límites epistemológicos de la cultura racional (aquí entrarían la mitocrítica, el orientalismo decimonónico a la Gobineau y por supuesto la poética del mito y erotismo de autores como Paz); y un vacío simbólico constituido por la casi absoluta ausencia de la literatura marroquí en el medio literario mexicano como oportunidad para darle forma al mundo africano desde la constelación literaria personal del autor.

En pocas palabras, podría aseverarse que, ante la ausencia de una tradición de diálogo directo entre las literaturas contemporáneas, el escritor de una tradición como la mexicana busca la raigambre común con otra área periférica y rellena los vacíos estéticos e históricos con un entramado literario imaginario. El resultado es la idea de la obra literaria como un espacio que puede generar un conocimiento del espacio africano que pueda reemplazar los cuadrantes históricos y literarios ausentes debido a la desconexión de las regiones en la literatura mundial. Michael Abeyta observa, así, que, al articular su experiencia en Marruecos con sus lecturas de Gilles Deleuze, Ruy Sánchez “nos muestra una vía estética para apreciar la diferencia de la cultura árabe”, creando “un homenaje a la herencia hispano-árabe, ofreciéndonos así otra vía de comprensión y amor para con los pueblos del Magreb” (Abeyta 2007: 25). Es importante mencionar que, aunque el ciclo de Mogador es el caso más importante, no es de ninguna manera el único. Un año antes del primer libro del quinteto, el poeta Jorge Ruiz Dueñas publicó *Las noches de Salé* (1986), un libro de prosas poéticas de fuerte raigambre mística y erudita en torno a otra ciudad marroquí. El libro está compuesto por varios textos cortos que fluctúan entre la visión mística, el diario de viaje y el ensayo de historia cultural, y opera por un mecanismo similar al de Ruy Sánchez, aunque, en vez de interesarse por el problema del deseo, busca un diálogo poético y epistémico con el Islam marroquí. La observación de Abeyta aplica de manera análoga al texto de Ruiz Dueñas, cambiando las fuentes: se

trata de otra forma de aproximarse al Magreb fundado tanto en la experiencia personal y lectora como en un canon de lecturas místicas e históricas no inmediatamente accesible al lector mexicano promedio. Otro ejemplo más reciente de representación de Marruecos, que lleva a cabo una operación similar a partir de la experiencia personal más que lectora, son las obras de María Victoria García. La primera, *Vi(r)aje a la memoria* (1997), es un libro híbrido entre el ensayo, la memoria, el cuadro de costumbres y la narrativa enfocado en la experiencia de una mujer exiliada en Marruecos como resultado de la Guerra Civil Española, un tema que conecta, por supuesto, con el exilio español en México. La segunda, *Dijo el camaleón* (2016), narra el devenir de dos hermanos en Yebala en la primera mitad del siglo XX. En este caso, el imaginario marroquí tiene que ver con la relación personal de la autora con la región (nació en Melilla aunque ha vivido en México por muchos años) y la iluminación de otra área histórica común entre el norte de África, España y México, unidas por el exilio resultante de la Guerra Civil. Los libros de García parten de un conocimiento personal de la cultura marroquí, más que del archivo libresco de Ruy Sánchez o Ruiz Dueñas, pero logran transmitir al lector mexicano (un lector además particular ya que ambos textos están publicados en editoriales universitarias estatales de circulación más restringida) un sentido de conexión íntima con esa cultura de la cual ella, como exiliada, es conexión.

Es posible evaluar otras representaciones de África que, sin caer en el orientalismo idealizado de Ruy Sánchez, o sin tener la relación personal de García, funcionan desde procedimientos literarios y constelaciones estéticas de estructura análoga. Por supuesto el punto aquí no es la repetición de archivos concretos sino de la mediación entre lectura, experiencia y formas de interpretación disponibles en el repertorio de literatura mundial accesible para un escritor mexicano. Pongo un ejemplo de representación del África subsahariana con procesos similares y archivos distintos: el cuento “La niña Tuviolé”, de Javier Fernández, incluido en su colección *Señora Krupps* (2013). El texto narra la historia de una abogada africana que vive en Ginebra, Suiza y rememora su infancia en una villa de Uganda durante el régimen de Idi Amin. Estructurado desde el flujo de conciencia y la memoria de la protagonista, “La niña Tuviolé” tensa su arco narrativo en el contraste de dos amoríos: uno con Bitalo, un muchacho de la villa que la pretendía y que termina muerto en una trampa para leopardos cuando ambos entraban a la adolescencia, y Gustav, la pareja de Tuviolé en Ginebra, quien es la única persona que tiene sentido del pasado ugandés de la protagonista, pero no conoce en detalle su primer amor. El cuento de Fernández es notable, de entrada, por el proyecto literario que lo arropa. *Señora Krupps* es un libro que recoge seis cuentos escritos en un periodo de dieciséis años y fue originalmente el primer volumen de literatura publicado (en 2010) por la

compañía disquera tijuanaense Static, conocida por su apoyo a artistas jóvenes en distintos géneros de música electrónica. Posteriormente, el libro fue recomendado a un editor del Conaculta y publicado en la serie El Guardaguas en 2013. El libro es un clásico subterráneo de la literatura fronteriza mexicana y “La niña Tuviole” sobresale temáticamente del resto de la colección, más enfocada en Tijuana y otros espacios fronterizos. Sin embargo, es claro que la referencia africana permite formular un tema central a otros textos: el conflicto identitario y la relación entre las raíces culturales y la modernidad. En lo que concierne a mi argumento, “La niña Tuviole” construye su mundo africano en parámetros análogos a los que se hacían disponibles al lector de habla hispana a fines del siglo XX. Si bien no hay un escrito de Fernández que permita hablar de influencia aquí, el enfoque en Uganda, la idea del sujeto africano exiliado en Europa pero que rememora su proceso de formación en la vida tribal y en los conflictos dictatoriales y algunos otros elementos tienen paralelos con el libro *Crónicas abisinias* (2000), de Moses Isegawa, una novela de repercusión internacional que narra, precisamente, la infancia rural, la experiencia de vida bajo Idi Amin y la posterior migración a Holanda como profesionista del protagonista-*alter ego* del autor. El punto aquí no es tanto que Fernández retome a Isegawa –hay variantes importantes como el protagonista femenino, el enfoque más orientalista en la comunidad, la cuestión del amor como tema central– sino que el esquema de representación de la historia ugandesa tiene la misma columna vertebral que la de un libro de un autor ugandés que pudo circular a través del sistema literario mundial. Ante la ausencia de la experiencia biográfica, lo que constituye la imaginación inter-periférica es el imaginario común, dentro del sistema dominante, de regiones separadas materialmente entre sí.

En la medida en que estos lenguajes comunes tienen una existencia tenue e intermitente, la labor del escritor como “gatekeeper” o “guardián” se vuelve fundamental, y, por tanto, no es casual que el registro autobiográfico sea donde aparecen de manera más constante las representaciones literarias de África en la literatura mexicana. En la mayor parte de los casos se repite un patrón en el cual el escritor mexicano aparece o como un testigo de una transición política importante que se puede reportar hacia el país de origen sin la mediación cotidiana de los medios internacionales, o, de manera más concreta, donde la curaduría literaria de África se hace en términos de las lecciones y paralelos que el continente tiene para la experiencia mexicana contemporánea. Hay dos libros interesantes que ilustran la primera instancia. El primero es el *Diario de Sudáfrica* (1988), de la poeta Verónica Volkow. El texto recorre las impresiones de Volkow durante su estancia en dicho país en 1986, donde, en compañía de un profesor y activista llamado Joseph, atestigua la vida en Cape Town durante el apartheid. Como observa Thea Pitman, el texto es de gran interés por la compleja

posición de Volkow como una viajera percibida como blanca dentro del contexto de segregación racial, a pesar de que su acompañante es de raza negra (Pitman 2009: 379). El segundo texto es *Crónicas africanas* (2001), de Ignacio Padilla, que recoge los textos escritos por el autor durante su estancia en Swazilandia en 1987 y originalmente publicados en la revista *Nostromo*. Pitman ubica el texto de Volkow y la novela de María Luisa Puga que discutiré a continuación como formas de representación de experiencias coloniales comunes entre Latinoamérica y África, y sobre todo de la disonancia del viajero latinoamericano blanco dentro del contexto racial africano como suspensión de la solidaridad entre sociedades colonizadas (Pitman 2009: 386), algo que sin duda sería aplicable también a Padilla.

Sin embargo, siendo textos de viaje que constituyen una referencialidad histórica de África que suplanta la ausencia de referentes literarios y culturales, conviene considerar dos elementos. Primero, hay que llamar la atención sobre el hecho de que la presencia de autores individuales en África es lo que permite la construcción de la conexión con México, y que esta conexión opera en géneros no centrales al sistema literario (el diario, la crónica) en los cuales la cuestión de la tradición literaria puede ser secundaria. Este, ciertamente, es el caso de Volkow, cuyo libro narra sus vivencias a partir de discursividades históricas y políticas de gran sofisticación, pero sin particular referencia a la literatura o al oficio de poeta de la autora. En el libro de Padilla, en cambio, se observa un fenómeno algo diferente: la contradicción entre la experiencia de lector y la experiencia material de África. Padilla mismo admite que para él “África había sido siempre para mí un continente imaginario, hermano de Trapisonda, Timbuktú, Barataria y Jauja” (2001: 15). Su experiencia del conflicto político de Swazilandia (Padilla atestiguó un momento de reacomodo político de la monarquía) es leída por Padilla como una “inmersión en una realidad paralela y sustancial” que define como “un reino de paradojas donde los reyes y las princesas no querían serlo, donde los brujos se embozaban en viejo automóviles y donde la felicidad idílica de un cuento de hadas era resultado de las más siniestras maquinarias políticas” (17). Si Volkow refiere con gravedad y profundidad al conflicto sudafricano (el cual en el continente americano era familiar gracias a la cobertura noticiosa), Padilla narra abiertamente, en un país que sería absolutamente desconocido para sus lectores, la tensión entre la mitología que informa la literatura de viajes (uno de sus autores señeros, por ejemplo, es Paul Bowles) y la realidad de un país poscolonial viviendo tensas jornadas políticas. En este punto, Padilla debate con una tradición de literatura fantástica donde África es constantemente representada a través de códigos heredados del cine y la literatura imperial. Aquí, por ejemplo, puede traerse a la mesa el inicio de la novela *Ojos de lagarto* (2009), de Bernardo Fernández BEF, donde se imagina el tráfico de dragones de

Zambia a Baja California, representándose al país africano a través de esquemas que recuerdan, por ejemplo, la narrativa del tráfico de especies de los filmes de King Kong. El segundo punto que convendría notar es que ambos textos coinciden, aunque no lo refieran directamente, con los primeros años de la llamada “transición a la democracia” en México, la crisis en la hegemonía del régimen de partido único. Creo productivo pensar que el interés de Volkow y Padilla por estos contextos africanos no tienen tanto que ver con relaciones de colonialidad, como plantearía Pitman, sino como parte de las experiencias comunes de países cuyos regímenes hegemónicos estaban en crisis y experimentaban los primeros años de reacomodo político hacia la democratización y la neoliberalización de sus distintas sociedades.

Concluyo estas reflexiones trayendo a la mesa dos textos con una representación compleja y profunda de África, ubicados en las orillas del marco temporal que he establecido para este estudio. El primero es la magnífica novela de María Luisa Puga, *Las posibilidades del odio* (1978), quizá la representación más sustantiva de África en la ficción mexicana (Puga 2014). La novela, como ha descrito Irma López, es muy innovadora en su forma, basada en el entrettejimiento de seis historias independientes a partir de las cuales Puga desdobra la historia y política de Kenya (López 1996: 37–40). Existe un importante punto sobre los lenguajes literarios que despliega Puga. Como observa Mónica Szurmuk, aunque los paratextos de la novela (la contraportada, por ejemplo) invocan a Isak Dinesen y Ernest Hemingway como referentes, en realidad Puga abiertamente refiere a Frantz Fanon y Ngugi wa’Thiong’o como sus interlocutores al escribir, mostrando influencia tanto de la política del primero como del trabajo novelístico de las primeras obras del segundo (Szurmuk 2006: 41). En esto, como sucede frecuentemente en su obra, Puga ocupa un lugar único en la literatura mexicana, puesto que *Las posibilidades del odio* anunciaba una posible conexión sustancial entre México y la literatura africana que, sin embargo, no logró desarrollarse en la ficción de décadas subsecuentes, como he tratado de demostrar en este artículo. *Las posibilidades del odio* da cuenta de una potencialidad de una relación distinta entre México y África en el contexto de la literatura mundial que, sin embargo, no se ha materializado.

El enfoque poscolonial de la literatura africana, que ha permitido su integración a circuitos de literatura mundial, ha comenzado a mostrar signos de agotamiento, igual que los modos imperiales de narración eran cuestionados por Padilla en su crónica. Si bien la línea poscolonial no tuvo el impacto profundo en México que tuvo en otras latitudes, su agotamiento es visible. En el libro *Okigbo vs. las transnacionales y otras historias de protesta* (2015), Luis Felipe Lomelí (firmando como un corrector de estilo ficcionalizado llamado L.F. Lomelí) presenta, en una narrativa satírica compuesta de distintos textos ficticios compilados como un

dossier, a Okigbo Richardson 'Ndajeé, un académico africano de la Universidad de Iowa. El libro de Lomelí (quien es a nivel personal un gran conocedor de la literatura africana) no es tanto una representación de África, sino una curiosa sátira de los discursos ideológicos de la academia estadounidense y el paradójico rol que los intelectuales del Sur global juegan en ella. El libro de Lomelí, sin embargo, apunta a un problema esencial: es un libro que da cuenta de las limitaciones de los contactos entre África y México. Al parodiar la apropiación estadounidense del poscolonialismo, Lomelí pone en escena también la ilegibilidad de África en términos de la poca eficacia simbólica que los modos preponderantes de representación de la literatura africana, siempre mediados por espacios académicos de Estados Unidos y la Europa Occidental, tienen en una escena de lectura latinoamericana. Más que una representación de África, Lomelí muestra con gran intuición la dificultad de acceder a África como tema o imaginario cuando siempre pesa una mediación institucional de elementos neoimperiales que reemplaza el contacto directo.

No debe sorprender entonces que el último libro que discuto, *El paralelo etíope* (2015) de Diego Olavarría, plantea ideas nuevas en torno a la narración de África más allá de esas lógicas. El libro se centra en el viaje de su autor a Etiopía, pero más que ser una crónica al estilo de Volkow o un ensayo de descubrimiento al estilo de Padilla, Olavarría hace visibles las conexiones históricas y coloniales que permiten su visita. Por ejemplo, en el primer texto del libro, Olavarría reflexiona sobre los contrastes urbanos causados por los lujosos hoteles de compañías transnacionales (Hilton y Sheraton) y el paisaje citadino. Olavarría confiesa que este tipo de visión de la profunda desigualdad económica no es raro para un latinoamericano que ha visto “la favela Rocinha desde las arenas de Leblon en Rio de Janeiro, los rascacielos de Santa Fe en el Distrito Federal vistos desde la barranca donde pasa el desagüe” (Olavarría 2015: 19). A partir de esta perspectiva, Olavarría reflexiona no solo sobre la aún más profunda desigualdad visible en Etiopía, sino la penetración del neoliberalismo, el rol del turista y otros temas. La novedad aquí es que el libro de Olavarría deja atrás cualquier aspiración a emular o superar las tradiciones imperiales y poscoloniales de representación del continente. Su Etiopía, aún más que la Kenya de Puga o la Sudáfrica de Volkow, otros dos ejemplos de gran fineza representativa, aparece en una complejidad inusitada, porque su voz narrativa tensiona el presente del país con lazos imperiales e históricos y con una subjetividad del autor siempre problematizada. *El paralelo etíope* muestra una paradoja sobre la que convendría reflexionar: no es la “literatura mundial” sino un cosmopolitismo material lo que permite a Olavarría superar los legados representacionales del colonialismo. Esta materialidad es una pista para la conexión Sur-Sur que la idea de “literatura mundial”, todavía plagada de eurocentrismo y limitada por su cercanía al modernismo global, aún no logra establecer.

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Daniel Link

Rubén Darío: la sutura de los mundos

Esta contribución lleva como subtítulo “La sutura de los mundos” porque ese es el programa de interrogación en el que se inserta, cuyo objetivo es, a partir de Darío, un análisis de los procesos de globalización (económica) y mundialización (literaria) que produjeron el característico y horrrisono sonido de la placas tectónicas que chocan entre sí exactamente cuando Rubén se puso a cantar, y su relación con lo que podemos llamar, muy en general, lo viviente.

Para nosotros, que habitamos los territorios novomundanos, no hay mundo ni tiempo *dados* antes de Colón, de modo que el presente debería entenderse como un efecto de ese viaje que sella para siempre la doble cara de lo latinoamericano: lo “inviolable”, lo que encanta a los sentidos, vs. lo “violado”, lo integrado al orden de expansión capitalista. América es, luego de la sutura provocada por el intercambio colombino, un asunto del pensamiento y ese pensamiento estalla, para nosotros, alrededor del centenario de las independencias de las naciones hispanoamericanas, es decir, en el cambio de siglo y, más precisamente, con la irrupción en la escena literaria de Rubén Darío, la primera figura planetaria, capaz de diseñar un pasado y un futuro americano desde una perspectiva mundial que ninguno de sus modelos franceses fue capaz de proponer.

La primera sutura de los mundos, entonces, se produce en el registro de la vida desnuda: políticas de exterminio, trabajo forzado, animalización, desnudamiento. Papa, tomate, llamas, cuises y aborígenes son equivalentes (sobre todo, equivalentes en el registro de la mercancía).

La segunda sutura es la de la vida cultivada, es decir, la vida de la polis, de las ciudades americanas, con sus culturas, sus procesos de mestizaje ya cumplidos, los procesos de integración operativa de lo disponible ya realizados, las sociedades ya fijadas e interpretadas como mimesis de las sociedades metropolitanas¹, las políticas del lenguaje, de lo propio y de lo impropio.

¹ Marx siguió “las palabras de su maestro Hegel, quien en sus *Lecciones sobre la filosofía de la historia universal* afirmaba que cuanto acontecía en el Nuevo Mundo no era sino el eco del Viejo mundo y, por tanto, el reflejo de una vida ajena. América debía aún separarse del suelo sobre el cual se había desarrollado hasta ese momento la historia universal, pero esto era únicamente una probabilidad cuyas condiciones de realización todavía no podían ser previstas”

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Lo que Darío dice en ese contexto es que, porque somos muy pobres, debemos encarnizarnos en llegar a ser negros, indios, chinos, Caupolicanes o Eulalias (y no en *descubrir que lo somos*), haciendo pueblo en la *mal-dicción*. Y deducir, en ese encarnizamiento, una glotopolítica (diferente de la traducción como mera transposición idiomática) y una política literaria (diferente de la “importación” que los miopes le achacaron a Darío, que no importaba nada sino que era un portador, un *infectado* de vida cultivada), en suma: una superación del horizonte de la colonización. No propongo solamente que Darío desbarata el mapa literario mundial de su época sino que las operaciones que sostiene vuelven imposible incluso la idea de mapa, que habría que reemplazar por la de red (con sus nodos brillando intermitentemente).

Pondré como ejemplos (que no presento cronológicamente, porque están, en rigor, fuera-de-tiempo) tres operaciones de lenguaje típicamente darianas para dar cuenta de sus estrategias. La primera de ellas es la intervención de 1892, cuando realiza su primer viaje transatlántico, precisamente en ocasión de un centenario del viaje colombino. Darío llevó consigo un conjunto de piezas mayas y un texto en el que dignificó el arte amerindio, al que colocó en relación con las grandes tradiciones estéticas de Occidente, justo antes de que las vanguardias históricas comenzaran a volver al “primitivismo” (Einstein 2008).

Lejos de toda celebración, “A Colón”, el poema que lee ante los madrileños, es completamente crítico de la Conquista y pone al almirante como responsable de la decadencia americana. La conquista está concebida bajo la metáfora de la violación (“Cuando en vientres de América cayó semilla/ de la raza de hierro que fue de España”). El poema textualiza una de las primeras “imágenes de América” y una de las fenomenologías americanas más difundidas: la que Héctor Murena describe en *El pecado original de América* (1954) como un proceso de mimesis europea nunca completo: “América ha sido interpretada según una clave puramente europea”. Por eso mismo, “Todo el que quiere vivir tiene que matar, y solo después del asesinato podrá reconciliarse con los muertos”, dice.

La posición de Darío no es tan trágica, pero es igualmente categórica, aunque sus categorías se levantan contra todo principio de autoridad y abren la lengua castellana hacia el tiempo del neologismo científico:

(Aricó 2009: 139). Simón Rodríguez, el maestro de Bolívar, sufría contemporáneamente porque “Vemos a los europeos inventando medios de reparar un edificio viejo, por no tener dónde hacer uno nuevo; vemos a los americanos, en un país vacío, perplejos, o imitando sin necesidad lo que hacen los Europeos [...] la América no debe imitar servilmente sino ser original” (citado en Rozitchner 2012: 146–147).

¡Desgraciado Almirante! Tu pobre América,
tu india virgen y hermosa de sangre cálida,
la perla de tus sueños, es una histérica
de convulsivos nervios y frente pálida. (1953: 963–965)

A la fantasía pueril de los conquistadores y explotadores de los cuerpos, las palabras y las cosas como mercancías (“la perla de tus sueños”), Darío opone el nombre categorial “histérica” que Charcot, en el mismo momento en que el poeta escribe y recita, está codificando como trauma sexual en La Salpêtrière², y que terminará por convertirse en principio de la sexualidad femenina cuando Freud, discípulo del psiquiatra, abraza la causa del fantasma. La primera operación, pues, enturbia la lengua introduciendo neologismos que cambian no solo el paisaje de la lengua sino, sobre todo, la relación de uso con los nombres y las categorías y que piensan el poema como instrumento de diagnóstico.

En el relato “La muerte de la emperatriz de la China” (1890)³, Rubén Darío hace que el protagonista del relato, un escultor, oiga “un gran ruido de fracaso en el recinto de su taller” provocado por su mujer quien, por celos, rompe una estatuilla que el escultor atesoraba. La frase solo se comprende del todo si se recuerda que “fracas”, en francés, significa estrépito y “fracasser” es romper con violencia. El “fracaso” dariano es un galicismo y la frase “ruido de fracaso”, en este contexto, equivale a “Rey de Reyes”, que se suma a los sentidos más obvios, pero sin cancelarlos del todo: ruido de rotura y violento fracaso de la idolatría (callejón sin salida de las religiones, pero también de las políticas)⁴. El “fracaso” dariano se instala en el medio de los desgarros que produce la globalización, a la que *interrumpe* (interrumpere: romper algo y poner un espacio entre los pedazos).

En esta segunda operación se deja leer una política de la traducción, si se quiere, pero también, y sobre todo, una política de las lenguas en contacto. Expulsado

2 Las *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux faites à la Salpêtrière* se publicaron entre 1885 y 1887. Freud es su discípulo a partir de 1886.

3 Véase Darío 1995: 236. José María Martínez, a cargo de dicha edición, precisa: “El cuento se publicó por primera vez en *La República* (Santiago, 15 de marzo de 1890), con la misma dedicatoria que luego se reprodujo en [la segunda edición del] 90 [*Al duque Job* {i. e.: Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera}, *de México*]. El 15 de mayo de ese mismo año se insertó en las páginas de *La Unión* [San Salvador, a mi entender]. En junio pudo leerse además en *El Perú Ilustrado* de Lima (día 5), con una presentación de Ricardo Palma, y en *El Imparcial* de Guatemala (día 15), donde aparece firmado por Darío”.

4 Según Ottorino Pianigiani, en *fracassare* (que pasa a las demás lenguas romances), el prefijo italiano *fra* reemplaza al *con* de *conquassare* (el resultado equivale al *interrumpere* y significaría, por lo tanto “en medio de la sacudida”. El diccionario de Pianigiani está disponible en: <http://www.etimo.it/>.

de los listados académicos como “galicismo”, el “fracaso” de Darío destruye toda ilusión de pureza y homogeneidad lingüística: el castellano, a diferencia de cualquiera de las otras lenguas romances estatales, es una totalidad quebrada e imposible de ser recuperada como tal y esto no solo por la declinación territorial de los sistemas pronominales, los léxicos y los ritmos sintácticos, sino sobre todo porque la lengua americana, despojada de todo fundamento, se revela como un mero espacio de transfiguración, zona de contacto y de fricción, principio de desidentificación⁵.

Un atento lector de la obra dariana ha observado que “como traductor, Darío es un caníbal exquisito” (Caresani 2012: s/p). Entiéndase la afirmación en todo su alcance: en relación con la figura calibanesca sobre la que el propio Darío reflexiona, a la par que algunos de sus coetanos (no digo contemporáneos porque la relación de contemporaneidad es otra cosa: Darío es nuestro contemporáneo, Rodó no lo es), pero en relación, sobre todo, con el canibalismo cultivado propuesto por la vanguardia paulista como clave de la situación latinoamericana (incluso, si se quiere, en relación con la antropología posestructural de Viveiros de Castro)⁶.

El carácter siempre presente de la traducción en el corpus dariano ha sido particularmente analizado en relación con el primer poema de *Prosas Profanas* (publicado en Buenos Aires en 1896), “Sinfonía en gris mayor”, que “traduce”, como se sabe, la “Sinfonía en blanco mayor” (1849), de Théophile Gautier, y el “Arte poética” (1874), de Paul Verlaine, pero también un género pictórico (la marina) y un paisaje (el trópico) a un poema que es una intervención en el Buenos Aires al que Darío acaba de llegar, tensionado entre el criollismo, el hispanismo y el cosmopolitismo. Sea: el traductor, como se ha dicho, como antropófago y la antropofagia como una antropología. Me detengo en la penúltima estrofa para ejemplificar la tercera operación dariana que trataré luego de traer a nuestro presente y nuestras preocupaciones:

La siesta del trópico. El lobo se aduerme.
Ya todo lo envuelve la gama del gris.
Parece que un suave y enorme esfumino
del curvo horizonte borraría el confín.

Por un lado, se borra el confín, que es tanto “el último término a que alcanza la vista” como el “término o raya que divide las poblaciones, provincias, territorios,

⁵ De otras lenguas coloniales americanas como el inglés y el portugués de América podría decirse lo mismo (Brasil y Estados Unidos aprobaron sendas reformas ortográficas) pero el caso del castellano (o su identificación con la lengua imperial bajo el rótulo “español”) es diferente, como se verá más adelante.

⁶ Véase Darío 1898. También Fernández Retamar 1989 y Viveiros de Castro 2010.

etc., y señala los límites de cada uno”. Se trata de una apertura y de una ampliación: la suspensión de todo veredicto retrógrado en relación con los lenguajes, los imperios y las naciones, una interrogación de los gestos (en suma: las formas y las imágenes de las que disponemos) no como si fueran interiores a la literatura, al arte, a la cultura sino como siendo *exteriores a toda garantía cultural y disciplinar*, participando de una exterioridad radical (lo abierto rilkeano o el afuera blanchotiano⁷). Pero no es esto lo que ahora importa.

La primera edición del poema, publicado en el periódico *El Correo de la Tarde* (Guatemala) el 21 de febrero de 1891 dice “duerme”. El 3 de mayo de 1891 se republica en *La Habana Elegante* (Cuba) con una única variante: la transformación de “duerme” en “aduerme”, que es la que llega hasta nosotros. La corrección de Darío, que sostiene las mismas cantidades silábicas del verso produce, sin embargo, una elongación rítmica que busca hacer coincidir el ritmo con la ensoñación o el sueño opiáceo⁸ del lobo de mar, el marino que protagoniza el poema. El hallazgo es extraordinario porque permite establecer una relación de semejanza y contigüidad entre el verso y el proceso que representa, y para hacerlo el poema recurre a una palabra caída en desuso, infrecuente, como se buscan los tesoros en una mina o una excavación⁹.

De modo que la glotopolítica dariana reposa en unas estrategias que llevan la lengua a un lugar en donde nunca estuvo: su propio pasado (*aduerme*), su propio futuro (*histeria*) y las lenguas de allende el confín (*fracaso*). La lengua de Darío (la lengua americana) jamás podrá coincidir con la lengua “española” ni con sus fantasías extraccionistas (la lengua como recurso natural a ser explotado: RAE, Telefónica, grupo Prisa, Santillana) ni tampoco puede coincidir consigo misma porque es una lengua que funciona como línea de fuga (hacia el pasado, hacia el futuro, hacia afuera).

Si me he detenido en estos pormenores es porque creo que se los puede poner en correlación con algunas tensiones teóricas de nuestro tiempo y nuestro espacio, milenarismo y globalización que, cada una a su manera, acaban con toda ilusión de autonomía de los fenómenos estéticos (Ludmer 2006). Si he elegido

7 Véase Heidegger 1996 y Foucault 1999 [1966].

8 Se podría pensar en el “onirismo tóxico” que tanto le interesaba a Darío, pero eso aquí no importa. La primera aparición del vocablo está registrada en el *Vocabulario de las dos lenguas, Toscana y Castellana* (Cristóbal de las Casas, 1570) donde la palabra, en efecto, se relaciona con la “adormidera”: *adormefcido: addormentato; adormir: allopiare*; adormideras: *papaueris*; etc. Agradezco estas referencias a Rodrigo Caresani (comunicación personal).

9 “Pocos se preocupan de la forma artística, del refinamiento; pocos dan –para producir la chispa– con el acero del estilo en esa piedra de la vieja lengua, enterrada en el tesoro escondido de los clásicos” (Darío 1934: 171).

esta singularidad ejemplar y no cualquiera otra es porque permite desplegar las perplejidades que forman parte de este volumen, puesto bajo la interrogación de la dialéctica entre centro y periferia, el cuestionamiento del eurocentrismo o la heteronomía de los asuntos artísticos y culturales, las negociaciones, tensiones y dislocamientos del valor estético en la producción contemporánea y, naturalmente, nociones como “literatura mundial” o “Sur global”, que participan, al mismo tiempo, de lo estético y de lo ético.

He querido, pues, ofrecer un “caso” que tanto participa de los juegos de lenguaje transnacionales y la crisis de los universales burgueses como de la tangencial alusión a “la vida literaria” y la guerra de discursos, un caso que involucra tanto el anacronismo y la catástrofe, o la noción de comunidad entendida no como el paraíso de las semejanzas sino como el infierno de las diferencias. En efecto, ¿a qué otra cosa podría aludir hoy la *Weltliteratur* sino a un mundo *interrumpido* (despedazado), tal y como se deduce de *Histoire(s) du cinema*, de Godard, que en una de sus más admirables secuencias opone al “totalitarismo del presente” (en la voz de Godard), la cita de Paul Celan (“si un hombre... viniese...”, “Käme ein Mensch”) y, resonando en ella, el enmudecimiento radical de Hölderlin?

★

Si para nosotros, hijos de Metapa, hay mundo y *Weltliteratur* es porque las estrategias darianas destruyeron toda ilusión de totalidad lingüístico-literaria-cultural. ¿Se puede pensar lo literario como figura del mundo una vez que el lenguaje que constituye su materia ha sido desidentificado de sí mismo? Para hacerlo, habría que poner en crisis los grandes modelos del comparatismo actual.

Ignacio Sánchez Prado ha censurado los modelos hegemónicos de “la literatura mundial tal como la plantean Moretti y Casanova” (2006: 9), por ejemplo, porque en ellos se definen “agendas que corresponden estrictamente a intereses intelectuales euro-norteamericanos” y donde “Latinoamérica sigue siendo el lugar de producción de ‘casos de estudio’, pero no un *locus* legítimo de enunciación teórica”. Ese *locus* es el que reivindicaba Darío, quien entendió la situación de lo latinoamericano como un horizonte de tensiones entre dos yacimientos de pasado (Europa y América) y reprogramó, en relación con esas tensiones, la memoria colectiva de América, que debe tanto a los centauros parlanchines como a Tuteotzimi (“Mi piqueta/ trabaja en el terreno de la América ignota”). Que no se trata solamente de un programa estético lo demuestran las intervenciones de Darío en las Conferencias Panamericanas¹⁰.

¹⁰ Especialmente en la Conferencia Panamericana de Río de Janeiro, que tendrá particular resonancia en su obra.

Pero las estrategias darianas sirven también como alerta contra los peligros de otra operación: la transformación del hispanismo en “estudios transatlánticos”. En un artículo irrefutable en sus argumentos, Eduardo Subirats (2004) denuncia “siete tesis contra el hispanismo”: los “dilemas aduaneros” que suscita, el prejuicio esencialista y concentracionario de la lengua única, el carácter quebrado y colonizado de la modernidad ibérica, entre otros aspectos. Por su parte, en abierta oposición a Julio Ortega, Abril Trigo censuró la mutación del hispanismo en estudios transatlánticos porque “La exaltación de la uniformidad lingüística del español y su meticulosa explotación como recurso económico está en la base de una muy bien planeada estrategia geopolítica” (2012: 35), que procura restablecer la hegemonía moral y cultural de la antigua metrópolis sobre el mundo de habla hispana¹¹. Entre otros aspectos, Trigo se detiene sobre todo en la “estratagema” anti-teórica de los estudios transatlánticos:

una ingeniosa estratagema cuyo fin es establecer una muy peculiar posición estratégica, el punto de vista privilegiado de quienes no se oponen a la teoría, sino que la superan, desde que han logrado salir relativamente ilesos de las batallas académicas e institucionales de los noventa, situación que les permite abrogarse la autoridad moral e intelectual para hacer borrón y cuenta nueva. Esto implica, por supuesto, la adopción de un nuevo paradigma crítico y teórico: los estudios transatlánticos, que gracias a su postura post-teórica no pueden ser nombrados ni teorizados como tal. La estratagema post-teórica hace posible pasar lo que es una práctica hermenéutica como un nuevo paradigma teórico, evitando así que se vea sometida al escrutinio de la crítica. (2012: 24)

O, para decirlo con palabras de Josefina Ludmer, que sitúa la aparición de un nuevo tipo de literaturas, las “literaturas postautónomas” en el horizonte de una crisis de las políticas representativas tradicionales, de los sistemas políticos y los Estados: “Las literaturas postautónomas [...] se regirían por otra *episteme*. Y lo que contarían en la imaginación pública sería una pura experiencia verbal [de la lengua: la lengua se hace en ellas recurso natural e industria] subjetiva-pública de la realidad-ficción del presente en una isla urbana latinoamericana” (2006 [2010]: 150).

Lo que antes propuse como red, podría llamarse, siguiendo estas indicaciones, archipiélago, con la condición de no proyectar lo insular de la definición

¹¹ Prueba de lo cual sería el discurso de Fernando Lázaro Carreter, presidente de la Real Academia Española, en el Congreso de Sevilla: “la presencia hispánica, actual y futura, en el concierto o desconcierto del mundo, depende decididamente de la unidad idiomática [...] la Real Academia siente que ha llegado el momento de intensificar sus actividades en pro de esta causa que dista de ser estética, y llega a ser decididamente política” (1992: s.p.).

sobre un mapa plano sino en el diagrama de una constelación (donde las distancias no son homogéneas).

Vuelvo al “fracaso” dariano, que ahora podríamos interpretar no como un capricho poético sino como una herramienta político-cognitiva, en la línea de un Simón Rodríguez leído por León Rozitchner (“Entonces se impone la pedagogía: hay que enseñar y aprender desde el fracaso” (2012: 47)) hasta Gayatri Spivak, para quien el fracaso constituye un método.

La perspectiva dariana, en efecto, parece coincidir con la de la más conocida cultora de los Estudios Subalternos de la Escuela India, que fueron introducidos en América latina en 1998 por la socióloga aymara Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (cfr. Gago 2016), junto con Rossana Barragán (1998), mucho antes de que se convirtieran en moda académica. La antología traducida quería contestar al multiculturalismo neoliberal que se imponía como política estatal en el mismo sentido en que funciona el perspectivismo antropológico de Viveiros de Castro.

Los estudios poscoloniales que allí se presentaron tenían por objeto “restituir a los (grupos, clases) subalternos su condición de sujetos plurales y descentrados, que habitan de un modo territorial la espesura histórica” (Barragán 1998: 11). La “sociedad civil abigarrada –la sociedad subalterna– [...] siempre permanece heterogénea y elusiva a la política de los de ‘arriba’” (Barragán 1998: 11), pero también a las conceptualizaciones del marxismo ilustrado (de José Carlos Mariátegui a Ángel Rama). La relación “Sur-Sur”, entonces, se verifica en la estratégica traducción de un triste trópico (el indio) a otro (el del altiplano boliviano), ninguno de los cuales puede considerarse una versión temporal¹² de Europa y sus “palacios de las universidades del norte”. Cuando Gayatri Spivak visitó Bolivia, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui le propuso traducir el término *double bind*, de gran fortuna en la teoría social (de Bateson a la propia Spivak pasando, naturalmente, por Deleuze) con el término aymara *pä chuyma*, que significa “tener el alma dividida por dos mandatos imposibles de cumplir” (cfr. Gago s.a.). El castellano, esa lengua interrumpida por la errancia desde las estrategias fundadoras de Rubén Darío, carece de una palabra para traducir con precisión un concepto que el aymara sí conoce. Una vez más, “El coloquio de los centauros” bien puede traducirse como “Tutecotzimí”. Y, por cierto, el desequilibrio de un lenguaje sin totalización posible (porque no tiene presente ni confin, sino solo pasado, futuro y afuera), teniendo en cuenta el carácter perspectivista propio de los estudios poscoloniales, permite entender mejor todavía la abundancia de *chinoiserie* en la obra dariana porque “El desplazamiento de los centros es un hecho, dice Silvia

¹² Es la sorprendente perspectiva de Claude Lévy-Strauss en *Tristes trópicos*: América es el pasado de Europa; la India, su futuro.

[Rivera Cusicanqui] (que además, insiste con que si nombramos desde donde estamos situadxs, ¡el oriente refiere a Europa!)” (Gago 2016: nota 20).

La teoría social que tal vez sirva de insumo para un nuevo diagrama de la literatura mundial parece haber llegado a un lugar eminentemente dariano. Habrá que perdonarle su retraso.

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Benjamin Loy

The precarious state of the art: Writing the Global South and critical cosmopolitanism in the works of J.M. Coetzee and Roberto Bolaño

porque todo es sur en el mundo, las estrellas
que no vemos y las que vemos, fascinación
y cerrazón, dalia y más dalia
de tinta

Gonzalo Rojas, "Para órgano"

I Re-mapping World Literature: opportunities and prospects of readings of the Global South

In 1952, Erich Auerbach, facing the devaluation of "traditional divisions of the material, chronological, geographical or typological" (1969: 12), harbored radical doubts regarding the possibilities presented by speaking about World Literature in a Goethean sense. This does not appear to have impeded the (recent) success of this concept within literary studies of the past 20 years. Without delving into a detailed reappraisal of this constantly expanding debate, it seems nonetheless important, given the current contagiousness of the concept of the Global South, to at least locate its relationship to, and possible value for the treatment of questions pertaining to World Literature. Both theoretical and analytical discussions of the notion of World Literature differ, at a basic level, with regard to the various ways in which we respond to two fundamental questions:

1. What ideas about the world and about literature does each analytical perspective articulate through the compound noun, *World Literature*?
2. How does each approach determine the possibility of an adequate ability to describe World Literature, in the sense of a literary global history?

In response to the first question, debates focus in particular on the status of literature itself in the medium of the global. One side privileges literature's ability to function as a world-making force with its possibility for creating alter-worlds

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(Cheah 2014: 2), thereby putting front and center the analysis of the literary text. The other side's interest in knowledge springs from the assumption that "there is no unmediated relationship between the practice of writing and the printed, commodified, and possibly consecrated text" (Helgesson 2015: 24), which is why, consequently, this sort of work concentrates on extra-literary mechanisms of global book markets¹. If these different approaches can be reconciled with relative ease, in the sense of Damrosch's claim that "systemic approaches need to be counter-balanced with close attention to particular languages, specific texts" (2003: 26), this makes the second question all the more difficult to answer, inquiring as it does into the problem of what kind of *world* we are speaking of when we invoke *World Literature*, and how we can conceive of this world in its spatial and temporal axes. Pascale Casanova's *La république mondiale des lettres* continues to offer what is without a doubt the clearest illustration of this problem. From her Euro or Francocentric perspective, *world* is only conceivable in dependency upon *one* geographical and temporal center – Paris in the age of modernity – which offers the opportunity to create a *master narrative* that would render manageable a body of literatures of the world that is otherwise simply impossible to imagine in its mass and diversity². The problem with such attempts at world-literary historiography lies in the fact that they are always subject to ideological distortions and as such cannot fulfill descriptive claims made on global-historical configurations of literature. Jerome McGann formulated this in a pointed way in his critique of Casanova:

The factive inadequacy of Casanova's account does not measure a failure of scholarship, it marks her ideological purpose. Like the artwork that interests her, Casanova's discussion "escape[s] the ordinary laws of history." It isn't a history at all, it is a theory, and "Paris" for her is a myth – "a modern myth created by literature". [...] But if Paris is a myth escaping the ordinary laws of history, the myth is itself a historical formation and is important as such. It is clearly important if people put faith in the myth – or if they don't. (2008: 651)

The idea of a *world* or *World Literature*, as treated in works like Casanova's, bears the inherent seed of a problem that Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his reflections on global history, exposes whenever he describes the understanding of globality in historicism shaped by European thought: "Historicism is what made modernity

¹ See also the other contributions in Helgesson/Vermeulen (2015), or the study by Marling (2016) about *gatekeepers*, a work exemplary for the influence of specific actors within the global literary field.

² Franco Moretti's notion of *distant reading* represents a completely different, yet no less problematic, attempt to tame this body of material; I will not discuss this in detail here. See the texts in Moretti (2013), as well as my extensive critique of Moretti and Casanova's Hegelian historiography in Loy (2017a).

or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it [...] Historicism thus posited historical time as a measure of the cultural distance [...] that was assumed to exist between the West and the non-West” (2008: 7). Just as Chakrabarty has demonstrated for concepts such as *Capitalism*, *Modernity* or *Enlightenment*, World Literature can be defined as a phenomenon that “[is] explained mainly with respect to ‘events’ within the geographical confines of Europe [...]”. The inhabitants of the colonies, on the other hand, were assigned a place ‘elsewhere’ in the ‘first in Europe and then elsewhere’ structure of time” (2008: 7–8). It seems to me that it is precisely this problem of “banishing” non-Western texts or textual histories to some “imaginary waiting room of history” (2008: 8), and the therefore consistently insufficient semantic charge of the term *world* within present ideas of *World Literature* that gives rise to the significance and possibilities of ideas such as the Global South. With its focus on “the tensions between ordering and disordering implicit” in the Global South, it “might provide a useful heuristic for those engaged in a wide range of intellectual, aesthetic, and political work” (Levander/Mignolo 2011: 1). The fact that questions emerging from the vantage point of South-South relations “call global designs into question and open up the possibility of networking among local histories” (Levander/Mignolo 2011: 10) seems to facilitate an opportunity to complicate and critique a simplistic notion of the *world* à la Casanova. Such questions illuminate, in a specific way, a postulation that Damrosch has already formulated (also not unproblematically), namely that every work of world literature always has “a perspective *from somewhere*” (2003: 27). A *re-mapping* of the contemporary cartographies of World Literature rooted in Western modernity from the perspective of the Global South would therefore be appropriate to open up a nuanced idea of literary globality without negating the central importance and influential power of Occidental concepts such as *Modernity* or even *World Literature*, because, as Chakrabarty has convincingly argued, it is “impossible to think of [them] anywhere in the world without evoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe” (2008: 4). From the perspective of the Global South, World Literature would therefore be conceived of as an “expansion of the world” and a “provincialization” of the West, in the context of envisioning the fact that “universalistic thought was always and already modified by particular histories, whether or not we could excavate such pasts fully” (2008: xiv)³. The concomitant perspective is

3 For Latin American literatures, the studies by Mariano Siskind (2014) and Héctor Hoyos (2015) come closest to realizing this postulation.

therefore “not [directed] against the idea of universals as such but emphasize[s] that the universal was [and is] a highly unstable figure” (2008: xiii).

With regard to the question of literature – as the following analysis of works by J.M. Coetzee and Roberto Bolaño is meant to document – such a critical perspective from the view of two authors, who write and wrote from a typical position between, or swinging to and from, the Global South (South Africa and Mexico/Chile) and the Global North (Australia and Spain), always implies the problematization of a fundamentally affirmative stance towards literature or World Literature as a medium of historical affirmation and cosmopolitan positioning, which suits many discourses in the current debates⁴.

II The humanities in neoliberal times, or the crisis of the cosmopolitan imagination

If we read the Global South as “the geopolitical concept replacing ‘Third World’ after the collapse of the Soviet Union” (Levander/Mignolo 2011: 3), then we can situate the works of J.M. Coetzee, born in 1940 in Cape Town, and Roberto Bolaño, born in 1953 in Santiago de Chile, against the backdrop of the watershed year of 1989 and its accompanying hopes and crises. The following analysis will focus on Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999) and *Elizabeth Costello* (first published in 2003), and on Bolaño’s closely intertwined and posthumously published novels, *2666* (2004) and *Woes of the True Policeman* (first published in 2011 as *Los sinsabores del verdadero policía*). The protagonists of all four texts, which are partially autobiographical in nature⁵, are connected by the fact that all of them are philologists⁶ (David Lurie in *Disgrace*, Blanche Costello in *Elizabeth Costello*, and Espinoza, Pelletier, Morini, Norton and Amalfitano in Bolaño’s novels) or a philologically adept writer (Elizabeth Costello). As such, these characters reveal how these texts confront meta-questions of literature and processes of reading and interpretation. We can locate the presentation of

⁴ Regarding one critique in this context, see Apter (2013), although her comments focus more strongly on the problem of translatability.

⁵ This study does not further explore the important question of how authors are staged and how this effects global reception. On Coetzee, see Helgesson (2015); on Bolaño, see Birns (2015).

⁶ I’m aware of the somewhat uncommon use of the designation “philologist” in English, however I use it here to refer to a specific and historic idea of literary scholarship, as discussed for example by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in his book *The Powers of Philology*.

all of these philological protagonists and their academic contexts within the radical global and neoliberal reorganization of universities and other educational institutions that stand at the root of the “world-wide crisis in education” (Nussbaum 2010: 2), within which the humanities in particular are threatened by educational policy focused solely on utilitarian premises or, as the text “The Humanities in Africa” in *Elizabeth Costello* puts it,

The *studia humanitatis* have taken a long time to die, but now, at the end of the second millennium of our era, they are truly on their deathbed. All the more bitter should be that death, I would say, since it has been brought about by the monster enthroned by those very studies as animating principle of the universe: reason, mechanical reason. (Coetzee 2004: 123)

In both Coetzee and Bolaño’s novels, the humanities in general, and philology in particular, seem to be disciplines stripped of all transcendence and potential efficacy, populated by figures degraded from literature professors to “professors of communications”; Lurie describes them as “clerks in a post-religious age” (Coetzee 1999: 3). The university and its students are guilty of corruption, squalidness and ignorance. As Bolaño writes, “[t]he university is rotten” (Bolaño 2012: 17)⁷, and Lurie notes, “He has long ceased to be surprised at the range of ignorance of his students. Post-Christian, posthistorical, postliterate, they might as well have been hatched from eggs yesterday” (Coetzee 1999: 32). The Chilean philologist Óscar Amalfitano, who says that it seems “as if in these times of crisis literature professors weren’t needed anywhere” (Bolaño 2012: 24)⁸, thereby corresponds with a general theoretical *ennui* among the representatives of a discipline that are only all too aware of their devaluation in the age of neoliberalism and who yearn to escape from their business of interpretation: “The truth is, he is tired of criticism, tired of prose measured by the yard. What he wants to write is music: Byron in Italy, a meditation on love between the sexes in the form of a chamber opera” (Coetzee 1999: 4)⁹. All of the novels exhibit to a similar degree the affective inadequacy of philology as textual science, which Bolaño presents, with a certain exaggeration, as a kind of pretext for the satisfaction of all-too-human desires. For example, Bolaño

⁷ “La universidad está podrida” (Bolaño 2011: 39).

⁸ “[C]omo si en estos tiempos de crisis en ningún lugar hicieran falta profesores de literatura” (Bolaño 2011: 46).

⁹ The ostensible motivation of these philologists bears an astonishing resemblance to the longing for “experiences of presence” on this side of a rationally founded hermeneutics, so prominently articulated by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in *Production of Presence* (2003). See also Loy (2017b) for a critique of this concept.

writes the following about the French literature scholar Jean-Claude Pelletier and his career at the beginning of 2666:

He saw himself, as we've said, ascetic and hunched over his German dictionaries in the weak light of a single bulb, thin and dogged, as if he were pure will made flesh, bone, and music without an ounce of fat, fanatical and bent on success. A rather ordinary picture of a student in the capital, but it worked on him like a drug, a drug that brought him to tears, a drug that (as one sentimental Dutch poet of the nineteenth century had it) opened the floodgates of emotion, as well as the floodgates of something that at first blush resembled self-pity but wasn't (what was it, then? rage? very likely), and made him turn over and over in his mind, not in words, but in painful images, the period of his youthful apprenticeship. (Bolaño 2008: 5)¹⁰

As the boredom of the philologists increases throughout the course of the novels, they engage in amorous escapades that end up functioning as another problematization of their ostensibly humanistic convictions and of literature itself: David Lurie has an affair with a young student named Melanie, which ends up costing him his job at a university in Cape Town; similar events unfold for Óscar Amalfitano, who is at first employed at the University of Barcelona and then, after many years of being a widower, discovers his homosexuality and is also dismissed after having an affair with a student; and 2666 features a *ménage à trois* between the two critics Pelletier and Espinoza and their young colleague Liz Norton, which triggers a series of problematic events in the course of the novel. What is interesting in this context, however, are the affective-political implications of presenting the protagonists' academic worlds as hypocritical and, as the title of Coetzee's novel indicates, merciless institutions. While Amalfitano's colleagues merely tell him, "You should have been more careful choosing your friends" (Bolaño 2012: 17)¹¹, *Disgrace* explores Lurie's predicament in far more detail. The novel grants a broad forum to the intense disciplinary procedures brought against Lurie, focusing – in a scarcely concealed allusion to the trial at

10 "Se vio, como queda dicho, a sí mismo, ascético e inclinado sobre sus diccionarios alemanes, iluminado por una débil bombilla, flaco y recalcitrante, como si todo él fuera voluntad hecha carne, huesos y músculos, nada de grasa, fanático y decidido a llegar a buen puerto, en fin, una imagen bastante normal de estudiante en la capital pero que obró en él como una droga, una droga que lo hizo llorar, una droga que abrió, como dijo un cursi poeta holandés del siglo XIX, las esclusas de la emoción y de algo que a primera vista parecía autoconmisericordia pero que no lo era (¿qué era, entonces?, ¿rabia?, probablemente), y que lo llevó a pensar y a repensar, pero no con palabras sino con imágenes dolientes, su período de aprendizaje juvenil" (Bolaño 2004: 17).

11 "Debiste ser más prudente a la hora de elegir a tus amigos" (Bolaño 2011: 38).

the end of Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*¹² – on the central theme of bigotry in a post-religious world that has lost its capacity to grant mercy, even though it remains a world that vehemently calls for certain basic affective forms of atonement. Lurie clearly labels this conflict when he refuses to deliver a performance of regret about his objective violation of the institutional rules: “Before that secular tribunal I pleaded guilty, a secular plea. That plea should suffice. Repentance is neither here nor there. Repentance belongs to another world, to another universe of discourse” (Coetzee 1999: 58). At the same time, the protagonists in the other novels are not staged at all as innocents whose fall from grace should be understood as a consequence of a pitiless *zeitgeist*. Lurie's ex-wife, however, identifies this fact in a relatively clear way when she says, “Don't expect sympathy from me, David, and don't expect sympathy from anyone else either. No sympathy, no mercy, not in this day and age. Everyone's hand will be against you, and why not?” (1999: 44).

At the same time, however – and this is crucial to the problematization of the humanities and literature in both Coetzee and Bolaño – all of these texts address the question of how literature and affect are related, and they also thematize the presumably positive connections that ostensibly exist between both specifically defined views of literature and interpretation. This pertains in particular to the influential idea that literature holds a specific power for inculcating certain empathic capabilities and – here the global dimension of the novels finally comes into play – the facilitation of a cosmopolitan worldview. In the recent past, this connection between reading fictions, education in empathy, and cosmopolitanism was most prominently articulated by authors such as Martha Nussbaum and Kwame Anthony Appia. For example when Nussbaum in her widely discussed book *Cultivating Humanity*, postulates: “[N]arrative imagination is an essential preparation for moral interaction. Habits of empathy and conjecture conduce a certain type of citizenship and a certain form of community: one that cultivates

12 This intertextual line of reference, which is extended in the novel to other places to Gustav Flaubert, is an indication of the fact that Coetzee's politics of affect are in no way an ostensibly new form of the novel, as Peter Vermeulen for example has argued, and that Coetzee's work does not spell the “end of the novel” because they supposedly do not fulfill the genre's traditional affective objectives (compare this with Vermeulen's central thesis, according to which “over a century of theoretical reflection on the novel has understood it as a cultural form that has inaugurated and sustained modern forms of individuality and community; it has done so, moreover, by mobilizing two vital kinds of emotive engagement with the world: desire and empathy” (Vermeulen 2014: 50–51)). Instead, Coetzee intentionally presents a newly defined form of the affective negotiation of emotional coldness, as it was constitutive for a certain line of modernity and whose founder was Gustav Flaubert. See also von Koppenfels (2007).

a sympathetic responsiveness to another's needs" (1997: 90). According to Nussbaum's argument, which follows Diogenes, the reading of fictional texts – and the study of "non-western cultures" in particular – and the associated capacity for putting oneself in another's position in a gesture of empathy, enables literature to fulfill an essential task in the affective education of mankind and his transformation into a cosmopolitan citizen of the world: "When we see in how many different ways people can organize their lives we will recognize [...] what is deep and what is shallow in our own ways, and will consider that 'the only real community is one that embraces the entire world'" (1997: 58)¹³. In fact, however, the view articulated here by Nussbaum¹⁴ is influential within a Western tradition and constitutes a certain affirmative propagation of the cosmopolitan potential of (world) literature. This notion has come under increasing pressure in contemporary research whenever authors such as Suzanne Keen in her study *Empathy and the Novel* have asserted that

[N]o evidence emerges [...] that would support a judgment about the importance or insignificance of novel reading in cultivating the sympathetic imaginations [...] this lack of information does not preclude influence through fiction reading, to be sure, but it does warrant caution when making claims about the formation of these particular good world citizens. (2007: 23)¹⁵

In fact, Keen emphasizes the fundamental ambivalence of narratives when she discusses, in reference to the example of the Holocaust that she repeatedly raises, the degree to which the narrative of the inhumane, situated for example in language about the racial superiority of Aryans in Nazi ideology, must be discussed in connection with the power of fictions: "The content of stories is not a neutral matter. If narrative fiction has the capacity to alter readers' characters for the good, it may also possess darker powers" (2007: 25). In their novels under discussion here, Roberto Bolaño and J.M. Coetzee seem to call into question this idea by critically examining the Western notion that literature is a cosmopolitan power that can improve the world; in Elizabeth Costello's thoughts about the connection between literature and evil, for example, there is the explicit statement that, "Specifically, she is no longer sure that people are always improved by what they read. Furthermore, she is not sure that writers who venture into the darker territories of the soul always return unscathed" (2004: 160). As a matter of fact, both authors deal

¹³ See also the similar, if more differentiated, comments in Appiah (2001).

¹⁴ Ette (2016) also presents a similarly empathic vision of literatures of the world as a reservoir of knowledge relevant to the survival of humanity.

¹⁵ Paul Bloom has also voiced similar concerns about the ubiquitous apotheosis of sympathy and empathy beyond the specific medium of literature in his latest book, *Against Empathy*.

with this problem through the philological protagonists in their novels, namely the problem as to the extent to which, following Nussbaum's argument, specialists in questions of empathy and a cosmopolitan ethos fail on the practical application of these ethical convictions, or the degree to which fiction and their humanistic knowledge enable them, in certain situations, to develop adequate possibilities for idealizing ethically problematic actions. This aspect becomes clear after Lurie's first sexual encounter with his student, Melanie, when Lurie comments as follows on the intentionally ambivalent scene after the end of the act: "Her tights and panties lie in a tangle on the floor; his trousers are around his ankles. *After the storm*, he thinks: straight out of George Grosz" (Coetzee 1999: 19). Lurie's humanistic education here becomes the prerequisite for the romanticization of an ethically problematic deed, one that surfaces for just a moment in his conscience in all of its objective reprehensibility: "*A child! [...] No more than a child! What am I doing?*" (1999: 20). This problem is addressed in a similar explicit way at the end of the novel when Lurie attends a theater performance in which Melanie is on stage. During the performance, Lurie reflects upon all of the women in his life and states indiscriminately, "by each of them he was enriched" (1999: 192). The reader first sees how the behavior of the condemned and ostracized Lurie affects his environment when a friend of Melanie's points out the inappropriateness of the sacked philologist's presence at his "victim's" performance:

"Only doing you a favour, prof. Didn't you learn your lesson?"

"What was my lesson?"

"Stay with your own kind."

Your own kind: who is this boy to tell him who his kind are? What does he know of the force that drives the utmost strangers into each other's arms, making them kin, kind, beyond all prudence? *Omnis gens quaecumque se in se perficere vult*. The seed of generation, driven to perfect itself, driving deep into the woman's body, driving to bring the future into being. Drive, driven. (1999: 194)

On the other hand, Lurie's attempt to conceal his desires in the register of abstraction or his education reaches its pinnacle at the end of the chapter when, after the incident, he picks up a prostitute off the street and describes his instrumental relationship with her in a way devoid of idealism: "The girl is drunk or perhaps on drugs: he can get nothing coherent out of her. Nonetheless, she does her work on him as well as he could expect" (1999: 194). At the same time, the novel repeatedly instantiates the possible limits of the empathic imagination, for example when the neighbor of Lurie's daughter Lucy accuses him after her rape of a sheer inability to put himself in her shoes, to which Lurie responds, "*You don't understand, you weren't there*, says Bev Shaw. Well, she is mistaken.

Lucy's intuition is right after all: he does understand; he can, if he concentrates, if he loses himself, be there, be the men, inhabit them, fill them with the ghost of himself. The question is, does he have it in him to be the woman?" (1999: 160). Katherine Hallemeier has shown how Coetzee's novel *Boyhood* articulates a criticism of the limits of the cosmopolitan imagination that authors such as Nussbaum promote, which tends in its universalizing impetus (and against its actual objective) towards a levelling of differences and power structures. We see this in *Disgrace* in Lurie's relationship to his (black) female student. According to Hallemeier, "Cosmopolitanism comes to stand as a theoretical term that gestures towards valuing differences of class, race, and gender. This gesture, however, subsumes material differences under a common human condition, even as the attribution of cosmopolitan feeling to subordinated groups arguably reinforces those groups' subordination" (2013b: 95).

Roberto Bolaño's *2666* also permits a similar treatment of this topic, as is evident in two scenes from the first of four parts of the novel, each dedicated to a scholar of literature. In the first scene, Jean-Claude Pelletier and his Spanish colleague Manuel Espinoza are visiting Liz Norton in London; both of them are pursuing her romantically. They surprise Norton in her apartment as she is speaking with her supposed ex-boyfriend, and the sexual and affective background of the following scene carries over on the same evening into a taxi ride through the city:

And when Norton told him he was lost and said which streets he should take to find his way, the driver fell silent again, with no more murmurings in his incomprehensible tongue, until he confessed that London was such a labyrinth, he really had lost his bearings. Which led Espinoza to remark that he'd be damned if the cabbie hadn't just quoted Borges, who once said London was like a labyrinth – unintentionally, of course. To which Norton replied that Dickens and Stevenson had used the same trope long before Borges in their descriptions of London. This seemed to set the driver off, for he burst out that as a Pakistani he might not know this Borges, and he might not have read the famous Dickens and Stevenson either, and he might not even know London and its streets as well as he should, that's why he'd said they were like a labyrinth, but he knew very well what decency and dignity were, and by what he had heard, the woman here present, in other words Norton, was lacking in decency and dignity, and in his country there was a word for what she was, the same word they had for it in London as it happened, and the word was *bitch* or *slut* or *pig*, and the gentlemen here present, gentlemen who, to judge by their accents, weren't English, also had a name in his country and that name was *pimp* or *hustler* or *whoremonger*. (Bolaño 2008: 73)¹⁶

16 "Y cuando Norton le dijo que se había perdido y le indicó qué calles debía tomar para enderezar el rumbo el taxista permaneció, otra vez, en silencio, sin más murmullos en su lengua incomprensible, para luego reconocer que, en efecto, el laberinto que era Londres había conseguido desorientarlo. Algo que llevó a Espinoza a decir que el taxista, sin proponérselo, coño,

The violent reaction from the literature professors to this criticism of their amorous threesome comes right away, whereby the subsequent physical abuse of the taxi driver is accompanied by a series of curses in which the academics express their allegedly cosmopolitan positions against someone they consider to be a reactionary Pakistani: “[S]hove Islam up your ass, which is where it belongs, this one is for Salman Rushdie (an author neither of them happened to think was much good but whose mention seemed pertinent), this one is for the feminists of Paris, [...] this one is for the ghost of Valerie Solanas, you son of a bitch” (Bolaño 2008: 74)¹⁷. Much like the actions of Coetzee’s protagonist, Lurie, the implications of this scene posit a radical doubt of the connection between cultural and cosmopolitan education and the ethical and moral actions that issue from it. The deeper implications of this critique of cosmopolitanism become obvious when Pelletier and Espinoza turn to other erotic adventures after the failure of their liaison with Norton. Pelletier starts up an affair with a prostitute named Vanessa, who is described in the novel as follows:

According to her, her husband was a saint. He had some flaws – for example he was an Arab, Moroccan to be precise, plus he was lazy – but overall, according to Vanessa, he was a good person, who almost never got angry about anything, and when he did, he wasn’t violent or cruel like other men but instead melancholy, sad, filled with sorrow in the face of a world that suddenly struck him as overwhelming and incomprehensible. When Pelletier asked whether the Arab knew she worked as a prostitute, Vanessa said he did, that he knew but didn’t care, because he believed in the freedom of individuals.

claro, había citado a Borges, que una vez comparó Londres con un laberinto. A lo que Norton replicó que mucho antes que Borges Dickens y Stevenson se habían referido a Londres utilizando ese tropo. Cosa que, por lo visto, el taxista no estaba dispuesto a tolerar, pues acto seguido dijo que él, un paquistaní, podía no conocer a ese mentado Borges, y que también podía no haber leído nunca a esos mentados señores Dickens y Stevenson, y que incluso tal vez aún no conocía lo suficientemente bien Londres y sus calles y que por esa razón la había comparado con un laberinto, pero que, por contra, sabía muy bien lo que era la decencia y la dignidad y que, por lo que había escuchado, la mujer aquí presente, es decir Norton, carecía de decencia y de dignidad, y que en su país eso tenía un nombre, el mismo que se le daba en Londres, qué casualidad, y que ese nombre era el de puta, aunque también era lícito utilizar el nombre de perra o zorra o cerda, y que los señores aquí presentes, señores que no eran ingleses a juzgar por su acento, también tenían un nombre en su país y ese nombre era el de chulos o macarras o macrós o cafiches” (Bolaño 2004: 102).

17 “[M]étete el islam por el culo, allí es donde debe estar, esta patada es por Salman Rushdie (un autor que ambos, por otra parte, consideraban más bien malo, pero cuya mención les pareció pertinente), esta patada es de parte de las feministas de París [...], esta patada es de parte del fantasma de Valerie Solanas, hijo de mala madre” (Bolaño 2004: 103).

“Then he’s your pimp”, said Pelletier. (Bolaño 2008: 81)¹⁸

In this scene, Bolaño demonstrates the distorted perception of reality of his literature professors and the arbitrariness with which these allegedly cosmopolitan individuals pass value judgments. While they become violent in response to the Pakistani’s insult of them as “pimps” and accuse him of a lack of liberality, these categories do not apply to Vanessa and her Moroccan husband, whom Pelletier describes as her “pimp” with an instinctive naturalness, even though it is obvious that this married couple have cultivated a libertarian model of a relationship – with the key difference that Vanessa, due to her material situation, is forced to demand money for sexual contacts with other men. Instead of reflecting on the concrete conditions of specific actions – Vanessa sleeps with other men due to her lack of money, just as Melanie does not know how to ward off her professor’s advances in *Disgrace* because of their asymmetrical power relationship – Pelletier also prefers a flight into abstraction whenever he tells Espinoza about his beloved by alluding to the “noble savage”: “Vanessa was perfectly suited to live in the Middle Ages, emotionally as well as physically. For her, the concept of ‘modern life’ was meaningless. She had much more faith in what she could see than in the media” (Bolaño 2008: 83)¹⁹. This thematic complex becomes even more exaggerated in the episode with Espinoza, who during his stay with Pelletier and Norton in Santa Teresa – the city in which hundreds of murders of women are described in the novel’s fourth chapter – initiates an affair at a market with a young carpet seller named Rebeca²⁰. This relationship is also defined by the

18 “Según ella, su marido era un santo. Tenía algunos defectos, por ejemplo era árabe, marroquí concretamente, y también era flojo, pero en líneas generales, según Vanessa, se trataba de un tipo con buen rollo, que casi nunca se enojaba por nada y que cuando lo hacía, al contrario que el resto de los hombres, no se ponía violento ni mal educado sino melancólico, triste, apesadumbrado ante un mundo que de pronto se le revelaba demasiado grande e incomprensible. Cuando Pelletier le preguntó si el árabe sabía que hacía de puta, Vanessa dijo que sí, que lo sabía pero que no le importaba pues creía en la libertad de los individuos.

–Entonces es tu chulo –le dijo Pelletier” (Bolaño 2004: 111–112).

19 “Vanessa estaba perfectamente preparada, tanto anímica como físicamente, para vivir en la Edad Media. Para ella el concepto «vida moderna» no tenía sentido. Confiaba mucho más en lo que veía que en los medios de comunicación” (Bolaño 2004: 114). His colleague Espinoza makes this connection explicit when he dismisses Pelletier’s observations with the remark, “Whores are there to be fucked [...] not psychoanalyzed” (Bolaño 2008: 84). (“–A las putas [...] hay que follárselas, no servirles de psicoanalista” (Bolaño 2004: 115)).

20 As is typical for Bolaño, this episode is also based on an intertextual allusion to the Rebeca motif, as it appears in Daphne du Maurier’s novel or Alfred Hitchcock’s film, and here in Espinoza’s attempt to comfort himself about the “loss” of Liz Norton.

concrete material disparities between the Spanish professor of literature and the Mexican merchant; first, Espinoza buys an entire series of carpets in order, as the novel puts it, to “make up for it buying what he imagined the others would have bought” (Bolaño 2008: 141)²¹. Bolaño uses the notion that anything can be bought, which surfaces multiple times in the novel²², to expound upon the fact that this implies the total availability of bodies, and of life itself, as is expressed in Santa Teresa, a fictionalized Ciudad Juárez²³, a place where the mass killing of women reifies in a radical way what Zygmunt Bauman has called “wasted life” (see Bauman 2004)²⁴. Espinoza, a professor of literature, is placed explicitly in the proximity of a murderer of women and the deadly idea of total power to dispose over the lives of others when a subsequent description presents how he appropriates Rebeca, through the power of his material opportunities, as a kind of sex toy: “In the afternoon he went shopping. He went into a lingerie shop and a women’s clothing shop and a shoe shop. That night he brought Rebeca to the hotel and after they had showered together he dressed her in a thong and garters and black tights and a black teddy and black spike-heeled shoes and fucked her until she was no more than a tremor in his arms” (Bolaño 2008: 153–154)²⁵.

The crucial implications of this presentation of a world in which the biopolitical violence of capitalist modernity and the Western tradition of humanism are interconnected is founded in the aforementioned problem of the imagination as a means for the idealization or abstraction of a reality experienced as banal; this was formative for the aesthetics of modernity and in 2666, verses of Baudelaire’s poem “Le Voyage” are superimposed in an intertextual manner on the novel’s

21 “[S]ubsanar el mal comprando él lo que supuso que hubieran comprado los otros” (Bolaño 2004: 186). (We should note here that the English translation cannot maintain the interpretive possibilities of the Spanish original and its usage of “the remediation of evil”).

22 See for example the episode with the horse race between a German and an Argentine youth at the beginning of the novel (Bolaño 2004: 36).

23 See also Bolaño’s comparison of Ciudad Juárez with hell in an interview, describing the city as “our curse and our mirror”, “the uneasy mirror of our frustration and of our disgraceful interpretations of freedom and of our desires” (Braithwaite 2006: 69)

24 Bolaño describes the continuity of this mechanism of exclusion in modernity between those who are equipped with civil rights and those who, according to Agamben, live a life described explicitly in 2666 as “naked”; see for example the passage in Bolaño 2004: 338–339.

25 “Por la tarde salió a hacer compras. Entró en una lencería y en una tienda de ropa de mujer y en una zapatería. Esa noche se llevó a Rebeca al hotel y después de ducharse juntos la vistió con un tanga y ligueros y medias negras y un body negro y zapatos de tacón de aguja de color negro y la folló hasta que ella no fue más que un temblor entre sus brazos” (Bolaño 2004: 201).

credo: “An oasis of horror in a desert of boredom”²⁶. Baudelaire’s poem describes the quasi-anthropological condition of modern man in the sense of a transcendence that can never be attained, one which is only momentary and transient and can be had in the form of ecstatic experiences. As Markus Messling has impressively shown, Bolaño’s *2666* calls up a complex of problems through this reference, which has lost none of its currency at the beginning of the twenty-first century; indeed, this problem has become more radical, denying even the hope of salvation through art, as a further rejection of the optimistic idea of a cosmopolitan and ethically grounded form of the aesthetic. “In Bolaño’s *2666*, this world no longer produces order and redemption; the novel transforms the classical foundation of literary ‘modernity’ to the primal scene of and anthropological affinity between aesthetics and violence” (Messling 2014: 205)²⁷. What both Coetzee and Bolaño thereby indicate in principle can be described as a fundamental skepticism against the ideas of (artistic) cosmopolitanism, which are always bound to a utopian ideal. As Pheng Cheah has shown elsewhere, this notion is always exposed to contamination by global inequalities and local power structures because “neither human rights nor cosmopolitan solidarities can escape from being entangled within the field of instrumentality. They are pulled back into and find themselves mired within the imperatives and techniques of globalization at many different levels” (2006: 8). The following discussion explores in greater detail how this aspect is dealt with in Coetzee and Bolaño’s novels in the context of those precarious territories of the Global South, leading at the same time to historical and philosophical implications.

26 Coetzee refers back to this Baudelairean problematic of *spleen* and *idéal*, of reality and ideality, at the beginning of *Disgrace* with an episode from Wordsworth’s Alpine excursion in *The Prelude*, when Lurie reflects, as he looks at Melanie sitting before him: “‘The clouds cleared’, says Wordsworth, the peak was unveiled and we grieved to see it. A strange response, for a traveler to the Alps. Why grieve? Because, he says, a soulless image, a mere image on the retina, has encroached upon what has hitherto been a living thought [...] we cannot live our daily lives in a realm of pure ideas cocooned from sense-experience. The question is not, How can we keep the imagination pure, protected from the onslaughts of reality? The question has to be, Can we find a way for the two to coexist?” (1999: 21–22). See also Vermeulen (2009) on the presence of Wordsworth in Coetzee’s work.

27 See also the similarly situated analysis by Herlinghaus, even though it rests on Benjamin’s concept of the ecstatic when he posits in reference to this connection between global violence and Western modernity that “There is an immanent dimension to modern violence, as it comes objectified in a hidden sphere of the Western ‘political unconscious’, in whose perpetuation the humanist academic tradition plays its part” (2011: 106).

III Spaces of violence, the return of history, and Apollo's defeat

I argued at the outset of this essay that the novels by Coetzee and Bolaño are situated not just in the Global South, but also in the aftermath of the epochal watershed of 1989 that first brought forth the notion of the Global South. Both *Disgrace* and *2666*, as well as *Woes of the True Policeman*, must be read as debates with certain optimistic historical-philosophical views that accompanied the end of historical constellations such as the Cold War or the apartheid regime in South Africa in the years before 2000²⁸. The fact that these texts do not share these optimistic assumptions about the future, whether with a view to their respective periods or to other historical moments, becomes particularly clear in *2666*, when the last part of the novel begins with the end of a specific historical event, namely the First World War, in a discussion between two disabled men: “According to the sergeant, everything was about to change. The war was coming to an end and a new era was about to begin. He answered, as he ate, that nothing would ever change. Not even the two of them had changed, and each had lost a leg” (Bolaño 2008: 638)²⁹. The post-Cold War era may also be unable to live up to its promise as a new phase of global prosperity and conviviality. The novel’s message is that globalization, fundamentally determined by asymmetries, results in new forms of endemic violence and exploitation, as is seen in the devastations in Santa Teresa; these are the signs of an epoch that Óscar Amalfitano describes by saying, “we’re plunged into the vulgar and savage *fin de siècle*” (Bolaño 2012: 36)³⁰.

This pessimistic view of the world and history in Bolaño and Coetzee stems not least from the experiences that their “cultivated” protagonists confront in the precarious, marginal areas of the Global South. David Lurie leaves Cape Town and moves in with his daughter Lucy, who runs a small farm in the Eastern Cape region, while Amalfitano leaves Barcelona for Santa Teresa with his daughter Rosa, where he finds a new position at the university there and then meets the European philologists who are searching for “their” author, Benno von

²⁸ The most prominent – and most trivialized and misunderstood – formulation of this optimism remains without a doubt Fukuyama (1992). See also the reading of *Elizabeth Costello* as a post-apartheid text in Bethlehem (2009) for more on the idea of a radically contingent perception of history in Coetzee.

²⁹ “Según el sargento todo estaba a punto de cambiar. La guerra tocaba a su fin e iba a empezar una nueva época. Él le contestó, mientras comía, que nada iba a cambiar nunca. Ni siquiera ellos, que habían perdido cada uno una pierna, habían cambiado” (Bolaño 2004: 796).

³⁰ “nosotros estamos acobados a un final de siglo vulgar y salvaje” (Bolaño 2011: 62).

Archimboldi, in Santa Teresa. Both regions – northern Mexico and eastern South Africa – are constituted as regions that stand in glaring contrast to the urbane and “civilized” origins of the protagonists, and both texts refer explicitly to the long histories of violence in these regions. The Eastern Cape region is therefore “the most logical setting for a story concerned at its core with entitlement to the land in post-apartheid South Africa. It was in this part of the country that nine frontier Wars were fought between the British and the Xhosa people during the nineteenth century” (Cornwell 2003: 43). And while Jean-Claude Pelletier in 2666 has a view from his apartment into the urban landscape of Paris, on the Place de Breteuil and the UNESCO building as a metaphor of the cosmopolitan and Western idea of globalism and modern urban order (see Bolaño 2004: 31), the critics find themselves within a landscape of the Global South that is fundamentally defined by chaos and precariousness. As the policeman Lalo Cura describes: “Living in this desert [...] is like living at sea. The border between Sonora and Arizona is a chain of haunted islands. The cities and towns are boats. The desert is an endless sea. This is a good place for fish, especially deep-sea fish, not men” (Bolaño 2008: 559)³¹. Confronted with the violence and defenselessness of human life in these zones – as Lurie and his daughter experience when three young black men invade the farm, rape Lucy, beat Lurie, and try to light him on fire – the texts’ protagonists articulate an understanding of history that is utterly antithetical to the idea of a teleological development that is optimistic about the future. Instead, the experience of violence in the present is interpreted in the context of a cyclical understanding of history as the return of a chain of violence-shaped events that stretches back far into the past; as Bolaño writes, “Everything will happen all over again” (Bolaño 2012: 63)³², or later on, “that history, which is a simple whore, has no decisive moments but is a proliferation of instants, brief interludes that vie with one another in monstrousness” (Bolaño 2012: 794)³³. After the incident at the farm, Lurie also has to accept that the moderate optimism he once harbored can no longer hold. “The more things change the more they remain the same. History repeating itself, though in a more modest vein. Perhaps history learned a lesson” (1999: 62), Lurie thinks before the assault. Afterwards, contemplating the country’s history of violence, he asks, “Why should I be allowed to live here

31 “Vivir en este desierto [...] es como vivir en el mar. La frontera entre Sonora y Arizona es un grupo de islas fantasmales o encantadas. Las ciudades y los pueblos son barcos. El desierto es un mar interminable. Éste es un buen sitio para los peces, sobre todo para los peces que viven en las fosas más profundas, no para los hombres” (2004: 698).

32 “Todo se va a volver a repetir” (2011: 97).

33 “[L]a historia, que es una puta sencilla, no tiene momentos determinantes sino que es una proliferación de instantes, de brevedades que compiten entre sí en monstruosidad” (2004: 993).

without paying?” (1999: 158). This history simultaneously invokes an attempt to explain the perpetrators’ behavior: “It was history speaking through them [...] A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors” (1999: 156). The consequences of this experience of violence are expressed not only in the pessimism about history described here, but also in a fundamental doubt as to the possibility of confronting these realities of the Global South with the sublimating instruments of art, religion and language; as Lurie says in light of the assault,

He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa. He is helpless, an Aunt Sally, a figure from a cartoon, a missionary in cassock and topi waiting with clasped hands and upcast eyes while the savages jaw away in their own lingo preparatory to plunging him into their boiling cauldron. Mission work: what has it left behind, that huge enterprise of upliftment? Nothing that he can see. (1999: 95)

The belief in the possibility of naming the horror, and thereby its at least potential banishment, is radically questioned against this background when Lurie admits, “More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa” (1999: 117). In 2666, another reflection on the events in Santa Teresa runs thus:

In the nineteenth century [...] society tended to filter death through the fabric of words. Reading news stories from back then you might get the idea that there was hardly any crime, or that a single murder could throw a whole country into tumult. We didn’t want death in the home, or in our dreams and fantasies, and yet it was a fact that terrible crimes were committed, mutilations, all kinds of rape, even serial killings. [...] Everything was passed through the filter of words, everything trimmed to fit our fear. [...] The Greeks, you might say, invented evil, the Greeks saw the evil inside us all, but testimonies or proofs of this evil no longer move us. They strike us as futile, senseless. (Bolaño 2008: 266)³⁴

This reference to Greek antiquity as a symbol for the possibility of an art that tries to grant form to a contingent experience of the world also surfaces in *Elizabeth Costello* when Elizabeth travels from Australia to an African university, where her

34 “En el siglo XIX [...] la sociedad acostumbraba a colar la muerte por el filtro de las palabras. Si uno lee las crónicas de esa época se diría que casi no había hechos delictivos o que un asesinato era capaz de conmocionar a todo un país. No queríamos tener a la muerte en casa, en nuestros sueños y fantasías, sin embargo es un hecho que se cometían crímenes terribles, descuartizamientos, violaciones de todo tipo, e incluso asesinatos en serie. [...] Todo pasaba por el filtro de las palabras, convenientemente adecuado a nuestro miedo. [...] Los griegos inventaron, por decirlo de alguna manera, el mal, vieron el mal que todos llevamos dentro, pero los testimonios o las pruebas de ese mal ya no nos conmueven, nos parecen fútiles, ininteligibles” (2004: 338).

sister Blanche will receive an honorary doctorate. Elizabeth becomes involved in a discussion with her sister, who is actually a philologist, yet long ago turned away from an academic career. Instead, Blanche has spent her life as Sister Bridget in a mission that cares for people living with AIDS in a hospital in “Zululand”, whereby this form of conversion forms the background for the debate about the possibility of positioning oneself, or engaging in ethical action, in view of the suffering in the world between art on one hand and religion on the other. In the following passage, Blanche justifies her devaluation of Greek ideals in favor of religion by pointing to art’s alleged remoteness from reality as a form of solace in the face of human suffering: “Ordinary people don’t want the Greeks. They don’t want the realm of pure forms. [...] They want someone who suffers like them. Like them and for them” (Coetzee 2004: 144). This complex becomes the specific target in Blanche’s explicit critique of the Apollonian, when she says, “You backed a loser, my dear. If you had picked a different Greek you might have stood a chance. Orpheus instead of Apollo. The ecstatic instead of the rational. [...] Someone who moves among the people, whom they can touch – can put their hand into the side of, feel the wound, smell the blood. But you didn’t, and you lost. You went for the wrong Greeks, Elizabeth” (2004: 145).

Bolaño, in an essay entitled *Literature + illness = illness* and published in *The Insufferable Gaucho*, makes a similar remark when he notes, in a cultural diagnosis of the fall of the Apollonian: “There’s no stopping Dionysus. He has infiltrated the churches and the NGOs, the governments and the royal families, the offices and the shantytowns. Dionysus is to blame for everything. Dionysus rules. [...] Where has that faggot Apollo got to? Apollo is ill, seriously ill” (Bolaño 2010: 129–130)³⁵. It is in this context – the cataclysms of the world and of human life experienced by the novel’s figures in precarious zones in the Global South, such as a hospital in Zululand or the workbenches of unbridled capitalism in northern Mexico – that Coetzee’s Sister Bridget apodictically refers to the possibility, or impossibility, of art or the humanities to develop dimensions of salvation. What alone remains, according to the missionary, is the path to religion: “Well, it cannot be done [...] I am talking only about history, about the record of the humanist enterprise. It cannot be done. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salvatio*” (Coetzee 2004: 133). The fact that this radical yet simple option is not acceptable to the majority of the characters in Coetzee and Bolaño’s novels raises the question of to

35 “Dioniso lo ha invadido todo. Está instalado en las iglesias y en las ONG, en el gobierno y en las casas reales, en las oficinas y en los barrios de chabolas. La culpa de todo la tiene Dioniso. El vencedor es Dioniso. [...] ¿Y dónde diablos está el maricón de Apolo? Apolo está enfermo, grave” (Bolaño 2003: 142–143).

what degree this fundamental doubt in the capacity of literature and history, as symbolic systems of producing meaning out of human existence, are developed as possible alternatives beyond the flight into religion or an all-encompassing nihilism.

IV The precarious state of the art: *down-to-earth readings or a cosmopolitanism of fragility*

What defines the confrontations staged by Coetzee and Bolaño between traditional Western forms of order and the ascription of meaning – be it in the form of art, the humanities or history – with the specific and fragile realities of life in the Global South is therefore the recognition of the radical inadequacy of such ideas or their postulated cosmopolitan and universalistic effectiveness. Instead, these novels develop the specific and multiple material asymmetries in human living conditions in the context of contemporary globalization, as becomes clear in *Disgrace* and *2666* with regard to questions about the rule of law. So, for example, Óscar Amalfitano asks the U.S. journalist Oscar Fate to take his daughter Rosa to the USA because of the murders of women in Santa Teresa. Due to Rosa's Spanish citizenship (in contrast to the thousands of "illegal" immigrants from Mexico and Central America), this is possible and simple. Similarly, David Lurie tells his daughter Lucy, who has Dutch citizenship, to leave South Africa behind due to its lack of a functioning constitutional state and its endemic disorder and danger. Lucy, however, becomes a figure that takes a decided stand against this functional pattern of the cosmopolitan, of which Bolaño's European literature professors also make use when they quickly leave Mexico after the failure of their search for Archimboldi because of the threatening conditions there. "He is here, he won't disappear in a puff of smoke, he is a fact of life" (Coetzee 1999: 208), Lucy tells her father with regard to her neighbor Petrus, who offers Lucy protection (after the attack at the farm, which he is suspected of initiating) if she will marry him. "Petrus is not offering me a church wedding followed by a honeymoon on the Wild Coast. He is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game" (1999: 203), says Lucy by way of summary, laying bare in a painful way the problematic forms of negotiating coexistence beyond the comforts of cosmopolitan ideals. The inadequacy of thinking through these conflicts and precarious modes of existence by means of abstractions is made explicit when, in an argument between Lurie and his daughter about her decision to remain on the farm, he says, "Is it some form of private salvation you

are trying to work out? Do you hope you can expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present?”, to what Lucie answers, “No. You keep misreading me. Guilt and salvation are abstractions. I don’t act in terms of abstractions. Until you make an effort to see that, I can’t help you” (Coetzee 1999: 112). The confrontation enshrined in this dialog, between a radically contingent reality (that Lucy has long ago learned to accept through her experiences in the Eastern Cape) and the invalidity of abstract ideas (as she has internalized her father in his existence in the protected discursive and vital spaces of his life as a professor in Cape Town), leads to a successive undermining of any presumably stable forms of subjectivity or other categories of “knowledge about the world”; this is staged in the figure of Lurie as well as Elizabeth Costello and, in a slightly different way, in Bolaño. In this context, Philipp Dickinson has written of “proto-ethical moments” in Coetzee’s novel, in the sense of “moments that resist the temporality of narrative while they instantaneously puncture Lurie’s ego and disarm his conception of himself” (2013: 11)³⁶. This becomes manifest in the text when Lurie slowly begins to give up the position of sovereignty that defines his existence in Cape Town in favor of a life in which his experiences of precariousness, and the inadequacy of how he comes to terms with the contingent, are expressed in modified patterns of action and reflection. For example, he begins working at an animal care facility run by his neighbor Bev, a woman he used to ridicule. The facility puts dogs to sleep and takes care of their proper disposal, which Lurie reflects upon as follows:

Curious that a man as selfish as he should be offering himself to the service of dead dogs. There must be other, more productive ways of giving oneself to the world, or to an idea of the world. [...] But there are other people to do these things – the animal welfare thing, the social rehabilitation thing, even the Byron thing. He saves the honour of corpses because there is no one else stupid enough to do it. That is what he is becoming: stupid, daft, wrong-headed. (Coetzee 1999: 146)

The idea formulated here by Lurie (and also discussed in *Elizabeth Costello*) of *caritas* (beyond the Christian context) as a form of relating with the world becomes readable here as a radical questioning of, or as an absence of, preconceived assumptions about the world and other people³⁷, with which Lurie previously

³⁶ Elizabeth Costello also finds herself in a situation of uncertainty regarding her own positions, brought about by her experiences in Africa when she believes that a state of physical weakness belies a cause deeper than the mere stresses of her journey: “But is that the explanation? Is a two-day stomach upset enough to cause a faint?” (Coetzee 2004: 143).

³⁷ Regarding the specific “non-human dimension” of this cosmopolitanism in Coetzee, see also Hallemeier 2013a: 123–152.

overcame problematic experiences of difference, in the sense of an “unimaginative sympathy,” as Sam Durrant has described with a view to Coetzee’s work: “This failure [of sympathy] is the precondition for a new kind of ethical and literary relation, a relation grounded precisely in the acknowledgment of one’s ignorance of the other, on the recognition of the other’s fundamental alterity” (2006: 120–121). In this context, art and literature also no longer function as a medium for cultivating what Nussbaum calls the “sympathetic imagination”. Instead, they offer an opportunity to reflect on the *unlearning* of ostensibly secure cosmopolitan assumptions about coexistence and the connections between affect and art. This does not however dismiss the possibility of a cosmopolitan idea of conviviality; it merely questions, in its seamless applicability, the inescapable experience of difference, as Hallemeier underscores in her reading: “In its representation of the globalized ‘new’ South Africa, Coetzee’s *Disgrace* imagines cosmopolitan community as that which is provincial in character and centered on the daily task of living with difference” (2013b: 109).

Both Coetzee and Bolaño’s reflections, undertaken from the vantage point of the Global South regarding the conditions of global and local coexistence, become fully legible in the sense of a complex representation of “critical cosmopolitanism” (see Delanty 2012)³⁸ or “cosmopolitanism from below” (see Kurusawa 2004). If the novels intentionally depict the confrontation of an allegedly civilized Western subject with an “other” – as was the case with the Pakistani taxi driver in *2666*, or the neighbor Petrus in *Disgrace* – and present subjects who cannot be integrated smoothly into cosmopolitan discourse, it is no accident then that figures such as Lucy, or the numerous Mexican women in Bolaño, are female figures from whose perspective issues a problematization of the idea of the sovereign and primarily male subject; because, as Elizabeth Costello’s sister Blanche says, “it is women who live closest to the ground” (Coetzee 2004: 145). This “proximity to the ground” becomes a subject of inquiry in the meta-reflections of these texts on the role of literature and the genre of the novel itself. The questioning of the significance of “narrative imagination” for the cultivation of empathetic cosmopolitan subjects goes hand-in-hand with a critique of the genre, paradoxically in the medium of the novel itself, which attempts, as Peter Vermeulen has shown, “[to] mobilize the conviction that the novel can no longer assume its authoritative cultural role” and that instead, it embarks upon a search for a possibility, “for the exploration of a weaker aesthetic mission, which is more attuned to forms of life that are no longer sovereign and centered, and to forms of affect that are not yet codified and controlled” (2015: 12). “I do not need to consult novels [...] to know

38 For further discussion of Delanty see also the contribution by César Domínguez in this book.

what pettiness, what baseness, what cruelty human beings are capable of. That is where we start, all of us. We are fallen creatures” (Coetzee 2004: 128). Blanche emphasizes this scrutiny of the novel as a cosmopolitan and affective medium of contemplation. More than just the “end of the novel,” as Vermeulen proclaims, it appears that Coetzee and Bolaño are concerned with a critique of the idea of the novel (or literature as such) as a form of transcendence that – in analogy to the fall of the humanities – can no longer be upheld in the contemporary world. In *Disgrace*, this phenomenon finds expression in the image of Lurie when he gives up his project – an opera about Byron’s Italian journeys – in favor of a kind of corruption of this idea as a tinkering about on a toy banjo: “It is not the erotic that is calling to him after all, nor the elegiac, but the comic. He is in the opera neither as Teresa nor as Byron nor even as some blending of the two: he is held in the music itself, in the flat, tinny slap of the banjo strings, the voice that strains to soar away from the ludicrous instrument but is continually reined back, like a fish on a line” (Coetzee 1999: 184). This stance of self-ironic deconstruction also finds similar form in *2666* in the figure of a mystic named Florita Almada who appears on various television programs in Santa Teresa and is also presented as an insatiable reader of any type of books:

And she read every single one, and from each, without exception, she drew some lesson. [...] any kind of reading that providence placed within her reach, and she learned something each time, sometimes very little, but something was left behind, like a gold nugget in a trash heap, or, to refine the metaphor, said Florita, like a doll lost and found in a heap of somebody else’s trash. Anyway, she wasn’t an educated person, at least she didn’t have what you might call a classical education. (Bolaño 2008: 430–431)³⁹

Florita functions in the novel as a counter-figure to the European philologists as bearers of this “classic education”, the value of which, as we have seen, becomes absurd as it is at no time capable of “reading” the complex connections of the surrounding world in a reasonable way. Florita, for her part, appears as a representative of a kind of “down-to-earth” reading who knows how to position her eclectic readings in practical life contexts while also making a series of “cosmopolitan” statements about the principle illegibility and complexity of the world,

³⁹ “Y ella no dejó ni uno sin leer y de todos, sin excepción, extrajo alguna enseñanza. [...] cualquier tipo de lectura que la divina providencia pusiera al alcance de su mano, y de todos ellos aprendió algo, a veces muy poco, pero algo quedaba, como una pepita de oro en una montaña de basura, o para afinar la metáfora, decía Florita, como una muñeca perdida y reencontrada en una montaña de basura desconocida. En fin, ella no era una persona instruida, al menos no tenía lo que se dice una educación clásica” (Bolaño 2004: 539).

which stands in opposition to the European cosmopolitans who remain convinced of their rationality. This serves Bolaño when he articulates his own ethical dimension of literature, writing: “To get a glimpse of other landscapes, which, though they might seem familiar, when you looked carefully were different [...]. Every hundred feet the world changes, said Florita Almada. The idea that some places are the same as others is a lie. The world is a kind of tremor” (Bolaño 2008: 430)⁴⁰. While the European philologists are incapable of seeing through a world that is constantly changing, Florita Almada embodies a *cosmopolitanism of fragility* that stems from the brittleness of her existence in Santa Teresa and is, as it were, expanded in radically eclectic readings that find expression in the novel in Florita’s discourse registers of the “popular”, meaning ironic, and yet also “grounded”, reality of life.

In Coetzee and Bolaño, literature functions as a medium shimmering between melancholy, comedy and madness, a phenomenon far removed from the idea of a rational decoding of a chaotic world, and of the novel as a medium of smooth cosmopolitan affect cultivation which, aware of its own shortcomings, perpetuates a belief in the possibility of a fragile power of transformation – at the price, of course, of being exposed to the danger of going insane during this endeavor of literary debate with the world⁴¹. This threat is expressed in Lurie’s description of himself as a “mad old man who sits among the dogs singing to himself” (Coetzee 1999: 212) at the end of the novel, or in one of Bolaño’s numerous monologues by Amalfitano, a character who strolls about at the margins of madness, when he makes the following remark about the essence of fiction:

Anyway, these ideas or feelings or ramblings had their satisfactions. They turned the pain of others into memories of one’s own. They turned pain, which is natural, enduring, and eternally triumphant, into personal memory, which is human, brief, and eternally elusive.

⁴⁰ “Para fijarse en otros paisajes, que aunque parecían el mismo, si uno los miraba bien, con los ojos bien abiertos, resultaban a la postre muy distintos de los paisajes de Villa Pesqueira. Cada cien metros el mundo cambia, decía Florita Almada. Eso de que hay lugares que son iguales a otros es mentira. El mundo es como un temblor” (Bolaño 2004: 538).

⁴¹ See also Coetzee’s remarks on insanity in Erasmus in Coetzee (1996), as well as Stockhammer (2016) on the *philo-a-logischen* moments in Coetzee and Herlinghaus on the meaning of insanity in 2666, when he writes, “What crystallizes are sudden perceptions, images linked to aspects of possible distortions, or divinations of the improbable, but there are no coherent links whatsoever between a dramatic logic and (the motives or affects of) human behavior. The artistic tension arises between particular images and a caustic yet nonlinear narration. If madness is an issue, it is not backed by a respective set of behavioral or dramatic patterns, nor is it focalized in an introspective way. It is both a latent possibility in an insane world, and [...] a rare dispositif” (2013: 197).

They turned a brutal story of injustice and abuse, an incoherent howl with no beginning or end, into a neatly structured story in which suicide was always held out as a possibility. They turned flight into freedom, even if freedom meant no more than the perpetuation of flight. They turned chaos into order, even if it was at the cost of what is commonly known as sanity. (Bolaño 2008: 189)⁴²

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⁴² "Estas ideas o estas sensaciones o estos desvaríos, por otra parte, tenían su lado satisfactorio. Convertía el dolor de los otros en la memoria de uno. Convertía el dolor, que es largo y natural y que siempre vence, en memoria particular, que es humana y breve y que siempre se escabulle. Convertía un relato bárbaro de injusticias y abusos, un ulular incoherente sin principio ni fin, en una historia bien estructurada en donde siempre cabía la posibilidad de suicidarse. Convertía la fuga en libertad, incluso si la libertad sólo servía para seguir huyendo. Convertía el caos en orden, aunque fuera al precio de lo que comúnmente se conoce como cordura" (Bolaño 2004: 243–244).

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2: **Book Markets**

César Domínguez

Literatura mundial en biblioburro. Un caso procomún de circulación literaria

Es corriente incluir entre los factores que atestiguan el renovado interés por la literatura mundial la publicación en apenas cuatro años de tres antologías en Estados Unidos, a saber, *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* (2001), *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature* (2003) y *The Longman Anthology of World Literature* (2004). Según ha indicado Sarah Lawall, una de las mejores conocedoras del fenómeno antológico mundial, “[o]ne element that seems often missing from critical discussions is an awareness of the dynamic interrelationships among teachers, editors, publishers, and institutional practice that go into the creation of an academic anthology” (2004: 80). Sin lugar a dudas, una dimensión notable de esas interrelaciones dinámicas soslayadas es la lucha editorial por un nicho de mercado y el previsto beneficio económico que compense la enorme inversión en derechos de reproducción y traducción que estos tres gigantes editoriales del mundo anglófono, especializados en textos universitarios, habían realizado. Puede decirse, parafraseando a Cary Nelson (2004: 170), que el capitalismo tuvo la última palabra al promover la circulación de textos literarios de alrededor del mundo en los campus estadounidenses.

Esta desatención por la dimensión material del fenómeno antológico mundial contrasta fuertemente con la importancia que se le reconoce a esa misma dimensión a la hora de explicar qué es la literatura mundial o, más específicamente, a la hora de desarrollar una de las definiciones de literatura mundial que más fortuna ha conocido, debida a David Damrosch. “I take world literature to encompass”, afirma Damrosch (2003: 4), “all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language”. Mientras que en la propuesta de Damrosch el factor que promueve la circulación parece ser fundamentalmente de índole estética, otros investigadores se han esforzado por desentrañar las fuerzas económicas e institucionales que favorecen u obstaculizan la circulación literaria. Sin excepción, estos estudios se han limitado al llamado mercado global del libro, por lo que el alcance de sus conclusiones se ve seriamente limitado por el etnocentrismo y presentismo de sus puntos de partida.

El objetivo del presente ensayo es analizar un caso de circulación literaria que no puede explicarse desde una perspectiva economicista. Para ello, pasaré

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revista en un primer apartado a las distintas elaboraciones de que ha sido objeto la propuesta de Damrosch acerca de la literatura mundial en términos de circulación. El interés de este ejercicio reside, por una parte, en que no se ha efectuado hasta el momento y, por otra, en que hará visible el “mercadocentrismo” que caracteriza todas estas propuestas a pesar de sus distintas procedencias disciplinarias. A continuación, en un segundo apartado se abordará un estudio de caso que desafía la visión economicista de la circulación: el Biblioburro. Con su análisis se persigue descentrar la circulación literaria de una economía del beneficio y, en última instancia, someter la idea de literatura mundial a una crítica semejante a la que, en relación con la globalización y el cosmopolitismo, ha generado las nociones de “globalización desde abajo” (Falk 1993 y 1997) y “cosmopolitismo crítico” (Delanty 2012). Finalmente, seguirá una serie de conclusiones y propuestas de futuras vías de investigación.

1 La circulación: un factor definidor de la literatura mundial

Se ha generalizado una lectura del libro seminal de David Damrosch *What is World Literature?* que concluye que en él no se propone una única definición de literatura mundial, sino hasta cuatro definiciones distintas, algunas de ellas con sus respectivas especificaciones, cuatro definiciones de las que aquella que incluye el factor de la circulación se ofrece en primer lugar:

1. “I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language” (Damrosch 2003: 4);
 - 1.1. “a work only has an *effective* life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture” (Damrosch 2003: 4);
 - 1.2. “world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation” (Damrosch 2003: 5);
2. “world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of [...] reading” (Damrosch 2003: 5);
 - 2.1. “World literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time” (Damrosch 2003: 281);
3. “World literature is writing that gains in translation” (Damrosch 2003: 281);
4. “World literature is an elliptical refraction of national literatures” (Damrosch 2003: 281).

Esta lectura se ve cuestionada en el apartado de conclusiones de *What Is World Literature?* (2003), donde se enumeran solo tres definiciones, resultado de la desaparición de aquella que incluía el factor de la circulación. Pero, como sostiene el propio Damrosch, estas tres definiciones son “family resemblances” de las “different forms of world literature circulating today” (Damrosch 2003: 281), de manera que la propuesta de Damrosch debería leerse de la siguiente manera. El factor *sine qua non* de la literatura mundial es la circulación. Todas las obras que circulan más allá de su contexto original presentan uno o más de estos tres rasgos en común: 1) refracción elíptica de la literatura nacional, 2) ganancia en traducción, 3) modo de lectura que consiste en un “compromiso distante con mundos más allá de nuestro lugar y tiempo”¹.

La propuesta de Damrosch debe situarse, además, por contraste con respecto a las definiciones hasta el momento existentes de literatura mundial, cuya propuesta vendría a reemplazar, y que él reduce a estas tres: 1) “an established body of *classics*”, 2) “an evolving canon of *masterpieces*” y 3) “multiple *windows on the world*” (Damrosch 2003: 15). Hay dos elementos en esta enumeración que, en lo que a mí se me alcanza, no han atraído la atención de los críticos. Primero: Damrosch en ningún momento explicita de dónde proceden estas tres definiciones y/o quiénes serían sus proponentes más destacados. Y, segundo: Damrosch no recoge la tradicional definición ternaria de literatura mundial tal y como había sido propuesta en primer lugar por la “escuela eslava” de literatura comparada y, singularmente, por el comparatista eslovaco Dionýz Ďurišin. En un libro de idéntico título al de Damrosch, pero once años anterior, *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (1992), en el que se sintetizan investigaciones individuales y colectivas de tres décadas previas, Ďurišin identifica así esas tres definiciones: 1) el conjunto de literaturas nacionales o unidades histórico-literarias análogas, más o menos mecánicamente yuxtapuestas, 2) la selección de los mejores autores, obras y procesos, generalmente elegidos según el valor actual de la situación literaria particular y 3) fenómenos literarios entre los que existen relaciones y afinidades mutuas y, por lo tanto, están en cierta forma genética o tipológicamente condicionados [mi traducción]². Como se puede observar, la única coincidencia se da entre la definición que Damrosch sitúa en primer lugar (un cuerpo

1 Discrepo, por tanto, de Andrei Terian (2012) cuando entiende que Damrosch limita su definición de literatura mundial a esos tres posibles rasgos en común.

2 1) “súbor národných literatúr alebo analogických literárnohistorických jednotiek viac-menej mechanicky zoradených vedľa seba”, 2) “výber najlepších autorov diel a procesov, volených spravidla z hľadiska aktuálnej hodnoty konkrétnej literárnej situácie” y 3) “literárne javy, medzi ktorými sú vzájomné vzťahy a súvislosti, a teda sú istým spôsobom, geneticky a typologicky podmienené” (Ďurišin 1992: 26).

establecido de clásicos) y la segunda definición recogida por Đurišin (selección de las mejores obras).

Por lo que a las reacciones que la propia definición de literatura mundial por parte de Damrosch ha suscitado, el hecho de que se hayan dirigido hacia los rasgos comunes que las obras mundiales pueden tener invita a pensar que dichos rasgos han sido situados mayoritariamente en un mismo nivel de jerarquía y considerados independientes con respecto al factor de la circulación, ya que este no ha sido objeto de esas reacciones. Sin embargo, y si mi lectura de la propuesta de Damrosch es correcta, la crítica de cualquiera de esos tres rasgos comunes debería conllevar de forma inmediata el cuestionamiento del factor del nivel jerárquico superior: la circulación.

De esas críticas destacan la esgrimida por Emily Apter en *Against World Literature* (2013) con respecto a la ganancia traductológica de la literatura mundial, la de Andrei Terian en “Reading World Literature” (2012) con respecto a la refracción elíptica, la de Pheng Cheah en *What is a World?* (2016) con respecto a la identificación de la mundialidad con la circulación global y la de B. Venkat Mani en *Recoding World Literature* (2017) con respecto al modo de lectura en cuanto compromiso distante³. Para los propósitos del presente trabajo, sin embargo, interesa destacar que el factor *sine qua non* de la literatura mundial para Damrosch —la circulación— no ha sido rechazado, como he anunciado. Bien al contrario, ha sido aceptado unánimemente y suscitado nuevas elaboraciones. Aquí me centraré en las dos que considero más relevantes, debidas a Gisèle Sapiro (2016) y B. Venkat Mani (2017), junto a la crítica más interesante para los propósitos de este ensayo, debida a Pheng Cheah (2016)⁴.

En el caso de Sapiro, su formación anuncia desde qué óptica se aborda la cuestión de la circulación mundial. De hecho, su trabajo se abre con la invocación a “Les Conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées”, un trabajo de Pierre Bourdieu originalmente publicado en 1990. Cabe advertir que el objetivo

³ De las tres subespecificaciones definitorias de la circulación en cuanto factor determinante de la literatura mundial, con seguridad la forma de lectura en cuanto compromiso distante es la más ambigua; de ahí que haya dado pie a propuestas críticas que concuerdan con este rasgo, pero por diferentes razones, como, por ejemplo, las debidas a Chakravorty (2014: 222–223) y Văsieș (2015: 106–108).

⁴ La propuesta de Sapiro no es propiamente una crítica de la definición de Damrosch, sino que la toma como punto de partida: “If we consider world literature as referring to those works that circulate beyond their national borders (Damrosch), then we have to ask how these works circulate” (Sapiro 2016: 81). De ahí que no la incluya en el listado de posiciones críticas junto a Apter, Terian, Cheah y Mani, pero sí entre las elaboraciones que, junto a Mani, persiguen profundizar en la propuesta de Damrosch.

de Bourdieu no es la circulación de obras literarias, sino la circulación de ideas como determinante de la instauración de un internacionalismo científico. Esta circulación, según Bourdieu, está afectada por una serie de factores estructurales que generan interpretaciones “erróneas”. Aunque presentados en plural (*un certain nombre de facteurs structuraux*), en realidad se trata de un único factor: “les textes circulent sans leur contexte”, de lo que se sigue que dichos textos son reinterpretados “en fonction de la structure du champ de réception” (Bourdieu 2002: 4), con la subespecificación de que “les auteurs étrangers sont souvent l’objet d’usages très instrumentalistes” (Bourdieu 2002: 5). Muy relevante es asimismo la lista propuesta por Bourdieu (2002: 4) de operaciones sociales activas en la transferencia desde un campo cultural a otro: 1) *sélection*, 2) *marquage* y 3) *lecture*.

Si se contrasta la propuesta de Bourdieu con la de Damrosch (aunque este no cita ninguno de sus trabajos), es notoria la coincidencia entre el principio bourdieuano según el cual “la lecture étrangère peut parfois avoir une liberté que n’a pas la lecture nationale” (Bourdieu 2002: 4) y el concepto de *elliptical refraction* de Damrosch. Por otra parte, las operaciones sociales de selección, marcado y lectura ya contaban con una asentada tradición crítica en los ámbitos de la teoría interliteraria, la literatura comparada y los estudios de recepción, respectivamente; aún así, algunos autores parecen aplicarlas al ámbito de la circulación literaria mundial *ex novo*. Así, Sapiro (2016: 82) sostiene que la circulación está mediada por “material means, such as books, newspapers, journals, and the internet, or by oral diffusion in public or private settings”, de lo que se sigue la necesidad imperiosa de un enfoque sociológico (*sociological approach*; Sapiro 2016: 81). Presentada en esos términos, dicha necesidad resulta cuanto menos sorprendente si se toma en consideración que el estudio de la mediación —aquello que Paul Van Tieghem denominara ya en 1931 el estudio de los *intermédiaires*— constituye uno de los dominios disciplinarios más antiguos de la literatura comparada.

Sapiro (2016: 82) reemplaza el factor estructural propuesto por Bourdieu por cuatro factores —político, económico, cultural y social— que pueden favorecer o entorpecer “the circulation of symbolic goods in a particular context”. Advierte que estos cuatro factores se hallan mutuamente implicados, si bien uno puede prevalecer y subordinar a los restantes. En su tratamiento individualizado de cada uno de estos factores no se detecta ninguna aportación realmente novedosa, ya que han sido objeto de investigación por parte de la literatura comparada en general y de la traductología en particular desde antiguo. Así, entre los factores políticos se incluye la censura y el sistema internacional de copyright, entre los económicos las industrias editoriales y sus redes de distribución, entre los culturales la traducción y entre los sociales los premios

literarios. El entramado de estos factores que favorece o entorpece la circulación literaria determina que la transferencia cultural opere por “isomorfismo”, que Sapiro (2016: 82) elabora a partir de la teoría neo-institucional de Paul J. DiMaggio y Walter W. Powell, o por “diferenciación”, dos mecanismos que, una vez más, habían sido descritos desde antiguo ya por la literatura comparada, al menos por su “escuela eslava”. Para volver al caso paradigmático de Đurišin, piénsese cómo su cuestionamiento de los principios franceses sobre el contacto literario dio lugar precisamente a sus propuestas sobre las formas de recepción “integradora” y “diferenciadora”. Aquello que sí constituye una novedad por parte de Sapiro es la vinculación entre sus modos de transferencia cultural y los dos modelos evolutivos de Franco Moretti, “onda” y “árbol”. “While the mechanisms favoring isomorphism translate into homogenizing waves”, sostiene Sapiro (2016: 94), “the differentiation process induces offshoots that shape trees”.

Para Cheah, las propuestas debidas a Damrosch, Pascale Casanova y Moretti comparten una visión de la literatura mundial elaborada sobre una analogía con las dinámicas de mercado, de forma que promueven una “negative freedom” (la liberación de las restricciones nacionales por parte de las obras que alcanzan un estatuto de mundialidad) e identifican el *mundo* con el *globo*, reduciendo al primero a un “spatial object produced by the material processes of globalization” (Cheah 2016: 28). En el caso específico de Damrosch, Cheah (2016: 29–30) señala que el acto de lectura es el principal agente en el incremento exponencial del significado literario que tiene lugar con la circulación de la obra a través de la categoría meramente espacio-geográfica que es el mundo en esta aproximación sociológica a la literatura mundial.

El libro de 2017 de Mani, especialista en literatura alemana, comparada y mundial, reelabora y desarrolla argumentos expuestos cinco años antes y representa, sin lugar a dudas, el intento más decidido de dotar de contenido a la circulación como factor definidor de la literatura mundial a través del concepto de “bibliomigración” (*bibliomigrancy*). La hipótesis central de sus trabajos de 2012 y 2017 es la siguiente: “an engagement with the materiality of literary circulation sheds new light on the conceptual and ideological creation and proliferation of world literature” (Mani 2017: 12). Esta hipótesis se concreta en la noción de “bibliomigración”, que Mani (2017: 33) define así: “Bibliomigrancy is the term I use for the physical and virtual migration of books. It encompasses multiple modes of movement of literary narratives in original languages or translation. Bibliomigrancy contributes to the worlding of literature, the making of the catalog of the imaginary global bookmobile”.

“Bibliomigración” debe entenderse pues como el concepto equivalente a la “circulación” de Damrosch o Sapiro, pero con una diferencia sustancial, a saber,

Mani introduce el problema de la “agencia” (*agency*)⁵. En un trabajo de 2012, uno de cuyos objetivos era problematizar el presentismo corriente en las investigaciones sobre literatura mundial, yo mismo había defendido que “definitions of world literature based upon circulation should not overlook the issues of historical context, agency, and the ‘book’s’ physicality. Otherwise, circulation will be at best an empty and metaphorical signifier” (Domínguez 2012: 37). A partir de este postulado (Mani 2017: 33–34), Mani afirma:

I claim that beyond the author, the translator, the academic critic, or the classroom readers, a plethora of actors, institutions, and media plays an important role in the construction of world literature and its readers. These include librarians, editors, publishers, literary magazines, book fairs, special interest groups, government censors and promoters, and more recently technological innovations such as electronic reading devices and digital libraries. (2017: 15)

Para Mani, el paradigma de la agencia en la circulación literaria mundial es la biblioteca, física o virtual, real o metafórica: “libraries have acted as social and political agents of collection and dissemination of cultural power” (Mani 2017: 17).

2 Una biblioteca itinerante: el biblioburro en Magdalena

En abril de 1997 Luis Humberto Soriano Bohórquez, licenciado en literatura, maestro y tendero, fundó la Biblioteca Rural Itinerante “Biblioburro”, así llamada porque la distribución de libros durante los fines de semana a través del municipio colombiano de La Gloria se realiza a lomos de la burra Alfa y el burro Beto. El proyecto se inició con su propia colección privada de 70 libros (Romero 2008), fundamentalmente de tipo técnico (matemáticas, medicina, historia, geografía) para alcanzar en 2008 unos 4.800 ejemplares. Este notabilísimo incremento de los fondos tuvo lugar cuando, tras oír en la radio a Juan Gossaín leer fragmentos de su novela *La balada de María Abdala*, Soriano solicitó a la emisora el envío

5 Nótese que Cheah, en relación con la propuesta de Damrosch, dirige sus críticas a una comprensión de la literatura mundial en términos de las dinámicas de mercado y, en consecuencia, a la confusión del *mundo* con el *globo*, al tiempo que, sorprendentemente, acepta que la lectura sea el agente de mundialización: “It is important to note that for Damrosch, [...] the main agency for this potentially infinite capitalization of or exponential increase in literary meaning is the act of reading” (Cheah 2016: 29).

de un ejemplar para darlo a conocer a través del Biblioburro, petición a la que los radioyentes respondieron con la donación de miles de ejemplares de diversos libros. Más recientemente, Soriano ha fundado una biblioteca en La Gloria y planea dotar al Biblioburro de conexión wifi.

En *The Library at Night*, Alberto Manguel (2008: 229) atribuye al Ministerio colombiano de Cultura la organización de bibliotecas itinerantes, cuando en realidad las administraciones de Andrés Pastrana Arango y Álvaro Uribe Vélez han reconocido a Soriano como creador de esta iniciativa y el gobierno colombiano la ha hecho suya únicamente como agente colaborador, a través de la Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social, con la ONG colombiana Fundalectura (CVNE 2008) en una réplica del modelo de Soriano que ha dado lugar a los llamados “morrales de lectura”. Así, en las *Memorias* del Ministerio de Cultura (2013: 50) de los Encuentros Nacionales de Educación Artística en Tuluá en mayo de 2013 aquellos proyectos que constituyen un ejemplo del papel transformador de las artes fueron objeto de reconocimiento oficial, incluido el Biblioburro, del cual se dice que fue fundado por Soriano “[t]ras observar el poder transformador de la lectura”.

Con ocasión de una entrevista en mayo de 2001 con una bibliotecaria itinerante no identificada, Manguel (2008: 230) relata la siguiente anécdota acerca de un libro no devuelto:

According to one librarian, the books are always safely accounted for. “I know of only one instance in which a book was not returned”, she told me. “We had taken, along with the usual practical titles, a Spanish translation of the *Iliad*. When the time came to exchange it, the villagers refused to give it back. We decided to make them a present of it, but we asked them why they wanted to keep that particular title. They explained that Homer’s story exactly reflected their own: it told of a war-torn country in which mad gods willfully decide the fate of humans who never know exactly what the fighting is about, or when they will be killed.

Ciertamente, es una anécdota reveladora en términos de las discusiones acerca de la noción de literatura mundial. Gracias a los servicios prestados por las bibliotecas itinerantes, un grupo de lectores del bosque tropical –o, más probablemente, un grupo de oyentes en torno a un lector en voz alta– se apropia (todo lo contrario de una lectura mundial entendida como “compromiso distante”) de una traducción al castellano de un clásico de la literatura “mundial” (las tres antologías Norton, Bedford y Longman concuerdan en incluir fragmentos de la *Iliada* en traducción al inglés) por entender que ese libro es contemporáneo suyo al describir cómo su tierra y ellos mismos se hallan en constante peligro al albur de la confrontación entre el ejército colombiano, la guerrilla y las fuerzas paramilitares (todo lo contrario, pues, de una lectura mundial entendida como aquella

interesada por “mundos *más allá* de nuestro lugar y tiempo” o como una “refracción elíptica”).

Nos enfrentamos, por tanto, a un cronotopo dislocado entre el Aracataca global del Macondo mágico-realista y el Magdalena factual destruido por la guerra y los desplazamientos masivos de población en el que un “biblioburrista” – ahora sí Luis Soriano – perdió los ejemplares de un manual ilustrado de educación sexual y de *Como agua para chocolate*, de Laura Esquivel, al no serle devueltos por los lectores, de *Brida*, de Paulo Coelho, al serle robado por unos bandidos por no poder hacerse con dinero, y de su pierna izquierda en 2012, que le fue amputada tras caer de su burro en una vereda costeña mientras llovía (Polo 2012). Al igual que acontece con la ampliación de sus fondos bibliotecarios, Soriano ha podido hacerse con una prótesis gracias a campañas benéficas de micro-mecenazgo.

Manguel incluye la red colombiana de bibliotecas itinerantes en el capítulo “The Library as Island” como ejemplo de práctica cosmopolita, que vincula a una actitud tecnológicamente ecléctica: “Being a cosmopolitan today may mean being eclectic, refusing to exclude one technology for the sake of another” (Manguel 2008: 229). Por mi parte, entiendo que el problema no se limita a una cuestión de opciones tecnológicas y por ello, siguiendo la propuesta terminológica de Gerard Delanty, prefiero hablar de “cosmopolitismo crítico” (*critical cosmopolitanism*) a la hora de comprender el significado del biblioburro. A diferencia de usos previos de este concepto por parte Paul Rabinow y Walter D. Mignolo, Delanty considera el cosmopolitismo crítico como una variante específica del cosmopolitismo que se caracteriza por “the transformative potential within the present”. “Cosmopolitanism as a normative critique refers to phenomena that are generally in tension with their social context”, sostiene Delanty (2012: 41), “which they seek to transform”. La noción de “cosmopolitismo crítico” viene, así, a incidir en que el cosmopolitismo no es un enfoque normativo o interpretativo que pueda practicarse sin referencia a la realidad social. El biblioburro es un proyecto de apertura hacia el mundo, pero también de apertura de la realidad local (el ejercicio que Soriano denomina “dejar atrás”) sin margen para el eclecticismo entre lo impreso o lo digital⁶. De hecho, en este caso lo impreso se repliega sobre cauces de circulación que una globalización desde arriba califica de anacrónicos, como son la circulación oral y la lectura colectiva. El biblioburro representa un modelo

⁶ Soriano combina las funciones de bibliotecario, dinamizador y pedagogo. El ejercicio de “dejar atrás” consiste en que los niños congregados en torno al biblioburro presenten un texto redactado por ellos mismos en el que recogen sus vivencias en un contexto violento. Tras su lectura en voz alta, Soriano invita a “dejar atrás” esas experiencias traumáticas.

de autogestión y organización comunitaria que sitúa en el centro de su quehacer la importancia de los procesos formativos en contextos de violencia. En términos de Delanty (2012: 45), es un ejemplo de cosmopolitismo crítico, ya que estima que el mundo social posee posibilidades transformadoras situadas en el presente y orientadas hacia el futuro, pero implementadas desde abajo, y no por las elites. En palabras de Soriano, a estas comunidades rurales “el Estado no les ofrece las herramientas” (Núñez Escobar 2016: s/p).

3 Consideraciones finales

Sapiro (2016: 85) contempla una circulación literaria que depende de las industrias editoriales y sus redes de distribución, de tal forma que el factor económico se impone sobre los restantes, hasta el extremo de ejercer una “censura comercial” (*commercial censorship*; Sapiro 2016: 87). Cheah (2016: 36), por su parte, en su crítica a las aproximaciones sociológicas a la literatura mundial centradas en la circulación, limita las fuerzas sociales responsables de la circulación exclusivamente a las dinámicas de mercado. Mani (2017: 33), finalmente, defiende una nueva genealogía de la literatura mundial que dé cuenta de aquellos espacios lingüístico-culturales “in which the circulation of commercial capital follows radically different trajectories than in affluent book production centers in Europe or North America”, pero en el marco aún limitado por una relación de producción y consumo (Mani 2017: 39).

El departamento colombiano del Magdalena representa uno de estos espacios lingüístico-culturales atravesado por trayectorias todavía más radicalmente diferentes. Con sus jornadas de siete u ocho kilómetros, el biblioburro reúne lectores de unas treinta localidades en una relación que supera desde abajo la circulación comercial. En su análisis de la relaciones entre la institución bibliotecaria y la literatura mundial, Reingard Nethersole (2012) contempla solo tres tipos de bibliotecas –la biblioteca real, la biblioteca imaginada y la biblioteca virtual– que el biblioburro parece reunir en un único espacio móvil. Al modo de una “biblioteca real”, el biblioburro ofrece a sus lectores acceso gratuito a los libros. Pero los lectores no se desplazan al estático “espacio táctil” que es una biblioteca (Nethersole 2012: 308), pues es esta la que se mueve a su encuentro. A modo de una “biblioteca imaginada”, el biblioburro conjura imágenes de deseada totalidad (Nethersole 2012: 308), pero en cada visita los lectores solo tienen acceso a una colección predeterminada. Y al modo de una “biblioteca virtual”, el Biblioburro proporcionará a sus lectores bits inmateriales (Nethersole 2012: 308). Pero, una vez más, será el ordenador y la conexión wifi los que se desplacen al usuario en un acceso que no tendrá lugar 24 horas al día, siete días a la semana.

Ann Steiner (2012: 316), a semejanza de estudios como los de Sapiro y Mani, centrados en las relaciones entre literatura mundial y mercado, sostiene: “world literature is defined and propelled by the forces and structures of the book trade that are intersected by the media market”. De ello se sigue la necesidad de una “definición marxista” de la literatura mundial, que tome en consideración factores tales como la edición y la distribución o circunstancias económicas generales (Steiner 2012: 318). El caso del biblioburro, entre otros posibles, pone de manifiesto que junto a esta innegable dimensión de la literatura mundial, producto de una globalización desde arriba y un cosmopolitismo elitista, también existen otras literaturas mundiales que escapan a una lógica economicista y nacen al calor de una globalización desde abajo y un cosmopolitismo crítico. En consecuencia, tan necesaria es una aproximación marxista como una aproximación desde una economía del don que atienda prácticas de circulación literaria del procomún.

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Susanne Klengel

El derecho a la literatura (mundial y traducida). Sobre el sueño translatológico de la UNESCO

Racine, c'est Racine.

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957)

1 ¿Qué es un clásico?¹

Con cierto orgullo, en un catálogo de la colección “Obras representativas” publicado al comienzo del nuevo milenio, la UNESCO dio a conocer un balance impresionante: una lista de más de 1300 obras literarias que provienen de más de 80 países diferentes y de cerca de 100 lenguas originales. Desde el año 1948 y gracias a los programas de cooperación e intercambio cultural, se traducen bajo los auspicios de la UNESCO obras de la literatura mundial que se publican generalmente en colaboración con editoriales del mundo entero. El catálogo de octubre del 2000 no solamente ilustra el resultado notable de uno de los proyectos de traducción literaria más amplios y ambiciosos sino que permite también, mirando más de cerca los títulos y las fechas de publicación, formarse una idea sobre el concepto universalista, la historia y la extensión de la empresa que se propone divulgar “works of literary and cultural importance that are nevertheless not very well known outside their original national boundaries or linguistic communities” (*Collection UNESCO... 2000*: 13).

Sin embargo, lo que se presenta hoy, a primera vista, como una historia exitosa e incuestionable entre las muchas actividades editoriales de la UNESCO

¹ Este artículo fue publicado por primera vez bajo el título “Negociando ‘lo clásico’ en la UNESCO: una querella entre las naciones viejas y las jóvenes” en *Estudios. Revista de Investigaciones Literarias y Culturales* (número monográfico, ed. por Andrea Pagni), 25 (2005), pp. 333–358. Agradezco a la editora del dossier el permiso de reimprimir mi artículo. También trató el tema en mi libro sobre los intelectuales latinoamericanos en la Segunda Posguerra europea (Klengel 2011: 255–270). En este contexto cabe señalar también el capítulo sobre la Colección de Obras representativas en Lembrecht 2013: 122–128.

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empezó con grandes dificultades conceptuales en los primeros años de la organización durante el período de la Posguerra. No es de sorprender que el conflicto más agudo se haya producido en torno al criterio normativo de la “representatividad” obligatoria o, más precisamente, acerca de la idea básica e influyente en los comienzos del proyecto de que los textos en cuestión debían ser los “clásicos”. Partiendo de esta programática, trataremos de reconstruir en lo que sigue las discusiones respectivas y el desarrollo de las actividades durante la segunda mitad de los años 40, tomando en cuenta, principalmente, las posiciones divergentes de los expertos de países europeos y no-europeos respecto a lo “clásico”. El estudio se propone esclarecer en especial la estrecha relación entre el prestigioso programa de traducción de la UNESCO, la idea de un campo literario universal compuesto por todas las naciones miembro de las Naciones Unidas y ciertos problemas planteados por conceptos o criterios de selección que derivan de un canon literario basado, principalmente, en una idea eurooccidental de lo literario y su historia. Llama la atención la función particular que tiene en este contexto la literatura latinoamericana, como se verá más adelante.

“What is a Classic?” es el título de una conferencia presentada por T.S. Eliot en la Virgil Society de Londres el 16 de octubre de 1944, cuando la liberación europea del régimen nacionalsocialista ya era previsible, sin que hubieran concluido todavía las acciones militares. T.S. Eliot, gran defensor de la tradición occidental-cristiana y futuro Premio Nobel de Literatura en 1948, dio una definición rigurosa de lo que significa “ser un clásico”. Según él, ni a Dante o Milton, ni a Shakespeare o Goethe corresponde tal denominación, sino tan solo al gran poeta romano Virgilio. Es él, dice Eliot, quien ha sentado las bases de lo “clásico”, obligando de esta manera a todas las generaciones posteriores a seguir su ejemplo. Solo en Virgilio se combinan y se expresan de manera única el genio de la lengua latina y la historia greco-romana que constituyen el fundamento de la civilización europea:

And, as Aeneas is to Rome, so is ancient Rome to Europe. Thus Virgil acquires the centrality of the unique classic; he is at the centre of European civilization, in a position which no other poet can share or usurp. The Roman Empire and the Latin Language were not any empire and any language, but an empire and a language with a unique destiny in relation to ourselves; and the poet in whom that empire and that language came to consciousness and expression is a poet of unique destiny. (Eliot 1946: 29)

Así, Virgilio representa para Eliot el único Clásico auténtico entre todos los europeos, mientras que los “grandes libros” de las literaturas nacionales respectivas –“herederas privilegiadas” de la Antigüedad grecolatina, según el poeta– deben considerarse como clásicos “relativos” dentro de su propio contexto lingüístico y cultural.

Esta definición de lo “clásico” que destaca como origen exclusivo la Antigüedad grecolatina con sus autores y obras sobresalientes y transhistóricos, universales e indispensables por su carácter único, da prueba de un empleo particularmente tradicional del término en cuestión. Por lo tanto, clásicos son solo ellos, los autores ejemplares de aquellos tiempos, que hasta la época contemporánea nunca han cesado de servir de modelo y de orientación. No obstante, visto en el contexto histórico concreto de la Segunda Posguerra, este juicio revela su propia historicidad al ser claramente parte de un movimiento intelectual que se proponía traer a la memoria colectiva la historia y los grandes valores comunes de la cultura occidental-europea.

Cargada de un simbolismo semejante, la expresión “clásico de la literatura” reaparece pocos años más tarde también en el marco de los proyectos culturales de la UNESCO, fundada como suborganización de las Naciones Unidas en 1945. Ya en el año 1946 se inició el gran proyecto denominado “Traducción de los clásicos”. No obstante, el uso mismo de la palabra “clásico” condujo en los años subsiguientes a debates particularmente controvertidos. Los criterios convencionales de su definición, como, por ejemplo, la referencia explícita o implícita a la ejemplaridad de la cultura grecolatina y su extensa recepción por las literaturas europeas, se consideraron paradójicos en el contexto de una empresa internacional que incluía una multitud de obras de origen no-europeo. En el transcurso de muchas discusiones agitadas el término “clásico” fue perdiendo poco a poco su sentido estrictamente normativo respecto a la calidad sobresaliente de los “antiguos”, de la ejemplaridad universal y de la “transhistoricidad” para ser abandonado al cabo de pocos años. En la historia y en los debates de la iniciativa, que serán objeto del análisis que sigue, se hace visible un problema de base que sobrepasaría finalmente los límites del proyecto original como consecuencia de una nueva internacionalidad en la comunicación cultural, que empezaba a poner en duda el canon literario arraigado en la tradición europea –duda que décadas más tarde desembocaría en controversias apasionadas sobre el canon literario, en la célebre “battle of the books” de la teoría poscolonial a la que se hará referencia más adelante en este estudio–.

2 Sobre la necesidad de los Clásicos en los tiempos de crisis y el papel de la literatura latinoamericana

El inicio y desarrollo del proyecto dentro del gran aparato institucional de las Naciones Unidas y de la UNESCO se caracterizan por una serie de resoluciones y

decisiones formales, reuniones, informes y debates entre especialistas, así como también por las idas y vueltas de definiciones y conceptos que no solamente documentan la complejidad de la iniciativa, sino también el sintomático idealismo humanista inherente a la obra de reconstrucción cultural después de la Guerra.

En su primera reunión del 14 de diciembre de 1946 la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas aprobó la primera resolución acerca de un amplio proyecto de traducción de los clásicos de la literatura mundial. La UNESCO, con sede en París, debía ponerlo en práctica cumpliendo con las siguientes normas: habría que garantizar la internacionalidad del proyecto tomando en cuenta también los escasos recursos financieros de ciertas naciones; el proyecto tendría que contribuir al desarrollo cultural; la definición de lo “clásico” no debería limitarse a una sola cultura, sino incluir obras de orígenes heterogéneos. Dicho con las palabras oficiales, se trataba de “œuvres de toutes les nations ou de toutes les cultures que les autorités les plus qualifiées considèrent comme ayant une signification universelle et une valeur permanente”². El motivo más fuerte para iniciar los trámites de aquel esfuerzo tan amplio e importante fue, según los documentos históricos, la gran confianza puesta en la influencia pacífica de las grandes obras literarias y su capacidad de promover el entendimiento entre los pueblos: “la traduction des classiques du monde entier dans les différentes langues des Etats Membres des Nations Unies favorisera la compréhension mutuelle et la paix parmi les nations en créant une communauté de culture à laquelle pourront participer les peuples de tous les pays”³.

Por consiguiente, la UNESCO fundó una Oficina para la traducción de los clásicos. En julio de 1947 se envió a los Estados miembros una primera carta junto con una descripción detallada del proyecto⁴, pidiendo apoyo oficial a los gobiernos. Con el propósito de preparar un cuestionario apropiado, la Oficina de traducción buscó en cada país el contacto con instituciones y personalidades calificadas para adquirir informaciones detalladas y fidedignas sobre el campo literario respectivo⁵. A la Oficina de París llegaron respuestas de Bolivia, Venezuela, Gran Bretaña, Francia, los Países Bajos, Canadá y Australia. Un informe sobre la primera etapa de la iniciativa fue presentado durante la segunda Conferencia General de la

² Sobre la historia del proyecto, véase el documento preparativo de la reunión del “Comité international d’experts” (21 al 25 de noviembre de 1949), con fecha del 15 de noviembre de 1949, UNESCO, Documents PHS/ Conf.5/2, p. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Comentario “Translation of the World Classics”, 1º de julio de 1947 (Phil/7/1947), UNESCO, Reg. Files, 1. Series 1946–1956, 803 A 52 (“Translation of Literature Surveys”).

⁵ El Cuestionario fue mandado en el año 1948, UNESCO, Documents PHS/5.

UNESCO, celebrada en la Ciudad de México en diciembre de 1947. Los delegados aprobaron sin reparos la continuación del proyecto así como el presupuesto necesario para realizarlo. En mayo de 1948 tuvo lugar una reunión importante de veinte especialistas provenientes de América Latina, China, Francia, Gran Bretaña, India, Italia, Estados Unidos y Egipto. Roberto Ibáñez del Uruguay, Jesús Silva Herzog de México y el diplomático brasileño domiciliado en París, Antonio Dias Tavares Bastos, representaron a los Estados latinoamericanos⁶. Respetando las opiniones de cada país, el grupo pretendía especificar dos listas de textos que merecerían ser traducidos. La primera lista debía contener los cien “mejores libros” que, traducidos a una multitud de lenguas, estarían destinados a lectores interesados de *todos* los Estados miembros. La segunda lista debía englobar obras consideradas como “clásicas” en sus países de origen, que se traducirían al francés y al inglés, las dos lenguas oficiales de la UNESCO, para llegar de este modo a un público internacional. En esta reunión se debatieron también los criterios de la traducción y de su calidad, los modos de seleccionar a los traductores así como cuestiones de la coordinación, del financiamiento y de las formas de cooperación con los gobiernos⁷.

Mostrándose otra vez favorable al proyecto, la tercera Conferencia General de 1948, durante la cual el mexicano Jaime Torres Bodet fue elegido Director General, propuso concretar el proyecto promoviéndolo a través de una subdivisión en regiones específicas. Por consiguiente, se designaron en un primer paso dos regiones culturales: una comisión de expertos en Beirut debía preparar junto con el gobierno del Líbano la traducción de obras de lengua árabe y de obras extranjeras al árabe. La segunda región englobaría a América Latina, cuya producción literaria había quedado mayormente desconocida fuera de los confines geográficos del continente. Dice la resolución: “Le Directeur Général a décidé d’accorder dans le plan général de traduction des classiques une priorité aux œuvres latino-américaines, trop peu connues en général dans le monde”⁸. Vista la atención particular prestada a la literatura latinoamericana en los programas culturales de la UNESCO a partir de 1948, no se debe descartar la posibilidad de que haya influido en cierta medida la nueva presidencia latinoamericana de la Organización⁹. En julio de 1949, una carta dirigida a

⁶ Véase el “Rapport de la Réunion du Comité d’Experts sur la Traduction des Classiques” (18 al 22 de mayo de 1948), con fecha del 27 de mayo de 1948, UNESCO, Documents PHS/Conf. 1/3, p. 1.

⁷ Véase nota 2, *ibid.* p. 4–5.

⁸ Resolución 6.2213, véase nota 2, *ibid.* p. 10.

⁹ Jaime Torres Bodet siempre tuvo una relación fuerte con la literatura, ya sea por su participación activa en el grupo poético de los Contemporáneos durante los años 20 y, posteriormente, en el campo de la literatura y crítica literaria; ya sea por sus actividades en la política de educación y cultura.

los gobiernos latinoamericanos y firmada por el nuevo Director General Jaime Torres Bodet explica y subraya la intención de promover especialmente la difusión de obras latinoamericanas: “Within the framework of the plan worked out by UNESCO with the help of an expert committee, I have considered it necessary to give priority to the translation and publication in French and English of the most important and significant works of Latin American literature”¹⁰. Para acelerar el procedimiento, la Oficina de Traducción redactó una primera lista provisional de obras latinoamericanas (que será analizada detalladamente más adelante en este estudio) pidiendo que los especialistas de cada país revisaran y complementaran las listas respectivas. Es relevador que no solamente se anunciaron las traducciones de clásicos literarios y científicos de cada país, sino también proyectos editoriales colectivos como, por ejemplo, antologías de poesía con muestras representativas de determinadas literaturas nacionales o también del continente entero. Hasta mediados de los años 50 se publicaron en la llamada “Serie Iberoamericana” ocho obras en francés y tres en inglés compiladas, traducidas e introducidas por personajes renombrados de la cultura internacional como Samuel Beckett, Paul Claudel, Roger Bastide, Marcel Bataillon, Federico de Onís u Octavio Paz¹¹.

Llama la atención que el gran proyecto de traducción de la UNESCO aspirara explícitamente a traducir los “clásicos”, subrayando aquella fórmula en el título oficial durante los primeros años de la iniciativa. No obstante a finales de 1949 los participantes preferían obviamente hablar de “grandes obras” (great books/grandes œuvres) o incluso de “obras maestras” como decía Torres Bodet en una de sus conferencias. A partir de 1952, las primeras obras traducidas se publicaron finalmente bajo un título nuevamente distinto, como “Obras representativas”.

10 Carta del 5 de julio de 1949, UNESCO, Documents XR/NC/Conf. reg. 1/12, Anexo I, p.1.

11 Se publicaron las siguientes traducciones: *Anthologie de la poésie mexicaine*, comp. por Octavio Paz, trad. por Guy Lévis Mano, presentado por Paul Claudel, París: Nagel 1952 (traducción inglesa por Samuel Beckett, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1958); Manuel de Jesús Galván: *Enriquillo*, trad. por Marcelle Auclair, París: Nagel 1952 (traducción inglesa por Robert Graves, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1954); José Martí: *Pages choisies*, trad. por Max Daireaux, José Carner y Emilie Noulet, prefacio de Max Daireaux, París: Nagel 1953; Gabriel René Moreno: *Les derniers jours de la colonie dans le Haut-Pérou*, intr. y trad. por Francis de Miomandre, París: Nagel 1954; Juan Zorrilla de San Martín: *Tabaré*, trad. por Jean-Jacques Réthoré, revisado por Jules Supervielle, París: Nagel 1954 (traducción inglesa por Walter Owen, Washington: Pan American Union 1956); Machado de Assis: *Quincas Borba*, trad. por Alain de Acevedo, intr. por Roger Bastide, París: Nagel 1955; Domingo Faustino Sarmiento: *Souvenirs de province*, intr. por Marcel Bataillon, trad. por Gabrielle Cabrini. París: Nagel 1955; *Anthologie de la poésie ibéro-américaine*, Selección, intr. y notas por Federico de Onís, presentado por Ventura García Calderón, París: Nagel 1956.

Esta confusión extraña de términos no se debe a un empleo descuidado y arbitrario de las diferentes nociones, sino que es más bien síntoma de un conflicto subyacente mucho más complicado.

Todos aquellos términos utilizados en el discurso de la UNESCO tienen una intención normativa, reclaman autoridad y remiten a la ejemplaridad. Esto vale especialmente en el caso del término “clásico” que indica ante todo obras (y autores) cuya autoridad y fuerza normativas emanan de su supuesto carácter único así como de una comprobada resistencia contra el transcurso del tiempo, es decir, de su “atemporalidad”. No obstante, “lo clásico” remite también en segundo lugar a una dimensión histórica, ya que se trata de épocas culturales estrechamente relacionadas con la construcción de identidades culturales y/o nacionales. En el discurso de la UNESCO “los clásicos” son presentados, por consiguiente, en una doble función: como bienes culturales históricos de las naciones, pero también como valores atemporales de la humanidad entera. Cada país, nación y cultura tiene, por lo tanto, sus textos clásicos cuya difusión internacional es considerada, además, como una contribución importante al entendimiento entre los pueblos. Aquel ideal ya había influido en la mencionada resolución de las Naciones Unidas en el año 1946 con su clara expectativa humanista: “la traduction des classiques du monde entier dans les différentes langues des Etats Membres des Nations Unies favorisera la compréhension mutuelle et la paix parmi les nations en créant une communauté de culture à laquelle pourront participer les peuples de tous les pays”¹². Un documento de abril de 1947 añadía que el proyecto privilegiaría ante todo obras capaces de apoyar realmente la idea de la comunicación y del entendimiento internacional puesto que “if politicians, businessmen, etc. who have to deal with nationals of a country remote from their own, realize that it has produced works which command their interest and respect, any negotiations they undertake will go forward in a much better atmosphere”¹³.

Para entender mejor aquel empleo enfático del término “clásico” y la confianza idealista puesta en el poder educativo de las producciones culturales, es preciso tomar en consideración la situación histórica concreta de los años que siguieron a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En ese momento, al fundarse la UNESCO, existía aparentemente una “necesidad de lo clásico”, como denominarían el germanista Wilhelm Vosskamp y otros a este mismo fenómeno en relación con la “época clásica de Weimar” en la historia cultural de la nación alemana.

¹² Resolución 60, aprobada el 14 de diciembre de 1946, véase nota 2, *ibid.* p. 1.

¹³ Carta del 22 de abril de 1947 del “Committee on Translations”, dirigida probablemente a Julian Huxley, Director General, UNESCO, Reg. Files, 1. Series 1946–1956, 803 A 064 “–56” (“Translation of the Classics. Meeting of Experts”) I.

Según ellos, la “necesidad de lo clásico” siempre se relaciona con la carencia y el deseo de construir o inventar una época cultural específica para autoconfirmarse cultural y nacionalmente¹⁴. Por consiguiente, en el caso alemán fue valorizada como “clásica”, es decir, ejemplar y normativa, una época explícitamente alejada de los trastornos políticos contemporáneos, a los que contraponía valores humanos y culturales más elevados. Se hermanaban el concepto del arte autónomo, la voluntad pedagógica de una “educación estética” y un llamamiento a la “verdadera humanidad”. Del mismo modo, frente a los tiempos revueltos de la Revolución Francesa, Friedrich Schiller había contrapuesto en el anuncio de la revista *Die Horen* al “tumulto político”, al “impuro sentido partidario”, a los tiempos vividos como crisis y caos “un interés más alto en lo puramente humano más allá de la influencia de las épocas” para establecer “justicia y paz”, “decencia y orden” con la finalidad de salvar al mundo (Schiller 1928: 106 y ss.; ver también Vosskamp 1987: 493–514). De manera comparable, el llamamiento de la UNESCO a retornar y reflexionar nuevamente sobre los valores humanos atemporales, sobre el modelo y la ejemplaridad de los clásicos, debe interpretarse ante todo como una reacción contra la Segunda Guerra Mundial recién concluida y el descubrimiento traumatizante del lado bárbaro de la humanidad. El llamamiento a un mundo mejor es sintomático de la atmósfera de aquel momento, evidente en particular con motivo de la fundación de la UNESCO, descrita más tarde por Jean Thomas, colaborador de la primera hora en la secretaría de la Organización:

A Londres, au mois de novembre 1945, les représentants de quarante-quatre pays étaient réunis pour fonder une nouvelle organisation internationale consacrée à l'éducation, à la science et à la culture. La guerre était encore présente partout; la ville laissait voir ses plaies béantes. La Conférence se tenait dans la banale salle de réunions d'une société professionnelle; le régime d'austérité prévalait dans toute sa rigueur. Mais s'il n'y avait ni pompe ni festivité, on sentait dans toutes les délégations une ferveur extrême. Il ne s'agissait de rien de moins que d'éviter le retour d'une pareille guerre, d'extirper des esprits les germes du fanatisme et de la haine, d'établir la paix sur le respect de la dignité humaine. Qui n'a pas participé à la Conférence de Londres aura toujours quelque peine à comprendre l'accent presque religieux de la déclaration que précède le traité qui fut alors élaboré, puis adopté, pour constituer l'UNESCO. (Thomas 1962: 24)

14 Los autores tratan de analizar los modos de construcción de “lo clásico” y, en relación con ello, las diferentes justificaciones históricas del “retraso” de la “época clásica” alemana (en comparación, por ejemplo, con la francesa). Según ellos, la “necesidad de lo clásico” resulta en general de la necesidad de cerciorarse de sí mismo aprovechando la fuerza de la cultura clásica para la construcción de identidades (véase la introducción de Vosskamp en la sección “Klassik und Klassizismus in Deutschland” en Vosskamp 1993: 9–11).

En consecuencia, la fundación de la UNESCO se realizó bajo el signo de los ideales de la Ilustración y del humanismo. Los verdaderos patrocinadores de la nueva institución eran, según observó el filósofo francés Alain Finkielkraut en 1987, Diderot, Condorcet y Voltaire. En su juicio severo, Finkielkraut insiste en esta característica inicial de la UNESCO para acusarla violentamente de haber abandonado aquellos valores imprescindibles en favor de un relativismo cultural cada vez más visible en el transcurso de los años (Finkielkraut 1989: 74–75).

Frente a los desastres de la guerra, puede decirse, resumiendo, que la “necesidad de los clásicos” articulada en ese proyecto de traducción tan ambicioso y hasta utópico fue motivada por el deseo cardinal y profundo de sacar lecciones a partir de los valores espirituales y de determinar una nueva base ética para promover acciones realmente humanas en el futuro. Sin embargo, la creación de un consenso para la concretización práctica llegó a ser objeto de negociaciones muy complicadas que condujeron necesariamente a la búsqueda de nuevos conceptos y denominaciones.

3 Desplazamientos: de los clásicos a las Obras representativas. Una querella entre las naciones viejas y las jóvenes

A pesar de tanto idealismo, el término “clásico” se reveló en el lapso de pocos años cada vez más problemático. Expresiones como “grandes obras” u “obras representativas” fueron propuestas para sustituirlo. Encontrar una definición convincente de lo que significa “obra clásica”, aplicable a todas las literaturas del mundo, constituía la dificultad principal. Desde el comienzo estos esfuerzos fueron el aspecto más polémico y ocuparon el centro de la atención. Aquellos debates agitados se reflejan en la mayoría de los documentos archivados, es decir, en los informes oficiales, protocolos y también, de manera más indirecta, en las cartas y los cuestionarios que iban a recibir los gobiernos. En lo siguiente será esbozado aquel debate relevador que se parece realmente a una “querella” entre las naciones “viejas” (europeas) y las naciones más “jóvenes”.

Un documento de 1947 califica de “clásico” a un libro “if it is considered truly representative of a culture or a nation, and if it remains as a landmark in the history of human genius and in the evolution of Man towards civilization”¹⁵. Por

¹⁵ “Translation of the World Classics”, 1º de julio de 1947 (Phil/7/1947), UNESCO, Reg. Files, 1. Series 1946–1956, 803 A 52 (“Translation of Literature-survey”).

lo tanto, la obra tiene que ser por un lado expresión auténtica de una cultura particular y, por el otro, disponer de una calidad estética y moral a nivel universal. Un clásico es, entonces, una obra que ha pasado (y va pasar) la “prueba del tiempo” a través de las generaciones. Los clásicos, aclara la comisión, además en una carta oficial, no solamente se encuentran en el área de la literatura sino también en la filosofía, la teología, la política, en las ciencias sociales y naturales, hasta en la geografía y las relaciones de viaje¹⁶. Un clásico tiene que contribuir al entendimiento entre las naciones –por este motivo las obras traducidas deben ser accesibles y comprensibles para cualquier interesado de formación cultural media–. Para resumir brevemente el denominador común más importante de aquel momento: un clásico se caracterizaba, particularmente, por su significación universal así como por su valor estético y moral permanente¹⁷. No obstante, pocas semanas mas tarde, el Director General de la UNESCO Julian Huxley arguye en la sesión de expertos del 5 de junio de 1947:

Aucun livre [...] n'est absolument universel ni permanent [...] en effet, le comité reconnaît avec le Dr. Huxley qu'un classique est avant tout national, régional; or s'il n'est pas qualifiable d'universel de fait, il l'est en quelque sorte de droit: représentatif d'une certaine culture il porte néanmoins en lui un message accessible à tous¹⁸.

El verdadero problema conceptual, sin embargo, se hizo visible en el momento de llevar el proyecto a la práctica. Cualquier intento, aunque fuera de índole pragmática, de fijar un año determinado con el fin de distinguir las “obras clásicas” de las modernas y contemporáneas corría siempre el riesgo de fracasar debido a la disparidad de opiniones entre los especialistas internacionales de la comisión. Durante las primeras sesiones y por razones prácticas, se propuso el año 1900 como límite para la época de los clásicos¹⁹. Con eso, la UNESCO quería evitar eventuales dificultades jurídicas y morales con los autores vivos por un lado, y, por el otro, trataba de impedir, sin crear sospechas, la posibilidad de que entraran obras revolucionarias de escritores soviéticos en las listas de los clásicos.

16 Carta del 22 de abril de 1947 del “Committee on Translations”, dirigida probablemente a Julian Huxley, Director General, UNESCO, Reg. Files, 1. Series 1946–1956, 803 A 064 “–56” (“Translation of the Classics. Meeting of Experts”) I.

17 Protocolo de la reunión del “Comité des Traductions des Classiques”, 20 de mayo de 1947, UNESCO, Reg. Files, 1. Series 1946–1956, 803 A 064 “–56” (“Translation of the Classics. Meeting of Experts”) II.

18 Protocolo de la reunión del “Comité des Traductions des Classiques”, 5 de junio de 1947, UNESCO, Reg. Files, 1. Series 1946–1956, 803 A 064 “–56” (“Translation of the Classics. Meeting of Experts”) II.

19 Ibid.

Es revelador que tales reservas, que remiten a las profundas tensiones ideológicas de la Posguerra y de la incipiente Guerra Fría, aparezcan mencionadas tan solo en los protocolos de las sesiones iniciales, pero no en los informes oficiales. Poco a poco, las continuas discusiones sobre aquella frontera arbitraria llegaron a crear una división entre los expertos. Como representantes de las “naciones jóvenes”, los australianos y el especialista brasileño Tavares Bastos encabezaron una verdadera “querella” entre las naciones viejas y las jóvenes hasta lograr convencer a todos los participantes de que la expresión “clásicos” ya no podía aplicarse apropiadamente a los textos a traducir. El protocolo de la reunión de mayo de 1948 dice al respecto:

Mr. Bastos wondered what authors were considered as classical ones. Brazil, as a young country, experienced the same difficulty [como Australia, S.K.] [...] that is to say that the choice of the year 1900 as the border-line between classics and non-classics bore too hardly on the younger countries, whose literature had flowered after that date. In Brazil, some 20th-century authors were considered as classics²⁰.

Jesús Silva Herzog, por su parte, problematizó, además, el concepto de la “universalidad” que solía servir de base en las discusiones mencionadas:

There were some very great writers who were not “universal” because they wrote in a language of a country without power or money to give them publicity: for example, certain latin-american works which were not known in Europe or the United States because they had not been translated. UNESCO should help to make them known. He quoted the following names as examples: Montalbo (Ecuador), Saimiento [sic] (Argentina), Martí (Cuba), Justo Sierra (Mexico), Rodó (Uruguay)²¹.

Los nombres citados remiten a autores cuya autoridad e influencia se limitaban al contexto nacional o continental sin que tuvieran una repercusión internacional. Demuestran, por un lado, que los atributos “clásico” y “universal” dependen esencialmente de la perspectiva así como de las contingencias de la historia, en este caso de la marginalidad cultural y lingüística latinoamericana dentro del sistema universal. A la vez, sin embargo, remiten también a las

20 Protocolo de la “Réunion d’Experts sur la traduction des Classiques” del 18 de mayo de 1948 (en la tarde), p. 5, UNESCO, Reg. Files, 1. Series 1946–1956, 803 A 064 “–56” (“Translation of the Classics, Meeting of Experts”) IV.

21 Ibid. p. 7. Durante esta sesión surgió finalmente la propuesta pragmática de denominar “clásicas” a todas las obras datadas antes de 1900. Su traducción sería “organizada” por la UNESCO. En cambio se calificaron como “modernas” las obras publicadas hasta 1939 que la UNESCO “recomendaría”, y “contemporáneas” las obras escritas después de 1940 sobre las que la UNESCO no haría más que “informar” al público interesado.

diferentes dinámicas de formación de tradiciones en el viejo mundo europeo y en las nuevas naciones. Los escritores clásicos son, como observó Ernst Robert Curtius en su conocido libro *Literatura europea y Edad Media latina*, “siempre los *Viejos*” (Curtius 1973: 256), sin embargo, fuera de las literaturas europeas, y especialmente en las literaturas de naciones jóvenes poscoloniales, son llamadas “clásicas” no solamente muchas obras del siglo XIX sino también del siglo XX como lo demuestra entre otros el caso sintomático de *Ariel* (1900), de José Enrique Rodó, la primera de toda una serie de obras importantes con gran repercusión inmediata en América Latina.

Debido a tales dificultades no solamente formales sino fundamentales a nivel del contenido, los expertos empezaron a hablar de “great books”/“grandes libros” cuando se referían a la literatura de América Latina. Poco tiempo más tarde ese cambio paulatino se hizo sentir en todas las áreas del proyecto conduciendo por último al abandono del viejo concepto. De esa manera también fueron refutadas las viejas connotaciones de unicidad, universalidad e indispensabilidad, mientras que se favorecían la ejemplaridad, la autoridad y el valor de permanencia de las producciones culturales respectivas.

El proyecto de traducción de las obras latinoamericanas empezó a concretarse durante el año 1949 bajo el signo de este cambio paradigmático. En la siguiente reunión de noviembre de 1949 los expertos le consagraron una gran parte de la discusión. Participaron en el debate, entre otros, los latinoamericanos Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, destacado historiador y crítico brasileño, y Antonio Castro Leal, embajador de México ante la UNESCO en aquel momento. Como ya hemos mencionado en otro contexto, a diferencia del procedimiento habitual y para promover la causa, la comisión decidió en el caso de la literatura latinoamericana establecer una lista provisional de obras con el fin de presentarla a los gobiernos respectivos. Esta lista, encontrada en los archivos de la UNESCO, ofrece una impresión interesante de la clase de autores y obras seleccionados para figurar entre las “grandes obras” (véase anexo)²². De nuevo, las obras enumeradas demuestran claramente que habría sido absurdo fijar el año 1900 como frontera artificial entre clásicos y no-clásicos, especialmente en el caso de América Latina. Son muchas las obras del comienzo del siglo XX que tienen una importancia literaria y cultural innegable en los campos literarios respectivos. Están, entre otros, autores como José Carlos

²² “Provisional List of Latin American Books to be translated into English and French”, 6 pág., UNESCO Archives, Documents XR/NC/Conf.reg.1/12, Anexo II, con la lista adjunta “List of suggestions by Mr. Ventura García Calderón”, *ibid.*, Anexo III.

Mariátegui y Ricardo Palma (los dos por error clasificados como paraguayos), Ricardo Güiraldes, Euclides da Cunha, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Antonio Caso, José Enrique Rodó y Teresa de la Parra, cuyas obras clave se publicaron todas después de 1900. Frente a estas evidencias, la comisión se puso de acuerdo sobre la única regla del proyecto; es decir, que las traducciones no incluyeran obras de personas vivas.

Así, fue precisamente el debate sobre la traducción de las obras latinoamericanas el que hizo surgir y crecer una nueva conciencia acerca de las épocas y tradiciones literarias a nivel internacional. Probablemente no se trata de una coincidencia, ya que en aquel período había comenzado una primera recepción francesa e internacional de la novísima literatura rioplatense y latinoamericana, de la cual Jorge Luis Borges suele ser considerado como destacada figura clave. A la vez estaba desarrollándose también un primer interés en conocer las tradiciones literarias de aquellos países. De este modo, en el nuevo campo de la literatura mundial después de 1945, se estaban vislumbrando señales de una lucha por el reconocimiento internacional de las producciones y tradiciones literarias de las naciones “jóvenes” consideradas durante tanto tiempo como “periféricas”²³.

Sin embargo, los debates sobre el proyecto de los clásicos son instructivos también por otros motivos. Fue quizás la primera vez que especialistas de la literatura que provenían de la “periferia” participaron sistemáticamente en un proyecto cultural de dimensiones mundiales no tan solo como profesionales de su propia cultura sino también como expertos literarios de la cultura universal. Merced a la aspiración universalista algo utópica del gran proyecto de la UNESCO, se abrió a un nivel institucional muy alto la posibilidad de ampliar oficial y programáticamente el horizonte de las tradiciones europeo-occidentales para dar acceso a otras tradiciones y culturas (como, por ejemplo, la árabe y la latinoamericana)... y eso, no solamente hablando *sobre y en lugar de ellas*, sino en forma de intercambio y de diálogo intelectual. Por cierto, este desplazamiento fundamental en el orden simbólico de los discursos no habría sido posible sin la reestructuración política del mundo después de la guerra y sin la nueva ética humanista bajo cuyo signo fueron fundadas las nuevas organizaciones internacionales de las Naciones Unidas.

23 Roger Caillois, desde los tiempos de su exilio argentino, abogado y mediador asiduo de la literatura latinoamericana más reciente, contribuyó también a llamar la atención pública hacia los “grandes textos” de las letras latinoamericanas dentro del programa de las “Obras representativas” después de haber obtenido un cargo en la UNESCO en 1948.

4 La querrela de los clásicos. ¿Una prehistoria de la discusión poscolonial sobre el canon?

En los debates analizados, los términos “clásico”, “gran libro” u “obra representativa” aparecen siempre en estrecha relación con cuestiones de la tradición literaria y el problema de la formación de cánones. Esto se debe especialmente al hecho de que la UNESCO, como patrocinadora del proyecto, constituía una institución internacional de peso provista de gran autoridad moral. Hablar de los “clásicos” siempre implica la idea de un canon imperativo. El proyecto de los clásicos, como acabamos de demostrar, parecía ser precisamente el intento ambicioso de establecer un corpus de textos ejemplares e indiscutibles definiendo, así, un nuevo canon literario mundial.

En los años 80 y 90 del siglo XX, un sinnúmero de controversias y polémicas sobre el canon, animadas particularmente por las discusiones en las universidades estadounidenses, trataron de mostrar que el canon literario universal se reduce tradicionalmente a los grandes textos de la literatura occidental. Indagando, por consiguiente, las causas de la autoridad específica y de la legitimidad de este canon, al parecer infalible, así como de las instituciones relacionadas, los debates poscoloniales, feministas o emancipadores de otra índole contribuyeron poco a poco a una apertura del concepto convencional. Se negaba a la literatura occidental el derecho a representar en exclusividad la herencia literaria y cultural de la humanidad y, por contrapartida, cada vez más obras de origen “periférico”, es decir, de tradiciones no-europeas o de grupos social e históricamente marginados, lograron entrar en los currículos académicos y llegar al conocimiento de un público mucho más amplio²⁴.

Teniendo en cuenta hoy en día estos procesos recientes, las discusiones sobre el proyecto de la UNESCO aparecen realmente como una prehistoria de las discusiones poscoloniales sobre el canon. En aquel entonces, después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, ya se anunciaba el problema fundamental entre la literatura universal y las literaturas “marginales”, es decir, las tensiones y contradicciones entre la idea de universalidad de la literatura (implícitamente idéntica con la tradición europeo-occidental) y los mecanismos de los campos literarios de las culturas tradicionalmente consideradas como “periféricas” que reclaman reconocimiento y el derecho a la representación en un contexto internacional.

²⁴ Véase por ejemplo el resumen de las discusiones en el primer capítulo de Guillory 1993 así como el libro de Bloom 1994 el cual, por su lado, reavivó otra vez las polémicas durante los años 90. Respecto al debate en el contexto latinoamericano, véase mi artículo (Klengel 1998).

En los debates de la UNESCO, esta misma dificultad había provocado continuas divergencias entre los representantes de las naciones “viejas” y las “jóvenes”, siendo la piedra de toque el debate sobre el status “clásico” de las obras latinoamericanas del siglo XX.

No obstante, entre el proyecto de la UNESCO en el clima cultural humanista de la Posguerra y los debates más recientes sobre el canon sí existe una diferencia esencial. Mirándolo bien, pese a los esfuerzos de los expertos, pese a la comprensión mutua avanzada gracias a las reuniones continuas, a pesar también del esfuerzo financiero y del gran prestigio de la comisión internacional así como de la misma UNESCO, la fundación de un canon imperativo y universal, es decir, de un canon novedoso de clásicos realmente “mundiales” o de obras realmente “representativas” a través de un programa de traducción no fue posible. Una de las razones fue presumiblemente la utópica dimensión políglota del proyecto, otra tenía que ver, seguramente, con los propios mecanismos de la génesis y formación de un canon. Un canon literario suele constituirse en el trascurso del tiempo y como consecuencia de las formas específicas de la recepción literaria debidas a la estructura y al conjunto de las tradiciones en el contexto cultural respectivo. Un canon puede fundarse también intencionalmente y de manera programática reclamando e invocando la misma estructura de tradiciones con una finalidad legitimadora, sean aquellas tradiciones reales o inventadas²⁵. El proyecto de la UNESCO respondía más bien al segundo modelo. Visto de cerca, no obstante, el conjunto de tradiciones invocadas se basaba primordialmente en los principios universales y humanistas de la UNESCO. En consecuencia, los textos traducidos carecían de un sistema primario de referencia, es decir, de su contexto cultural, nacional y también lingüístico. Además, parece difícil que un proyecto de traducción, aunque lo organice una institución prestigiosa y culturalmente poderosa como la UNESCO, sea capaz de fundar un canon internacional con éxito, ya que el momento fundador de identidad no se basa en este caso en la finalidad de crear o consolidar el sentimiento colectivo de una nación o de una cultura particular, sino que se dirige, de modo muy general e idealista, a todos los seres humanos en el sentido más general de su humanidad²⁶.

25 Las iniciativas para establecer como imperativo cánones “revisados” a partir de categorías como “raza”, “clase” y “género” presentan hoy en día los ejemplos más obvios.

26 No obstante, respecto del término “clásico moderno”, el problema se presenta de manera diferente puesto que el sistema referencial ya no es principalmente el contexto cultural específico sino más bien la propia modernidad literaria. Eso explicaría por qué Jorge Luis Borges ha llegado a ser un autor canónico merced a la recepción internacional, es decir, basada particularmente en la traducción.

El proyecto de los clásicos de la UNESCO revela, pues, un dilema que es, a la vez, el dilema de la misma UNESCO, fundada en el espíritu humanista de la Ilustración. Declarar como imperativo tanto lo universal como lo particular debía conducir en el caso de los clásicos, por las razones mencionadas, rápidamente a un problema insoluble. Si el proyecto sigue teniendo mucho éxito hasta hoy día, ello se debe sin duda al hecho de haber abandonado tempranamente el concepto tradicional de lo “clásico”, esquivando de esta manera su eurocentrismo intrínseco. Aunque los 1300 títulos de las “Obras representativas” traducidas de más de 80 lenguas a una multitud de otras lenguas, no estén formando ese canon mundial deseado e imposible, dan prueba contundente de la apertura inevitable del campo literario internacional desde 1945. Estas obras han ido trazando uno de los caminos que desembocan en el mapa actual de la “nueva literatura mundial” fundamentalmente transformado, donde ya no hay, según señaló Carlos Fuentes en 1993, ni verdadero centro ni periferia del quehacer literario.

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Appendix

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Annex II

PROVISIONAL LIST OF LATIN AMERICAN BOOKS TO BE TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH AND FRENCH

The countries are given in alphabetical order, and in each country the books are given in chronological order. Nevertheless, as a whole, the list gives a general view of Latin American literature in its successive phases: the pre-Columbian era, the era of conquest, the colonial era and modern times (excluding living authors).

In the case of some of the selected works, it would be advisable, in order to avoid the monotony of repetition, to give as the title of the book that of the first text appearing in it, followed by "and other Essays" (or Stories, etc.).

A bilingual edition is contemplated for poetical works, giving the original text (Spanish or Portuguese) and a prose translation.

In cases where English or French collections of selected works of important authors in this list already exist, an entirely or partly new selection might be made.

Anthologies of several countries

1. "Antología de la poesía hispanoamericana" (Bilingual edition: with the original text and prose translation).
2. "El Pensamiento de los Fundadores de América"
3. "Cronistas de Indias":
 - I. Explorers and Travellers;
 - II. Chronicles of the Conquest:
 - (1) Accounts of the Conquerors;
 - (2) Chroniclers following the Conquest;
 - III. The Chroniclers of the pre-Columbian era.
4. "Epistolario de las Misiones"
5. "Crónicas de la Colonia"
6. "Prosistas de la Colonia"

WS/100.140

"Provisional List of Latin American Books to be translated into English and French", 6 págs., UNESCO-Archives, Documents XR/NC/Conf. reg. 1/12, Anexo II, con la lista adjunta "List of suggestions by Mr. Ventura García Calderón". Ibid., Anexo III.

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ARGENTINE

"Antología de la poesía argentina"	
Echeverría	"El Matadero" and other writings
Alberdi	"El Crimen de la Guerra"
Sarmiento	"Recuerdos de provincia"
"	"Obras morales y críticas", Selection.
"	"Facundo" (translated)
Mitre	"Historia de Belgrano", Selection.
Mansilla	"Una Excursión a los Indios ranqueles"
Hernández	"Martín Fierro" (translated into English)
Payró	"El Casamiento de Laucha"
Leopoldo Lugones	Selection of verse and prose
Güiraldes	"Don Segundo Sombra" (translated)

BOLIVIA

Gabriel René Moreno	"Los últimos días coloniales en el Alto Perú"
Alcides Arguedas	"Raza de bronce"
Armando Chirveches	"La candidatura de Rojas"

BRAZIL

"Antologia da poesia brasileira"	
"Antologia de contos brasileiros"	
Antonio Vieira	"Cartas e Sermões", Selection
Conto Magalhães	"O Selvagem"
Machado de Assis	"Memorias postumas de Bras Cubas (already translated into French)"
Joaquin Nabuco	"Minha formação"
Capistrano de Abreu	Selected Works
Aluizio de Azevedo	"O mulato" or "O cortiço (already translated into English) or "A casa de pensão"
Raul Pompeia	"O Ateneu"
E. da Cunha	"Os Sertões" (already translated into French and English)
Ronald de Carvalho	"Pequena Historia da Literatura Brasileira"

COLOMBIA

Sor María Josefa del Castillo	"Afectos místicos"
Francisco José de Caldas	Various writings
José Manuel Restrepo	"Historia de la Revolución"

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COLOMBIA (Continued)

Joaquín Acosta	"Historia de la Conquista"
Manuel Ancizar	"Las peregrinaciones de Alpha"
Rafael Nuñez	"Reforma política y social"
Pombo, J. A. Silva y G. Valencia	Selection of prose and verse
Caro, Cuervo and M. F. Suárez	Selected works
Antonio José Restrepo	Selection of his prose works
Tomas Carrasquilla	"Entrañas de niño"
Carlos Arturo Torres	"Idola Fori"
Antonio Gómez Restrepo	"Estudios críticos"

COSTA RICA

Manuel Gonzáles Zeledón)	
Aquileo J. Echeverría)	"Cuadros de costumbres y narraciones"
Teodoro Quirós)	
Manuel de J. Jiménez)	
Ricardo Fernández Guardia	"Crónicas coloniales y cuentos típicos"

CUBA

José Antonio Saco	"Historia de la esclavitud (a selection already exists in French)"
J. E. Varona	Various writings
José Martí	Various writings

CHILE

José Zapiola	"Recuerdos de Treinta años"
V. Pérez Rosales	"Recuerdos del pasado"
V. Lastarria	"Recuerdos literarios"
"Historiadores chilenos"	(M. L. Amunátegui, D. Barros Arana, B. Vicuña Mackenna, J. Toribio Medina), Selection
Blest Gana	"Durante la reconquista"

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Antonio del Monte y Tejada	"Historia de Santo Domingo", Selection
Manuel de Jesús Galván	"Enriquillo"
César Nicolás Penson	"Cosas Añejas"
Pedro Henríquez Ureña	"Estudios críticos", Selection

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ECUADOR

Santa Cruz Espejo	"Obras varias" (El Nuevo Luciano", "Cartas riobambesas", etc.), Selection
Mejía Lequerica	"Discursos", selection
Juan León Mera	"Cumando - Novelas cortas"
Juan Montalvo	Various writings

EL SALVADOR

Santiago Ignacio Barberena	"Historia de El Salvador"
José Antonio Cevallos	"Recuerdos Salvadoreños"
Francisco Gavidia	Selected works
Alberto Masferrer	Selected works

GUATEMALA

"Literatura maya" ("Popol Vuh", "Libros de Chilam Balam", "Anales de los Cakchiqueles", etc.)	
A. José de Irisarri	Various writings
E. Gómez Carrillo	"Crónicas escogidas"

HONDURAS

Froilán Turcios	Selected long and short stories
José Cecilio del Valle	Selected works

MEXICO

"Literatura precortesiana"	
"Antología de la poesía mexicana"	
"Antología de cuentos mexicanos"	
Ruiz de Alarcón	"Teatro"
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz	Selected prose and verse
Fray Servando Teresa de Mier	"Memorias"
Fernandez de Lizardi	"Periquillo Sarniento" (translated into English)
"Historiadores Mexicanos" (Alamán, Mora, Crozco y Berra, García Icazbalceta, etc.), Selection	
Luis G. Inclán	"Astucia"
Justo Sierra	"Evolución política del pueblo mexicano" and other writings
Rafael Delgado	"La Calandria"
Antonio Caso	Various writings

NICARAGUA

Ruben Darío

"Poesía y prosa", Selection

PANAMA

Pablo Arosemena (1836-1920)

Various writings

Darío Herrera (1877-1914)

Selected works

PARAGUAY

"Poesía y teatro quechua" (with Inca Garcilaso de la Vega	"Poesía guaraní" of Paraguay) "La Florida del Inca" (translated into French), or else "Commentarios Reales" (of which there is an old translation into English of the seventeenth century and a partial one of 1869)
Llano de Zapata	"Cartas críticas", etc., Selection
Ricardo Palma	"Tradiciones peruanas", Selection (a selection has been translated into English and French)
M. González Prada	Selected works
J. de la Riva Agüero	"Estudios históricos y literarios" Selection
J. C. Mariátegui	"Ensayos escogidos"

PUERTO RICO

Eugenio María de Hostos

"Estudios críticos" - "Moral social"

URUGUAY

Zorrilla de San Martín

Rodó

Selected prose and verse writings
"Ariel - El Mirador de Próspero -
Motivos de Proteo" - Selection
(Partly translated into English)
Selection of verse and prose
"Obras dramáticas" (Selection
translated into French)
"Cuentos" (Some translated into
English)

J. Herrera y Reissig

Florencio Sánchez

Horacio Quiroga

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VENEZUELA

Bolívar

"Discursos y correspondencia",
Selection (Selections translated into
English and French)
"Obras varias", Selection
"El Sargento Felipe"
"Idolos Rotos"
"Ifigenia - Memorias de Mamá Blanca"

A. Bello

Gonzalo Picón-Febres

Manuel Díaz Rodríguez

Teresa de la Parra

List of suggestions by Mr. Ventura García Calderón

MEXICO

Sor Juana
Fray Servando de Mier
Justo Sierra: Prosas
Urbina

NICARAGUA

Rubén Darío: Prosas escogidas - easier to translate than verse.
I published a few chosen pages of verse which were
well translated into French.

GUATEMALA

Gómez Carrillo ?

CUBA

José Martí: Paginas escogidas or
Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: Sab (Novel on slavery), published
by Barbagelata at my advice.

COLOMBIA

Jorge Isaacs: María

VENEZUELA

Bolívar: El Delirio, selected letters, some of them extraordinarily
amusing; project of the Anti-fiction League. At Inca
in Peru I saw last year an unpublished advance project,
discovered later and fuller than the better-known version.

PERU

Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera: a novel or
Palma

CHILE

Vicuña Mackenna: La Revolución de la independencia del Perú.
Poets and prose writers appeared very late.

XR/NC/Conf. reg. 1/12
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BRAZIL

Graça Aranha: Canaán or
Euclýdes da Cunha: Os Sertões

BOLIVIA

Alcides Arguedas: Raza de Bronce or excerpts from his
Historia de Bolivia

URUGUAY

Rodó or
Marcos Sastre: Tempe argentino (delightful description of the
countryside seen by an American friar).

SANTO DOMINGO

Our Pedro Henriquez Ureña, or the book by de Hostos you mentioned
to me.

ARGENTINA

Sarmiento: El Facundo or
Mármol: Amalia or
Horacio Quiroga: Cuentos escogidos or
Leopoldo Lugones: Selección de prosa y verso

Gesine Müller

Re-mapping World Literature from Macondo

1 Introduction

1.1 World Literature and the *Global South*

A two-hundred-year-old debate about World Literature has reached new heights in the last two decades. This development has issued primarily from the United States, with scholars such as David Damrosch, Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova and Emily Apter. Their theoretical reflections have contributed in different ways to an analysis of the paths of circulation traversed by literary texts on their way to canonization. This debate, however, seldom questions the established centers of denominating power which are located in Western Europe and the USA.

When we address the question of how World Literature is “done” today, however, this necessitates considerations of the global differentiation that has reshaped the map of the world. The end of globalization has almost become a topos; some analysts have gone so far as to proclaim the end of a phase of global northern hegemony, with its clear socioeconomic divide between the wealthier, politically dominant North and a poorer, marginalized South. In the context of the channels in which literature becomes canonized, this raises the question of the degree to which – given a worldwide farewell to center/periphery logic – new circulation paths in the *Global South* affect denomination processes in World Literature.

In the following discussion¹, I use the hotly debated and problematized notion of the *Global South* as an epistemological descriptor for world regions located beyond the “old” established centers of Western thought. Ultimately, these regions can be located anywhere on the globe: “The ‘Global South’ is not an existing entity to be described by different disciplines, but an entity that has been invented in the struggle and conflicts between imperial global domination and emancipatory and decolonial forces that do not acquiesce with global designs” (Levander/Mignolo 2011: 3)². Jean and John Comaroff also point out

¹ For the topic of this article see also Müller forthcoming.

² Compare the article by Hermann Herlinghaus in this volume, as well as his comments in *Violence Without Guilt: Ethical Narratives From the Global South* (Herlinghaus 2009: 57–66).

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another important aspect of the concept of the *Global South*: “‘The Global South’ has become a shorthand for the world of non-European, postcolonial peoples. Synonymous with uncertain development, unorthodox economies, failed states and nations fraught with corruption, poverty and strife, it is that half of the world about which the ‘Global North’ spins theories” (2012: 113). Ketaki Kushari Dyson already pointed in 1988 to the dangers of reducing the idea of the *Global South* to a “Third-Worldism” (8).

1.2 Gabriel García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad* as a model case

Social-theoretical and sociological studies on these questions are one step ahead of literary studies, which is due not least to the difficult archival situation facing scholars who want to work on the material side of World Literature. The unquestionably canonical work of the Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez³ serves in my analysis as a model case for tracing canonization processes⁴. At first glance, his work seems to have traveled along the “classical” paths of literary circulation nodes – those for Latin American literatures – in the 1960s, specifically Barcelona, Paris or New York; from there, his texts then went on to the centers of former colonial empires, such as Bombay or Cape Town, where English plays a canonizing function as a privileged language. If we take a closer second look, incorporating perspectives that take account of the *Global South* concept at the epistemological level – for example, in the direction of China, Russia or the Arabic world – the picture becomes highly differentiated and very productive. The following discussion focuses on the central novel, *Cien años de soledad*, and its reception in the USA, India and China, as well as the Arabic world and Russia. The following questions inform my analysis:

1. External to literature: To what extent should we consider the exemplary reception paths of García Márquez’s work not just in the conventional parameters of European or North American centers and a Southern periphery, but also at the level of South-South relations? Aamir R. Mufti famously criticized

³ For extensive studies on the complete works of the author see the fundamental works of Julio Ortega, e.g. Ortega 1989, 1995, 2003, 2007.

⁴ Seventy percent of the books and academic articles circulating worldwide are in English, 17 percent in French and 3 percent in German. Only slightly more than 1 percent are in Spanish (Helgesson 2015: 73). Regarding the connections between literature and the market, see also Sánchez Prado (2015: 15). These figures make the global and wide-ranging impact of García Márquez even more significant.

the fact that the question of Orientalism has received too little attention in current concepts of World Literature (Mufti 2010: 458). Even if Mufti is referring primarily to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this question may enable new findings in an examination of global García Márquez reception.

2. Internal to literature: To what degree does the realm of the aesthetic reveal specific intertextual references between García Márquez and authors of the *Global South*? Can we distill processes of reception and transformation with regard to certain literary topoi, genres or paradigms?

In 1967 – exactly 50 years ago as of this writing – Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *Cien años de soledad* had an unusually large print run of 8,000 copies for the first edition, at Editorial Sudamericana in Buenos Aires. This was three times the standard. The same year, three further editions of 20,000 copies each went into print (see Marling 2016: 25). This led to more awareness of García Márquez’s earlier work, which was then also reprinted in large numbers (Cohn 2012: 1). The main stimulus for the international reception of the Latin American literary *boom* in general, and García Márquez in particular, came from Spain, closely followed by France; a decisive point of intersection was Barcelona, where the author lived between 1968 and 1975 (see Shaw 2010). This first and critical level of international reception has been researched intensively for decades and developed into the topos of Latin American literature of the 1960s, which I will not go into here.

2 The USA as a central reception filter and driver

2.1 Initial rejection: Gabriel García Márquez’s political communism and the global economic “Worthlessness” of Latin America

García Márquez was a dedicated communist and worked from 1959 to 1960 with Fidel Castro’s *Prensa Latina* in Havana, Bogota and New York, which led to some distrust in the United States. In *Conversations with Gabriel García Márquez*, William Kennedy (2006: 61) explained the lack of American interest in Latin American culture and literature as the tendency of the average U.S. citizen to categorically reject socialist and communist systems in the 1960s. Additionally, the majority of the U.S. population considered the Latin

American continent as “worthless” due to its political and economic insignificance at the time. This provides a context for understanding the following comments by García Márquez regarding the integration of Latin America into the (intellectual) map in 1967:

We're writing the first great novel of Latin American man. Fuentes is showing one side of the new Mexican bourgeoisie; Vargas Llosa, social aspects of Peru; Cortázar likewise, and so on. What's interesting to me is that we're writing several novels, but the outcome, I hope, will be a total vision of Latin America [...] It's the first attempt to integrate this world. (Castro 1967: vii)

If the Cuban revolution stands for an attempt by Latin America to emancipate itself from the political control of the USA, then the *boom* signifies the creation of cultural autonomy and the end of cultural colonialism in the literary-intellectual field, particularly vis-à-vis the USA.

2.2 *Cien años de soledad* as a spearhead for Latin American literature

The attitudes of the U.S. readership, which ranged from disinterested to critical, changed suddenly in 1970 with the appearance of Gregory Rabassa's translation of *Cien años de soledad*, which appeared with the title *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The publishers of the New York Times Editor's Book Review named the novel one of the year's twelve best. The paperback edition, published by Avon in 1971, then began to circulate among a genuinely “extra-literary” audience (Johnson 1996: 133). The translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was the first exposure for many North Americans to Latin American literature and led to a perception of the novel as a microcosm of a larger, “exotic” Latin American world. The novel's success ushered in the publication of far more Latin American literature in the USA and its significantly broader reception in the public sphere (Shaw 2010: 27). Ronald Christ – who was the first to use the term *magic realism* (Marling 2016: 37) – edited a special booklet for the journal *Review*, with articles and reviews translated from Spanish to English, as well as discussions of *Cien años de soledad* from Francophone and German speaking regions. García Márquez's ascendancy in the Anglophone world continued with the first scholarly work written in English on his work: in 1977, Frederick Ungar published George McMurray's *Gabriel García Márquez*, the first monograph on the author, in a series dedicated to the greats of World Literature, such as Saul Bellow and Truman Capote. McMurray's book functioned as a door opener for various English-language editions of essays and interviews, as well as further

monographs⁵. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, it was not until 1990 that Michael Bell included García Márquez as the first Latin American in his “Macmillan Modern Novelists” series. Shaw calls the honor bestowed upon García Márquez’s work by Anglophone Hispanic studies the “consecration of Gabriel García Márquez as a world author” (2010: 33).

2.3 The potential for connecting to World Literature

The aforementioned understanding of *Cien años de soledad*, in which the microcosm of Macondo, the fictional town where the novel takes place, represents a “foreign” Latin America is just one side of the coin of reception in the USA. On the other side, there was the staging of archetypal universalisms and anthropological constants. This potential for multiple connections made it easy for recipients, and especially for scholars of literature, to weave the novel into the fabric of universalist World Literature. Intertextuality research uncovered García Márquez’s innumerable allusions to such works as the Bible, Faulkner, and Dostoevsky (McGrady 1981, cited in Ortega Hernández 2007). Such Occidental lines of interpretation contributed more than a little to the resounding success that *Cien años de soledad* experienced in the major cities of the Western and North American hemisphere (Marling 2016: 38; see also Düsdieler 1997: 335).

Furthermore, García Márquez’s narrative style, often described as “premodern” or “fable-like”, was credited with significant influence on writing after the modern age, in that it triggered a *narrative turn* and initiated the rediscovery of storytelling (Düsdieler 1997: 324). What is important here is the departure from the fragmented narration of the modern period and a “return to a consciously anachronistic oral style” (Düsdieler 1997: 324) oriented through its fantastical style against the *nouveau roman* and the temporal regime of modernity. Thomas Pynchon and Toni Morrison (as is particularly clear in her 1987 novel, *Beloved*) qualify as storytellers who picked up the mantle of Márquez’s poetics.

It was the anti-rational and mythical understanding of reality evinced by the characters in *Cien años de soledad*, presented as a matter of course, that advanced Macondo as an exemplar for Latin American literature in general and for broad parts of U.S. literature as well. García Márquez’s art brings together

⁵ These include for example the epochal works of Bell-Villada (*Gabriel García Márquez. The Man and His Work*. North Carolina University Press, 1990), Bloom (*Gabriel García Márquez*. Chelsea House, 1989), Janes (*Gabriel García Márquez: Revolutions in Wonderland*. University of Missouri Press, 1989), McNerney (*Understanding Gabriel García Márquez*. South Carolina Press, 1989).

elements that are disparate and paradoxical in terms of content, which served as points of reference for U.S. writers after 1970, namely the admixture of literature and anthropological knowledge, of fact and fiction, of the trivial and the extraordinary. One example for this dimension of reality is the priest in *Cien años de soledad*, who speaks of nothing but the arrival of the Antichrist, and then the Antichrist actually appears in this fictional world (see Düsdieler 1997: 323, 324, 353). At the same time, García Márquez's novel offers literary material that marginalized groups (ethnic, religious, etc.) take up in peripheries and use to undermine the "discourses of domination, knowledge and history" established by literary and political centers (Düsdieler 1997: 336). The USA's own English-language canonization of Gabriel García Márquez's work became the primary driver of reception for the Anglophone *Global South*, to which we now turn.

3 Reception in India

3.1 Translations and quantitative reception

Cien años de soledad was first received in India in the English language. The first translations into India's regional languages — Hindi, Bengalese, Marathi, Malayalam and Tamil — took place after the immense leap in García Márquez's popularity and reputation resulting from his being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1982 (Maurya 2015: 252)⁶.

In a journalistic text, Indradeep Bhattacharyya (2014) describes the astounding rise in sales of Gabriel García Márquez's books after his death in 2014; his works were on display in all of Calcutta's major bookstores, where the world's largest public book fair takes place each year. They sold as soon as they were put out⁷. He also draws parallels to developments in the Indian book market after the

⁶ The four-volume *Bibliographic Guide to Gabriel García Márquez* (ed. by Nelly Sfeir de González) lists the following translations between 1949 and 2002: Malayalam: *Cien años de soledad* (tr. Kottayam, India: Di. Si. Buks, 1995), *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* (Vi ke Unnikrsnan, tr. Kottayam, India: Di. Si. Buks, 1997, 1998); Gujarati: *La Mala hora* (Niranjana Taripathi, tr. Amadavada, India: Gurjara Grantharatna Karylaya, 1991).

⁷ See also Bhattacharyya 2014: "Ranjit Adhikary, sales manager of Supernova Publishers, Penguin's exclusive distributor in eastern India, said: 'The demand for Garcia Marquez's books has shot up exponentially. Every day we receive orders for at least 90–100 copies of each title. The two books most in demand – 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' and 'Love in the Time of Cholera' – are out of stock. They will be back in circulation next week'".

Nobel Prize of 1982⁸. García Márquez's reception in India therefore seems to be characterized by two sudden upswings, one associated with his Nobel Prize and the other with his death. According to Bhattacharyya, the gradual story of his reception began in the 1970s:

Way back in 1971, when Manabendra Bandyopadhyay introduced him in the comparative literature syllabus at Jadavpur University, nobody had heard of the author, but he noticed an instant liking among students for "One Hundred Years of Solitude". "The first sign was that students read the text themselves, which was definitely not the case with someone like Joyce," Bandyopadhyay said. (Bhattacharyya 2014: n.p.)

One key to Gabriel García Márquez's success in India therefore lies in a certain intimacy enacted by literature, as well as the book's readability: its everyday speech-like narrative and fable-like style speak to every reader, regardless of education or cultural conditioning.

3.2 Magical realism as a reception amplifier

El realismo magical [sic], "magic realism", at least as practiced by Garcia Marquez, is a development of Surrealism that expresses a genuinely "Third World" consciousness. It deals with what Naipaul has called "half-made" societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new, in which public corruptions and private anguishes are more garish and extreme than they ever get in the so-called "North", where centuries of wealth and power have formed thick layers over the surface of what's really going on. (Rushdie 1982: n.p.)

As the Rushdie quote above makes clear, the global establishment of magical realism on the basis of shared experiences in the *Global South* was crucial to García Márquez's reception in Indian literature. Mariano Siskind comes to the point when writing about the phenomenon of *Cien años de soledad*: "Macondo is the mediation between the idiosyncratic hyper-localism of the Colombian tropical forest and the general situation of the continent. Macondo is the village-signifier that names the difference of Latin America, and later, perhaps of the Third World at large" (Siskind 2012: 854). The universal dimensions of the magical in García Márquez's texts fascinated Indian readers, paired as they were with the interleaving of reality and fiction; as the García Márquez translator Buddhadeb

⁸ "College Street bookseller Suvojit Saha said, 'Demand for Garcia Marquez's books had shot up in 1982. It has again peaked after his death. We are sending away customers as there is no supply. We had about 30 titles; we sold out last Saturday'" (Bhattacharyya 2014: n.p.).

Bhattacharjee notes, “Take ‘The Autumn of the Patriarch’, for instance. The sweep of the novel startled me. At that time, Latin America had seven-eight military dictators who exercised ruthless power. It could be the story of any of them – their despotic rule as well as their helplessness” (Bhattacharyya 2014: n.p.).

García Márquez’s success in India was also fed by the success of Rushdie’s novel, *Midnight’s Children* (1981). Rushdie has himself acknowledged his admiration for his Latin American colleague in numerous reviews and interviews; looking back, Rushdie emphasized the enormous impression produced by his reading of *Cien años de soledad* and the uncanny feeling of familiarity that he felt for it.

And of course when I did read it, I had the experience that many people had described of being forever lost in that great novel. Unforgettable. I think all of us can remember the day when we first read Gabriel García Márquez; it was a colossal event. One thing that struck me, [...] was the incredible similarity between the world he was describing and the world that I knew from South Asia, from India and Pakistan. It was a world in which religion and superstition dominated people’s lives; also a world in which there was a powerful and complicated history of colonialism; also a world in which there were colossal differences between the very poor and the very rich, and not much in between; also a world bedeviled by dictators and corruption. And so to me, what was called “fantastic” seemed completely naturalistic (Rushdie 2007, cited in Siskind 2012: 860–861).

3.3 Postcolonial perspectives on global magical realism

In a scholarly context, the reception of Gabriel García Márquez gained steam after Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and the Nobel Prize. The first “International Seminar on García Márquez and Latin America” was organized in Hyderabad in 1984⁹. Beginning in the 1990s, a broad field of research on postcolonial fiction and magical realism opened up, and García Márquez, along with Rushdie and others, played a prominent role, especially in terms of his influence on Indian literature. Siskind’s 2012 study on this matter is a pioneering work, examining the global dissemination of magical realism as a postcolonial form of expression and, in this context, assigning a central role to Gabriel García Márquez, or the “globalization

⁹ A selection of the talks can be found in Bhalla 1987. Similar to the developments after the Nobel Prize in 1982, the “English and Foreign Languages University” in Hyderabad organized another seminar, entitled “Márquez and Literatures of India”, which took place on March 25, 2015. The seminar’s program is available for viewing at <http://efluniversity.ac.in/images/Documents/schedule.pdf>.

of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*”¹⁰, “The emergence of a magical realist narrative in other postcolonial locations [than Latin America] will be a result of a material and concrete process of global expansion [of the novel]” (Siskind 2012: 867, n. 80)¹¹. From a perspective internal to literature, what seems decisive for this path-breaking role is “the narrative and interpretative horizon opened up by García Márquez by rendering visible the relation between the universality of (colonial, postcolonial, capitalist) modern history, and the particularity of local forms of oppression” (Siskind 2012: 855). Siskind describes one particular feature of the postcolonial variant of magical realism inspired by *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: the perspectivation of the magical in relation to a specific subaltern socio-cultural experience of colonialism and other forms of local or global oppression (see Siskind 2012: 855–856).

Christopher Warnes and Taner Can have recently published works on magical realism in English-language postcolonial novels. Both books invite a rereading of magical realism, which the authors declare as central for postcolonial fiction in English, as in works by Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Ben Okri and Sly Cheney-Coker. Not long ago, Susanne Klengel and Alexandra Ortiz Wallner developed a new paradigm focused on the question of relationships between Latin America and India; they offered the descriptor of “Sur/South”, an alternative for the *Global South* and raised the question of new Orientalisms.

3.4 Gabriel García Márquez’s influence on Indian culture

The traces of García Márquez’s literary aesthetic are remarkable in Indian literature, at least with regard to internationally circulating works. The aforementioned connections between the works of García Márquez and Salman Rushdie, above all in relation to magical realism, are well known and have seen intensive international research. Deep Basu writes,

¹⁰ There are a large number of authors worldwide in postcolonial situations whose work was significantly influenced by García Márquez’s novel. In addition to Salman Rushdie and Toni Morrison, who I have already mentioned, there are: Latife Tekin (*Dear Shameless Death*, 1983), Ben Okri (*The Famished Road*, 1991), Mia Couto (*Sleepwalking Land*, 1992), and Mo Yan, about whom I will say more in a moment (see Siskind 2012: 857–858).

¹¹ For earlier studies on the connection between magic realism and postcolonialism see i.a. Rincón 2001.

And not to forget Salman Rushdie, whose first epoch making novel “Midnight’s Children” and controversial novel “Satanic Verses” were heavily influenced by Marquez’s Magic Realism. Rushdie once told in an interviewer that there was “a whole group of writers” including himself who, “broadly speaking, are thought of as a family”, namely a Magical Realism family. (Basu n.d.)

This group also includes Amitav Ghosh (*The Circle of Reason*, 1986) and Arundhati Roy (*The God of Small Things*, 1997). Comparisons between Roy’s novel and García Márquez are as common as they are part of the commercialization of Roy’s works. Ghosh, for his part, responded to an interview question about this literary role models by identifying García Márquez as the most important source of inspiration in his work (Aldama 2002: 87).

Yet García Márquez has exercised an immense influence on Indian culture that goes beyond the narrow confines of literature. In the context of film, for example, his work has opened up ways to draw upon an oral, magical tradition to levy critiques against colonialism and imperialism and the effects of both. Again, Deep Basu:

Lijo Jose Pelliserry’s film “Amen” has been described as the most successful experiment with magic realism in Malayalam cinema. He says that though India and Colombia exist in two different hemispheres, the sensibilities are almost the same. Indians also have uncountable legends and supernatural stories and lore borne out of fertile imagination, robust beliefs, large families and a culture of strong family and community bonds. (Basu n.d.)

In summary, it is fair to say that García Márquez’s reception in India has taken place in several stages: the slow spread of magical realism to the global level certainly paved the way, propelled as it was by the Nobel Prize awarded to Miguel Angel Asturias in 1967, the year in which *Cien años de soledad* was published. The translation of the novel into English in 1970 ushered in rapid worldwide success and inclusion in comparative literature programs in India as early as 1971. Beginning in the 1980s, Gabriel García Márquez’s influence became clear and decisive for Rushdie and other “postcolonial” authors. García Márquez’s Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982 served as a catalyst for these developments and strengthened scholarly interest in García Márquez’s work from a postcolonial perspective that is associated with magical realism. This tradition lives on among numerous storytellers in India, some of whom are internationally visible (Ghosh and Roy, among others). García Márquez’s death in 2014 also led to greater interest in his work and even stronger relationships between Indian literature and his oeuvre.

4 Reception in China

According to Gisèle Sapiro, the production and circulation of symbolic goods is highly politicized in countries in which the economic is subject to the political and the state runs the institutions that direct cultural production and the

organization of intellectual careers, as in fascist or communist countries (Sapiro 2016: 84). This is an apt description of García Márquez's reception in China.

4.1 Literary boom in the 1980s: García Márquez as figurehead

In the early 1980s, after the painful Cultural Revolution, the recently selected Nobel Prize winner García Márquez advanced to become a literary and cultural figurehead in the “New China”. The 1980s were an unusually successful and productive phase for literature in China, based on the fact that many of the most important authors in twentieth-century World Literature – such as Franz Kafka, James Joyce, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Kawabata Yasunari, Mario Vargas Llosa – and García Márquez, who had previously not fit into the context of exemplary socialist literature – were translated in China in the 1970s. García Márquez's literature in particular provided support to Chinese intellectuals. One Chinese critic remarked, “It's as if a friend of yours, a neighbor, suddenly became a millionaire”, because, in China, García Márquez was still considered a “third-world artist” (Ye 2015: 29).

The Nobel Prize initiated a major reappraisal of his work on the Chinese book market. In 1982, Translation Publishers of Shanghai (Yiwen Chubanshe) published an anthology of his works from 1950 to 1981. In 1987 two versions appeared of *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*, and the famous poetological interview *El olor de la guayaba* with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza (Ye 2015: 29). Interestingly, an official campaign was waged in 1983/84 against magical realism as an anti-socialist “pollution of the spirit”. China had to wait until 1994 for a full translation of *Cien años de soledad*. The first authorized version only appeared on the market in 2011¹². Two translations of the novel had already been published in 1984, one of them based on the original Spanish version and another on the English translation (Ji 2015: 358). Both were drastically abridged, however, due to accusations that the book was obscene and depicted superstition (see Ye 2015: 29).

China's *Xungen* literary movement also emerged in the 1980s and was characterized by its return to the roots of Chinese civilization, as well as an artistic style that sought to combine tradition and modernity in harmonious ways. Han Shaogong, one of the main members of the *Xungen* movement, said the following in 1985: “Literature has its roots. Literature has to be deeply set in traditional grassroots. If it is not, the Tree of Literature will never flourish” (Han 1985: 2, cited

¹² All previous editions of *Cien años de soledad* were published in China without the official permission of the author. Chen Mingjun, head of Thinkingdom House publishers, secured the exclusive rights for one million dollars (see <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/apr/29/gabriel-garcia-marquez-chinese-edition>).

in Ye 2015: 30). Chinese literati found points of connection in García Márquez's poetics, unleashing a true "fever for Latin American culture" (Gálik 2000: 161). To accommodate this celebratory fervor, completely new translation techniques had to be invented because magical realism did not compare with any of China's established literary currents (Ji 2015: 358).

4.2 Mo Yan and magical realism in China

Mo Yan (born 1955), the Nobel Prize winner of 2012 whose epochal cycle of novellas, 红高粱家族, *Hóng gāoliang jiāzú* (*Red Sorghum*) was published in 1986, produces work that is very closely aligned with García Márquez's form of magical realism. In his novel *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (1996), for example, he rewrites China's tumultuous twentieth-century history. With a sharp eye for the strange and peculiar, he deconstructs the official historiography of China's revolutionary period (see Siskind 2012: 857). Yan creates a Chinese equivalent of Macondo, a provincial universe based on his fictionalized city of birth, Gaomi, in the Shandong province. "I was born there, I grew up there, my roots are there" (Ye 2015: 30) admitted Yan in an interview. It is therefore no accident that Yan was honored by the Nobel Prize Committee for his "hallucinatory realism", which we can define as a derivation from twentieth-century Latin American poetics. García Márquez's influence on Yan's writing also surfaces in the constant interweaving of the periphery/center topic in Yan's narrative texts.

Yan himself once said that his childhood experience of famines taught him "to think about life from my gut and to get to know the world from my teeth" (Ye 2015: 30). Such experiences of deprivation assume similar literary forms in Yan's and García Márquez's work, and we must interpret this as the expression of a specific literary aesthetic of the *Global South*. One example is the ingestion of non-edible items. The protagonist in Yan's "Iron Child", lacking anything edible to eat, consumes steel rods, while Rebeca, in *Cien años de soledad*, reacts to unrequited love by becoming a geophage, someone who eats soil. Fan Ye interprets this behavior as a meta-cultural stance of resistance, a silent protest by the marginalized against their oppressors (Ye 2015: 31–32).

In his "Confessions", Mo Yan writes about the poetological and ideological influence that García Márquez and Faulkner had upon him (Ye 2015: 37), in which, interestingly, he categorizes García Márquez as a Western author:

In the year 1985 I wrote five novelettes and more than ten short stories. There is no doubt that where their worldview and artistic devices are concerned, they were strongly influenced by foreign literature. Among Western works the greatest impact came from García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* und William Faulkner's *The Sound and Fury*. (Gálik 2000: 161)

5 The Arabic world: Magical realism and the deconstruction of outdated social structures

In the contemporary literature of the Arabic world, magical realism has also opened up a space for the thoughts and memories of marginalized voices that were or are oppressed by imperialist structures; a space in which ancestral spirits and nature are constitutive elements of ritual practices and mythologies, a space in which the boundaries between reality and the “magical”, between reality and dream, between past and present, are elided (see Jarrar 2008: 305–307). The first translation of *Cien años de soledad* was done from the French version in 1979. In the context of literature in the Arabic world, it is instructive to consider the novel *Les 1001 années de la nostalgie* by the Algerian Rashid Boudjedra, which also appeared in 1979¹³; its title resembles *Cien años de soledad* as well as the *One Thousand and One Nights*, and its narrative structures also borrow from both works (see Jarrar 2008: 307; Rabia 1981: 96).

Arabic authors have read texts from the *One Thousand and One Nights* as a narrative against colonialism. As in the two aforementioned regions of the *Global South* – India and China – there are an array of social, economic and political problems in many Arabic and Latin American countries that facilitate similar reading patterns and expectations. This provides the basis for cross-pollination between postcolonial local literary traditions and magical realism, particularly the globally circulating form of magical realism in the form of *Cien años de soledad*. The reception of Gabriel García Márquez has contributed significantly to the literary deconstruction of existing, long outdated social structures that cement the postcolonial dichotomy between the center and the periphery. The authentic textual content of magical realism, especially through its orality and fantastical style, enables the reproduction of political and cultural ruptures and breakdowns.

Of course there are other world regions and other cultural contexts from which aspects of García Márquez’s immense global influence can be read, such as Japan or Africa. In Russia in 2012, for example, in honor of his 85th birthday, a Gabriel García Márquez Year was announced and celebrated with a broad range of cultural events, including seven subway cars in Moscow bearing oversized images of the author and quotes from his works. At this point, however, our look

¹³ Published by Denoël (Paris). Published in Arabic in 1981 (under the title, *Alf wa ‘am min al-hanin*).

at the four major regions of the USA, India, China and the Arabic world suffices to permit conclusions to be drawn from the circulation and adaptation of García Márquez's work and magical realism.

6 Conclusion

If we turn our attention, from an extra-literary perspective, to the canonization history of a recently deceased author, then – despite global nuances and differences – published works have to pass through Barcelona, Paris or New York to reach Bombay, Peking or Casablanca. The denomination centers of the West/North continue to exercise enormous power. The fact that García Márquez's global reception intensified after two key events – his Nobel Prize and his death – confirms this finding.

The history of the canonization of his works from a perspective within literature has distilled two different reception filters: in the West of the 1970s the two pillars of successful reception were the potential for connecting the works to World Literature and Orientalism; in the countries that here stand for the *Global South*, the specific, shared experience and aesthetic related to postcolonialism seem to be important. These two reception filters also manifest themselves in the frequently mentioned explanation of success at the level of the content: according to this line of argument, *Cien años de soledad* found global resonance because of its unique combination of its ability to connect universal dimensions of modern history with the particularities of local forms of oppression (see Siskind 2012: 855).

We have seen that a South-South perspective also offers heuristic potential arising from the question of the possible existence of decidedly “Southern” aesthetics and forms of representation. This seems to be all the more significant whenever we look to the literary modeling of shared historical experience within the *Global South*, which ranges from colonial history to integration into the economic, social and cultural processes of transformation within global modernity.

This also raises a literary question in relation to García Márquez, namely the extent to which Héctor Hoyos' manner of reading Borges and Bolaño could also be an example of how cultural products participate in the creation and recreation of narratives of the global and thereby find a transnational readership (Hoyos 2015: 4). This does two things to questions about the establishment of World Literature: first, they turn away from Eurocentric and U.S. concepts and canon formation; second, a content-based (pertaining to topics and author biographies) re-situation in the literatures of our time at the international and transnational

levels. Ottmar Ette's term "Literatures of the World" may capture this dimension particularly well because he points the way to the development of a scholarly concept (a development that is a long way from being complete) while taking up a conventional practice in the literary scene (Ette 2004, 2017). Vittoria Borsò speaks similarly of this phenomenon of "World Literatures"¹⁴. If we remain at the material level of specific processes of circulation and canonization, there are still a few research gaps that have to be filled at a purely descriptive level. At the same time, such processes must be reconsidered in light of South-South perspectives in order to meet the demands of an appropriate concept of World Literature in our current phase of globalization and in our academic practice.

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¹⁴ Recent years have seen further important programmatic interrogations of a positively connotated notion of World Literature, including for example Robert Stockhammer (2009), Sarah Brouillette (2015) and Pheng Cheah (2016).

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Teng Wei

Pablo Neruda in contemporary China: Translation between national and international politics (1949–1979)

I

From the 1950s to the 1970s in mainland China, the Latin American poets that people were most familiar with were undoubtedly José Martí and Pablo Neruda. As Neruda was a contemporary poet, as well as one of the leaders of the Chilean Communist Party, he had been invited to visit New China twice. For this reason, he was known in the 1950s to the Chinese not only as a poet, but also as a rather influential political figure. Actually, Neruda was on Chinese soil three times. The first was in 1928 when he visited Hong Kong and Shanghai in route to Rangoon, to take up the position of honorary consul. Yet the impression he had of old China was not favourable. In his autobiography he wrote: “That China was a colony ruled with an iron hand – a paradise of gamblers, opium smokers, brothels, nighttime muggers, phony Russian duchesses, sea and land pirates” (Neruda 2001: 236)¹. What was even more unforgettable for Neruda was being robbed in Shanghai. After he and a friend had made the rounds at six or seven night clubs, they each hired a rickshaw to go back to their hotel. In the rainy night the rickshaw drivers brought them to a suburb and stole their clothes and all their money, only leaving them with their passports and documents. That experience caused Neruda to compare Shanghai in his poem “Cantando a la tierra y al pueblo de China” to a “wicked woman” or “an old woman with wrinkles all over her face / so poor that she had nothing / holding an empty bowl / standing at the main entrance of a temple”².

1 “Aquella era una China férreamente colonizada; un paraíso de tabúres, de fumadores de opio, de prostíbulos, de asaltantes nocturnos, de falsas duquesas rusas, de piratas del mar y de la tierra” (Neruda 1980: 327).

2 This poem was written during the time Neruda visited China in 1953. Neruda wrote it by Ding Ling’s request. It was first written in Spanish, and translated by Yuan Shuipai from English version (translated by George Leeson). Neruda’s original script could not be found, so here is the version translated by myself from the Chinese version first published in *People’s Literature*, No. 3 (1953), pp. 63–70.

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In December 1949, Neruda was appointed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet as a member of the Stalin Peace Prize Jury. Guo Moruo (郭沫若) and French writer Louis Aragon, Neruda's good friend, were both vice-chairmen of the jury. At the time there had been frequent disagreements among the jury arising from national and personal interests. Neruda, Aragon and Ilya Ehrenburg collaborated and agreed among themselves and succeeded having the prize awarded to Pablo Picasso, Bertolt Brecht, and Spanish poet Rafael Alberti. Of course they were all anti-fascist, progressive figures, but at the same time they were also great friends of Neruda – particularly Picasso and Alberti. In 1951 Soong Chingling (宋庆龄) was awarded the prize after being nominated by Guo Moruo, the president of China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC). In September of that year, Neruda and Ehrenburg were asked by the jury to go to Beijing and present the award, which was a gold medal engraved with Stalin's picture and an award certificate. This time, Neruda's visit to China was entirely different from the awkward trip of 1928. Neruda was the first Latin-American cultural guru to pay a special and formal visit to New China. As he and Ehrenburg had come to present the award to Soong Chingling, who was vice-president of PRC at that time, they were received with much ceremony. On the afternoon of September 15th, Soong Chingling, Guo Moruo and Mao Dun (茅盾), president of the China Writers Association went to the airport to greet them in person. During their stay in China, almost all the state leaders of New China met with Neruda and Ehrenburg, these included Premier Zhou Enlai (周恩来), Vice President Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇), Zhu De (朱德) and others. Although they did not get the chance to meet Chairman Mao, they felt somewhat flattered by the level of the official reception. During the banquet, Neruda came to know Ai Qing (艾青), the extraordinary political lyric poet in socialist China, who he described as "charming" (2001: 208)³, "his broad dark features, his large eyes brimming with mischief and kindness, his quick intelligence" (2001: 231)⁴, all these qualities had made Neruda ecstatic. During the trip, Ai Qing had accompanied Neruda on sightseeing tours to the Fragrant Hill and Summer Palace. They went on to sample court dishes together at the latter.

In 1952 Neruda's exile ended and he returned to Chile. A year later he himself received the Stalin Peace Prize. In 1954 Neruda turned 50, and he invited many good friends from around the world to come celebrate, taking the opportunity to hold a gathering of the Left-wing cultural arena and intellectual arena, and call for the defense of peace. Those in attendance were Neruda's closest friends in

³ "encantador" (Neruda 1980: 28).

⁴ "su ancho rostro moreno, sus grandes ojos llenos de picardía y bondad, su inteligencia despierta" (Neruda 1980: 321).

the cultural field, including Ehrenburg, Jan Drda of Czechoslovakia, from Latin America Miguel Angel Asturias, Oliverio Gironde, Norah Lange, Elvio Romero among others. China regarded this event as very important, and sent a delegation led by Xiao San and Ai Qing. They brought boxes of presents including ivory carvings, Hunan embroidery, cloisonné jars, and other valuable items. At the time the Pacific route was not yet opened, and to travel from China to Chile it was necessary to go via Europe and Africa. Since China did not have diplomatic relations with most European and African countries at the time, it took Ai Qing a grueling eight days to fly to Santiago. During the trip, one box of presents was lost in transit. Ai Qing recalled later that the reason for bringing such valuable items as birthday presents for Neruda was in order to open up connections – which is to say to use Neruda's enormous reputation and widespread influence as a vehicle for opening up civilian diplomatic channels⁵. Ai Qing himself gave two paintings by the master of Chinese traditional painting Qi Baishi (齐白石) to Neruda. Neruda also made it a point to buy several bull horn cups as presents for Ai Qing as well as for the Chinese translator of his poems, Yuan Shuipai (袁水拍). Xiao San and Ai Qing stayed in Chile for a month. Neruda often entertained them in his Isla Negra home. He introduced Ai Qing to his Chilean friends, saying that Ai was his long-time friend, the only Chinese descended from the times of Qu Yuan (屈原)⁶. Ai Qing asked him “when will you visit China again?” He said with tears in his eyes: “I don't know, Ai Qing. There are many difficulties and it is not easy to get away. It has to be another two or three years”⁷. During his stay with Neruda, Ai Qing enjoyed his sincere and generous friendship. Ai Qing had also seen how the Chilean people loved Neruda. On 13th August 1954, Ai Qing's team bid farewell to Santiago and went back to China. During his stay in Chile and after going back home, Ai Qing wrote his most outstanding poems of the 50's, such as “Vienna” and the long poem “On the Chilean Strait – to Pablo Neruda”, as well as the set of poems “The Trip to South America”. In “On the Chilean Strait – to Pablo Neruda”, he writes: “You love the sea, I too love the sea / forever we shall navigate the sea”, expressing a sense of deep mutual appreciation. After saying farewell to Neruda at the airport, Ai Qing wrote on the flight “Farewell”, “With one ‘goodbye’ / no fixed date for reunion”. The sadness of departure and longing filled the lines⁸.

In August of 1956, Neruda invited the Chinese Cultural Delegation to visit Chile and perform. Not only did he personally go to the Santiago airport to greet

⁵ See Ai Qing 1980.

⁶ Qu Yuan is the first romantic poet in China's literary history.

⁷ Ai Qing 2004: 245.

⁸ See Guangwei 1999: 423–427.

them, but he also invited the delegation's leader, Chu Tunan (楚图南) and others to his seaside home for lunch. Standing on the shore in front of the delegation, he shouted "China, Xiao San, Ai Qing" towards the sea, again and again⁹.

The last time Neruda visited China was in 1957. Accompanying him were Brazilian left-wing writer Jorge Amado and Amado's wife. This time, Ai Qing went to Kunming in Yunnan to greet the group that was flying in from Burma. He took them sightseeing at Dianchi Lake and Shilin, the stone forest. They then flew to Chongqing and cruised down the Yangtze River, passing by the Three Gorges and Hankou, and finally went to Beijing. Ai Qing again presented a favourite Qi Baishi painting to Neruda. It was said that Neruda had made a special trip to visit Old Master Baishi. The latter did a painting for him on the spot of two agile small chickens fighting for an earthworm. He added the lines: "Call friends in the future – to Mr. Neruda, painted by Old Baishi at the age of 93". When Old Baishi put down his brushes, Neruda was so moved that he broke out in tears, and he embraced the Master¹⁰.

The era was that of the anti-Right movement in China. The situation was sensitive among the senior echelon of Beijing's cultural arena, where there prevailed a sense of "Storm is coming". Although Ding Ling (丁玲) was Vice-Chairperson of the Chinese Writers Association, a denouncement against her was already in the works. Earlier in the autumn of 1951, Ding Ling had received Neruda and was with him and Ehrenburg when they visited Shanghai and Hangzhou. She also made an official Welcome Speech to Ehrenburg and Neruda, in which she called Neruda a "Chilean poet as well as our poet" (Ling 2001: 264). Neruda considered her as one of his great Chinese friends. As for Ding Ling, it was certainly a happy occasion to reunite with an old friend, but further, having been assigned as the host of the banquet for Neruda, seemed to imply that her political situation had cleared up. She paid special attention to her makeup and put on an elegant silver-grey dress for the banquet. After returning home, she joyously described the scenes at the meal to her son, describing the conversation with Neruda among other things¹¹. However, according to Guo Xiaochuan's (郭小川) diary, Guo had met Neruda's group in Ai Qing's home on 16th July around 5 PM. At 6:30, Ai Qing invited everyone to Kang Le's (康乐)¹² for dinner. After finishing their meal at around 8, Guo Xiaochuan went to Zhou Yang's place. Zhou Yang (周扬), the vice minister of the Propaganda Department discussed three issues with him. The first was

⁹ See Wan Guang 1956: 29.

¹⁰ See Huang Yongyu 1992.

¹¹ See Jiang Zulin 1998.

¹² A family's private restaurant in Beijing, which was well known for its imperial dishes.

the denouncing of Zhong Dianfei (钟惦棐), a film critic. The second was Geyang (戈杨) at “The New Observer” (新观察) and the third issue was that of Ding Ling and Chen Qi Xia (陈启霞) which they decided would be worked on the following week (Xiaochuan 2000: 148).

Ding Ling and Ai Qing, Neruda’s best Chinese friends who had welcomed him did not get the chance to bid him farewell. They were criticized and purged by the Party and their peers as alike, because they were found to be rightist during the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957. The morning before Neruda’s departure, Ai Qing and his wife Gao Ying went to the Beijing hotel where Neruda was staying to say goodbye. Ai Qing told Neruda: “I have been involved in the Anti-Rightist Movement and probably will not be allowed to see you off” (Ying 2007: 296). Neruda did not understand what had happened. Ai Qing, not knowing how to phrase it in French, stomped his foot on the floor and made a gesture of blowing wind with his hands, meaning approaching disaster like earthquake or storm. Neruda finally understood the horrible situation that Ai Qing was facing. They were about to discuss it, but a telephone call came saying that a Minister wanted to come and see Neruda. Ai Qing immediately guessed that it was Zhou Yang, who he could not let see him there. Although Neruda could not understand the intricacies of the situation, he hugged Ai Qing in a strong embrace, and told Ai Qing that he hoped to see him again. The two hastily said goodbye. The person who came was indeed Zhou Yang and he told Neruda the news of Ai Qing’s denouncement. Neruda was very angry and he made a protest on the spot. Ultimately, Ai Qing was still not among the group who came to see him off from Beijing. Neruda said he left with a mouthful of bitterness. That bitterness could still be sensed many years later. Since that day, not only did they not meet again, but Ai Qing would never again read Neruda’s poetry.

II

Pablo Neruda’s work has been translated into Chinese since 1948. In the 15th issue of *World Affairs* (世界知识)¹³ a translation by Bai Yuan (柏园) appeared of “Chilean Poet Pablo Neruda’s Open Letter”. This is the earliest known Chinese translation of Neruda’s writings. The open letter may have been Neruda’s “The Crisis of Democracy in Chile is a Dramatic Warning for Our Continent”, published

¹³ *World Affairs* is a famous magazine covering international politics and culture. It was founded in 1934 in China.

in Venezuela's *EI Nacional* on November 27th, 1947. In this article, Neruda exposed the crimes of the Videla government. On January 6th, 1948 Neruda made his last speech in the Congress, "Yo acuso", after which he was stripped of his position as senator. On February 5th, a warrant was issued for his arrest. From then on, Neruda had to go into hiding, and in 1949 he fled Chile by land over the Andes. In April 1949, the anti-fascist cultural movement and intellectual movement met in Paris at the The World Congress of Partisans for Peace. In a miraculous fashion, Neruda unexpectedly appeared at the closing ceremony on the last day. The delegates to the Congress who had been worried about him rushed to embrace him. His appearance shattered the rumor spread by the Videla government that Neruda was still in Chile under siege by the Chilean police. American writer Howard Fast later wrote the article, "I Met Neruda in Paris", a translation of which was published in the 21st issue of China's *World Affairs* Periodical in 1949. This article is the second time that Neruda's work was translated into Chinese.

After the founding of New China, Neruda was translated from time to time, and after his visit with greater frequency. Neruda was portrayed to the Chinese people of the 1950s era as part of the political concepts of left-wing, progressiveness, struggle, anti-fascism, and so on. This tradition in interpretation has directly impacted Socialist China's acceptance, translation and interpretation of Neruda from the 1950s to the 1970s. In 1950, the poem "Let the Rail Splitter Awake" ("Que despierte el leñador") was translated by the famous satirist Yuan Shuipai (袁水拍), who was also in charge of the English translation of Chairman Mao's poems. This was the first publication of Neruda's poems in Chinese, published by Shanghai's Xin Qun Publishing in 1950, as one of the "Xin Qun Poem Series". In order to welcome Neruda's visit in 1951, *Selected Works of Neruda* was translated by Yuan Shuipai and published by the People's Literature Publishing House, the most important official literature publisher in China. The fine edition features illustrations by Neruda's friend José Venturelli and went into four printings within three years. "Que despierte el leñador" and *Selected Works of Neruda* were among the most popular books of foreign poems translated and published in 1950s in China. Neruda was the first Latin American poet to have visited China. He was being persecuted by the anti-Communist Chilean government and in exile at the time and had always been anti-fascist and against US-led imperialism. More importantly, he was a member of the Chilean Communist Party and one of their leaders. At the time, the work of Communist writers would not only be affirmed ideologically, but also rated highly in terms of artistic achievement. Because of this, the newly-established socialist China was willing to introduce and publicize Neruda with its substantial effort. The introduction of Neruda essentially emphasized Neruda as Latin America's conscience, a fighter, a soldier for peace, and the people's poet.

In the 1950s, the earliest articles published on Neruda's life and writings were by his friend, the Soviet writer Ehrenburg. The Chinese translation of his article "Pablo Neruda" was published in the second issue of volume two of *Translation Monthly*, which appeared on February 1st, 1950. In this article, Ehrenburg critiqued Neruda's work from the perspective of poetry writing. He believed the reason that Neruda could come to represent Latin American's art of poetry was because his poems had inherited the great traditions of both Castilian poetry and Chilean folk songs, and had also absorbed European (especially French) symbolist techniques and spiritual heritage, while simultaneously carrying the passion of Walt Whitman and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Ehrenburg felt that Neruda had by coincidence arrived on the poetic scene at the time when *modernismo* had arrived at a dead end in Latin America. His fresh and simple style, the use of nature imagery, novel imagining, and a richness in tone, had distinguished Neruda's voice from the field. In talking about Neruda's passion for Mayakovsky, Ehrenburg pointed out that what had moved the young Neruda was not Mayakovsky's poems during the Soviet Union Socialist establishment era, but the brightness, creativity, thunderous tone, sensitivity as well as agitating poetic power of his earlier work.

As compared to this, the introduction to the biography *Neruda* written by Volodia Teitelboim and Vera Kuteyschikova more clearly displayed the markings of time and ideology. The former was also a writer besides being General Secretary of the Chilean People's Front. His relation with Neruda was quite special. After Neruda's death, he wrote the highly authoritative biography *Neruda*. In 1952, he came to China to attend the Pacific Asia Peace Conference. During that period, he was invited by *The New Observer* magazine to write "Neruda's Battling Road". In this paper, Teitelboim asserted that Neruda was a member of the People because of his family background. He also included Neruda's early love poems as "resistance poems". Teitelboim believed that the Spanish Civil War and the expansion of fascism had driven Neruda to complete the transition from resistor to revolutionary. His poems became weapons that cried out on behalf of the people. Although he was persecuted by imperialists and their lackeys, this led to his becoming the favorite poet of the Chilean people. He was the "people's poet, passionate revolutionary, ambassador of peace, great singer who sang the praise of Soviet Union, China and other people's democratic countries [...] he led Latin America's intellectuals to find their true path", and therefore, "his achievement in this respect was greater than any Latin American writers" (Teitelboim 1952: 26–28). Kuteyschikova's *Pablo Neruda* was originally published in the Soviet Union's "Star" magazine in May 1949. The Chinese translator (Sun Wei, 孙玮) found it to be the most comprehensive introduction of Neruda's life work at the time with the exception of Ehrenburg's writings. That article also correlated

Neruda's literary work with his political life, stressing Neruda's connection to the struggle and the people, focusing on his anti-fascist and anti-imperialist stance, as well as emphasizing that he was a friend of the Soviet Union¹⁴. Afterwards, the introduction articles written in China essentially carried on in this vein rather than following Ehrenburg's stance. In 1957, to welcome Neruda to China again, the Writers Publishing House had further translated and published *Pablo Neruda's Biography* co-authored by Kuteyschikova and Adam Livovitch Stein.

In terms of translating Neruda, the most important Chinese translators during the 1950s–1970s era were Yuan Shuipai, Zou Jiang (邹绛), Wang Yangle (王央乐), Sun Wei (孙玮) and Chen Yongyi (陈用仪). In general, Yuan would re-translate from English translations, Zou from English or Russian, Sun mainly from Russian, and Wang and Chen directly from the original Spanish. Yuan Shuipai was one of the earliest and most famous Chinese translators of Neruda. According to him, the first time he came across Neruda's poems was in 1944 when he read the book *United Nations' Poetry Selection* in which was the poem "Almería" appeared. Yuan said it was one of the few short poems that had touched him the most. He translated it into Chinese right away but knew nothing about the author. In 1947 he read "Los muertos de la plaza", and in 1949 he read the poem "Que despierte el leñador". On the strength of Neruda's poems, he made a note to collect relevant biographical material in order to gain an understanding of Neruda's character and his militant life. Their similar political stance had deepened Yuan's acceptance of Neruda. In January 1950, his translation of "Que despierte el leñador" was published and was the first Chinese translation of Neruda's poetry. In the same year he met Neruda in Warsaw during the Defense of World Peace Congress, and again saw him at the ceremony where Neruda awarding the International Peace Council's International Peace Prize. Returning to China, Yuan Shuipai wrote the article, "Fighter for Peace – Neruda the Poet". Later he translated "El fugitivo". Along with "Los muertos de la plaza" and "Que despierte el leñador", it was included the collection *Canto General*, which consisted of Neruda's lyrical political poems. In 1951, to welcome Neruda to China, Yuan had translated a selection of these and published *Neruda's Poetry Collection*. At the time 12,100 copies were printed, 100 of which were elegant thread-sewn copies, 10,000 pocket-size, and 2000 roughly A4 size. The title, in calligraphy, was done by Guo Morou (郭沫若). The introduction was written by Czechoslovakian writer F.C. Weiskopf, who was then Czechoslovakia's ambassador to China. Venturelli had provided photos of Neruda as well as pictures he himself had drawn. Also included were pictures

14 See Kuteyschikova 1950 (the Chinese version was translated by Sun Wei).

other Latin American artists had drawn. From 1951 to 1954, this book was printed four times.

The poems translated by Yuan Shuipai were basically Neruda's political poems, mostly translated from English translations published in the American *Masses and Mainstream* magazine. Besides him, other translators also worked only with political poems, such as "El fugitivo", "Las uvas y el viento", "Canción de gesta" as well as "España en mi corazón". "El fugitivo" was a description of Neruda's life in exile pursuant to the political oppression he encountered. "Las uvas y el viento" collected Neruda's poems that paid tributes to China and the Soviet Union. "Canción de gesta" was dedicated to the Cuban Revolution, and it had a Chinese translation less than a year of its original publication. Out of all these work, the one that had greatest impact on China was "Que despierte el leñador", the important reason for this being that this long poem had predicted the certain failure of the U.S.A. and supported the Chiang Kai Shek government. This made it particularly favored in New China. Furthermore, this poem was indeed one of the best among Neruda's lyrical political poems.

III

After reviewing the translation history of Pablo Neruda in 20th century China, the real agenda behind this research may be revealed. It is an effort to describe the role that national and international politics have played in Socialist China's translation history of Latin American Literature. This point is to be divided into three parts for clarity.

First, because of the Cold War, developing relations with Asian, African, and Latin American countries became more and more important for New China. With the aim of striking back against the blockades of the United States, Chinese leaders implemented "people to people" diplomacy toward Sino-Latin American relations in the early days of New China. Thus, translating Latin American literature and interacting with their poets could be a very effective way of developing non-government diplomacy. For example, when Neruda went to visit New China in 1950, the host showed warm and extraordinary hospitality. Premier Zhou Enlai told him that he was "the first swallow in the spring of friendship between China and Latin America" (Zhiliang 2004: 55). He also discussed with Neruda the possibility of helping China invite a large group of Latin American intellectuals and artists to Beijing for a meeting. Neruda not only promised to do so, but also recommended his friend José Venturelli to Zhou to help prepare the meeting. In October 1952, with Pablo Neruda and Venturelli's positive contact, more than 150 representatives from 11 Latin American countries attended the Asia-Pacific

Peace Conference in Beijing. It represented a great diplomatic achievement in the history of New China. Just as China's expected, Neruda also actively mediated between Chile and China. Chile was the first country in South America to start bilateral trade relations with China in 1953 and establish a diplomatic relationship in 1970. All of this would hardly have been possible without Neruda's efforts. In addition, Premier Zhou Enlai instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a Spanish major in Chinese universities in order to welcome the representatives from Latin America. So the establishment of Spanish studies in China also took China's diplomatic and political needs into consideration.

Stimulated by the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, China suddenly had strong ties to Cuba and potentially other Latin American countries in turn. Consequently, in order to meet the requirements of national diplomacy, higher education institutions with majors in Spanish continued to emerge and expand all around China. Moreover, 1959 was the peak year of translating and publishing Latin American works between the 1950s–1970s. Neruda's every poem or essay on the Cuban Revolution was translated into Chinese and published in the most important official media like the *People's Daily*. During this era, not only was Spanish-teaching performed for political purposes, but also translations were closely associated with political action – essentially, Latin American literary works represented by Cuban literature were seen as “revolutionary literature” in China.

Like the cow that gives a good pail of milk and then kicks it over, Chinese translation of Latin American literature, which had been favored by international politics in the 1950s, later hit a pronounced low point because of the drastic change of the international situation. From the mid-1950s to 1964, the Sino-Soviet relationship evolved from the stage of “differences” into “split”. On this issue, the Communist Parties of Cuba and twenty-two other Latin American countries tried to mediate between China and the Soviet Union, but eventually failed. From then on, the Communist parties of Latin America were divided between the PRC and the USSR, splitting into two communities, one Pro-China and the other Pro-Soviet. Accordingly, only the left-wing writers of the Pro-China community could be introduced into mainland China; the others would be kept out of Chinese readers' sight. For instance, Pablo de Rokha was regarded as a member of the Pro-China community, while Pablo Neruda was evaluated as a negative character who held the viewpoint of Soviet revisionism. In July 1964, Pablo de Rokha was invited to visit China. Travelling widely, he wrote more than fifty poems in praise of China, Mao Zedong, and the Great Leap Forward. On the other hand, from 1964, neither Pablo Neruda nor his works appeared in China's media, despite his previous substantial contributions to “people-to-people” communications between China and Latin America. Even after the September 11th coup happened in Chile

in 1973, and Neruda died, the official media didn't say a word to condemn Pinochet's military *coup d'état* or to mourn Salvador Allende or Neruda. Once the most important Latin-American poet, Neruda had disappeared in the view of China. It was not until 1979, the end of the Cultural Revolution, that he and his work were permitted to return again.

Second, the translation strategy that the Chinese translators employed when translating Neruda was highly politicalized. As André Lefebvre posited¹⁵, translations are not made in a vacuum, but are a kind of rewriting, reflecting a certain ideology or poetics. Each step of the translating process such as selection, translation itself, publishing, bookselling, and literature review, is controlled and organized by the nation. Due to manipulation of literature and translation, the Chinese translation of Latin American literature from the 1950–1970s was synchronized with national politics. More particularly, the country made a clear distinction between “translatable” and “untranslatable” writers and works of foreign literature. Thus, only revolutionary and left-wing literary works could be introduced into mainland China. Several left-wing writers and intellectuals of Latin American who expressed sympathy for the Chinese revolution were invited to visit mainland China. Besides Neruda and Amado, Nicolás Guillén, Miguel Ángel Asturias, and Alejo Carpentier were also invited to visit China. Some of the left-wing intellectuals even worked in China as Spanish teachers. Although the writers who were introduced into China had varying literary styles – even works written by the same author are of course not static – Chinese translation of Latin-American literature focused merely on the works which were anti-imperialistic, and anti-authoritarian, works that praised the Soviet Union, China, and Socialism, and also those that supported the Cuban Revolution. For instance, some of Neruda's poems with themes of lust, obscurity, indifference, and surrealism were totally suppressed. Only the parts of his poems expressing the fighting spirit, or being filled with righteous indignation were “selected” for Chinese readers. Neruda's inquiry on the themes of *americanidad*, history, poetry, identity, and desire were often undervalued. For example, all of the poems selected for *Neruda's Poetry* published in 1951 were political poems and political speeches given after the Spanish Civil War.

Third, although this paper has examined China's translation and reception of Pablo Neruda in the years ranging from 1949 to 1979 – known as the Mao Era or the Era of Socialist Construction – from the perspective of translation studies, and has discussed the complicated and subtle relationship between translation and politics, translation and ideology, an attempt is still being made to avoid

15 See Lefebvre 1992.

the way of thinking which contrasts translation and politics or literature and politics. Especially important is to oppose the consideration of the local history of translation with a mere transplanting of the theory of ideological manipulation on top of it. Through deep historical research and the representation of the complicated connection between translation and politics, I found there truly exist what Raymond Williams terms “Structures of Feeling”. For example, some part of Neruda still survived and emerged through the translation practice’s misreading, rewriting, adapting and editing of his work. In fragments and instances, one could still feel the heterogeneity between Neruda’s poetry and the socialist realism. So it was not only because of the official ideology, but also due to the quality of Neruda’s poems themselves, that Chinese versions of Neruda’s work were printed in more than 83,000 copies¹⁶. Neruda was able to become the icon of Latin-American modern poetry in Chinese readers’ eyes, because they loved his poems in their hearts.

IV

After the Cultural Revolution, Neruda came back into view of Chinese readers. But the new translations were not as free as one might imagine. The Cold War had ended, but other ideologies took hold, such as de-politicization and globalization. For example, the first poem translated into Chinese after the Cultural Revolution was “Tu Risa”. This was the first time that Chinese readers got the chance to see, through the poem, some of Neruda’s personal and romantic life. From then on, more and more love poems were translated. In 1996, in the wake of the Oscar-nominated film *The Postman*, Neruda again came into view for the Chinese. The film talked about Neruda’s life during exile, living on the Island of Capri in Italy. He taught the island’s postman who delivered his letters to write love poems, and to pursue love. After the release of the film, Neruda’s love poems became a hit in translation and publication. In particular, *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* was widely translated. The Chinese readers discovered suddenly that Neruda actually described sex with exquisiteness and feeling. As result, in *Selected poems of Pablo Neruda*, published in 2003, there were no political poems included. Today, Neruda is considered as a master of poetry and a Nobel Laureate

¹⁶ At that time, Chinese people were so poor that they had no habit to buy books from the bookstore. Most people borrowed books from public libraries, or from those who had the money or the right to own books. So a book that could be sold more than a 10,000 times had to be considered extremely popular.

in China. However, his life of struggle for the Chilean people, democracy, and world peace have been intentionally obscured and forgotten.

In sum, this essay takes the translation history of Pablo Neruda during the socialist China era (1949–1979) as a case, and uncovers the various kinds of misreading and rewriting in the process of translation and reception. It is designed to discuss the complicated and subtle relationship between translation and national/international politics, translation and ideology. By revealing the close literary and political connection and interaction between China and Latin-American countries, the essay attempts to find new ways of thinking and understanding the global literary history during the Cold War period¹⁷.

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¹⁷ See further discussions in Wei Teng 2011.

Jorge J. Locane

Por una sociología de las ausencias en la literatura mundial

I

La bibliografía comprometida en el debate sobre *literatura mundial* suele identificar, de manera más o menos explícita, la existencia de dos niveles o dinámicas diferenciados: el nacional y el internacional¹. De ahí que algunos investigadores hayan propuesto la necesidad de establecer una suerte de “división del trabajo” (cfr. Moraña 2006), respectivamente, entre especialistas y generalistas (Damrosch 2003; Moretti 2013). Al margen de que las lógicas concretas que dominan las dinámicas intrínsecas de los dos sistemas no han sido precisadas en detalle, creo que los abordajes disponibles, siempre parciales, se fundan por lo general en un idealismo culturalista que reduce el fenómeno al desdoblamiento de valores y referencias culturales involucrados. Dicho en pocas palabras: la *performance* que un texto puede tener en el circuito internacional –argumentan– nunca puede ser evaluada desde el sistema de referencias nacional, o viceversa. Esto es así porque, respectivamente, los textos estarían respondiendo a e interactuando con tramas culturales específicas y en cierto punto incompatibles.

Si bien el planteo en principio me parece adecuado, creo que el sistema nacional y el internacional son *algo más* que configuraciones culturales. Más aún, creo que antes que eso habría que entenderlos como sistemas productivos de valor económico y simbólico. Sistemas que, si atendemos en particular a las periferias, van a contrastar de manera fundamental en las condiciones materiales bajo las cuales funciona la maquinaria de producción y los mecanismos de agregado de valor.

El punto de partida, entonces, sería el siguiente: la *literatura mundial* y las *literaturas locales* –prefiero utilizar este término– constituyen sistemas productivos que responden a demandas y condiciones económicas, y también culturales, diferentes entre sí y, hasta cierto punto, mutuamente excluyentes. La infraestructura y los recursos requeridos y en efecto a disposición en ambos niveles suelen

¹ Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, por ejemplo, se refiere al punto en los siguientes términos: “The importance of formal and thematic properties to international canonization has been underestimated and understudied, especially as national canonization has a different logic and different values than international canonization” (2008: 3).

ser en muchos sentidos disímiles. A lo que, desde ya, habría que añadir que los perfiles culturales correspondientes a los lectores ideales de cada uno de los dos sistemas difícilmente pueden coincidir. Y si prefiero hablar de *literaturas locales* en lugar de literatura nacional es porque me interesa acentuar que el sistema productivo a escala no-mundial no necesariamente responde a un horizonte de expectativas nacional, sino, en casos, a unos mucho más localizados, lo que implica que las marcas morfológicas de lo plural, en su doble manifestación –literaturaS localeS– no pueden ser elididas.

No ignoro que el ya frondoso debate sobre el tema ha dado lugar a varias definiciones de *literatura mundial*, un espectro que va de enfoques altamente programáticos (Cheah 2016) a los fundados en las efectivas condiciones materiales de producción (Helgesson/Vermeulen 2015; y, especialmente, Brouillette 2015). Extraigo, a conciencia de que podría valerme de otro esquema, el escenario inicial sobre el que me interesa argumentar como resultado de un refinado crítico de algunas fórmulas acuñadas por David Damrosch. Si la *literatura mundial*, en su modelo, aparece definida como “all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language” (Damrosch 2003: 4), un interrogante que se podría abrir a acto seguido sería: ¿pero qué sucede con aquellos textos que, por la razón que fuere, no experimentan tal suerte? ¿Cómo y bajo qué premisas conceptuales considerar, entonces, el fenómeno de lo *no* circulante? En un contexto histórico, el actual, donde las élites culturales han optado por posicionarse contra los atavismos regionalistas² para apuntalar los fundamentos culturales de una emergente comunidad imaginada ahora de alcance mundial, las producciones que permanecen enraizadas en tramas locales no prestigiosas tienden a ser despreciadas como provincianas o excesivamente particularistas: “some literary works, indeed, may be so closely dependent on detailed, culture-specific knowledge that they can only be meaningful to members of the originating culture or to specialists in that culture; these are works that remain within the sphere of a national literature and never achieve an effective life in world literature”, agrega Damrosch en su libro *What is World Literature?* (2003: 158). De modo que las elaboraciones que respondan al horizonte de expectativas de los centros mundiales de producción cultural van a contar con la predisposición de los favores, y el reconocimiento de

2 Sobre el punto, Zygmunt Bauman escribe: “Some of us become fully and truly ‘global’; some are fixed in their ‘locality’ – a predicament neither pleasurable nor endurable in the world in which the ‘globals’ set the tone and compose the rules of the life game.

Being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation. The discomforts of localized existence are compounded by the fact that with public spaces removed beyond the reaches of localized life, localities are losing their meaning-generating and meaning-negotiating capacity and are increasingly dependent on sense-giving and interpreting actions which they do not control” (1998: 2–3).

la acogida y puesta en circulación internacional. Mientras que las producciones por alguna razón resistentes a la asimilación por parte de los mercados material y simbólico mundiales van, así, a resultar invisibilizadas como fuentes contenedoras de alguna verdad –ya sea estética, política o cultural– validable a nivel mundial.

II

Me voy a permitir ser algo simplista y esquemático. La *literatura mundial*, la que se produce hoy según la premisa “literatura que circula más allá de su marco nacional de gestación”, es, fundamentalmente, un producto de la industria cultural transnacional, es decir que en gran medida depende de la infraestructura y de la voluntad de los conglomerados polirrubros –valga el grupo Bertelsmann como exponente ejemplar– para un funcionamiento efectivo. Estos grupos, que –como es sabido– son contados, disponen de una amplia ventaja en lo que respecta al control de los canales, los recursos humanos y los recursos económicos necesarios que sostienen la circulación a escala mundial –y con ello, habría que agregar, la codificación ideológico-cultural exigida a los productos–. La Feria del Libro de Frankfurt es hoy en día, sin duda, *el* foro, emblemático por excelencia, donde se pactan los tráficos del futuro inmediato y sus condiciones. Algunas vertientes teóricas –Gisèle Sapiro, ante todo– han querido conceptualizar la lógica hegemónica en este dominio en base al arsenal teórico de la sociología de la literatura de raigambre bourdieuana. Me gustaría acotar, no obstante, que este sistema productivo es tan dependiente de recursos económicos –los necesarios para la adquisición de derechos, para el pago de traducciones y para la cobertura publicitaria, entre otros– que no veo que deje mayor margen para la siempre discutida “autonomía relativa” de la literatura que en su momento supo postular Pierre Bourdieu, valga recordar, inspirado en el campo literario francés decimonónico³.

³ Sin embargo, en su texto “Una revolución conservadora en la edición” de 1999, Bourdieu pareciera sugerir que la tensión entre el polo autónomo y el heterónimo, en la fase de la actual concentración editorial, se habría resuelto definitivamente en favor de la segunda. Al respecto, anota: “Si es verdad que, como lo ha mostrado Jean-Yves Mollier, la edición ha pasado, entre 1880 y 1920, de la pequeña empresa familiar a la gran empresa casi industrial, estos cambios no tendrían la amplitud ni la brutalidad de las conmociones estructurales que han sido suscitadas, desde hace una veintena de años, por la irrupción de una lógica financiera sin concesiones en el mundo relativamente protegido (otros dirán arcaico) de la edición francesa. Desde la OPA de Jimmy Goldsmith, en 1986, en las Presses de la Cité, revendidas algunos meses más tarde como cualquier empresa cotizada en bolsa, los fenómenos de concentración se han sucedido, yendo del rescate puro y simple a la toma de participación del capital –sin hablar de todos los lazos de dependencia asociados a la participación en la fabricación o en la difusión–, con la consecuencia casi siempre, del abandono de una política editorial propiamente literaria en beneficio de una lógica puramente comercial” (1999: 253).

Es cierto que una zona, acaso marginal, de los canales de circulación internacional estaría controlada por organismos culturales o políticos que asumen el costo económico de algunas instancias de la producción, lo que daría lugar a cierta circulación de, por ejemplo, literatura mapuche, yoruba, de mujeres o kurda⁴. En cualquier caso, ante esta evidencia, la lógica heterónoma no se vería afectada, sino, al contrario, constatada como –vamos a decir así– “regla de juego básica” del escenario. Si la lógica economicista posee un carácter ampliamente dominante, por razones que tienen que ver con los costos mínimos necesarios para sostener la producción, lo que estarían haciendo las agencias de financiamiento alternativo es introducir marginalmente criterios de selección no prioritarios.

Pero los costos que agregan valor en la cadena productiva no se reducen a la etapa que podemos llamar de “preproducción”; a esta, le sucede, una etapa de efectiva puesta en circulación y luego una de confirmación. La distribución, la visibilidad en las bocas de ventas, la publicidad, las notas de prensa, las reseñas y los premios son todos mecanismos de agregado de valor involucrados –e insoslayables– en la producción de *literatura mundial*. Todo esto tiene su costo, y los grandes conglomerados son quienes disponen –o al menos concentran– no solo de los medios económicos indispensables sino también, en casos, de la infraestructura subsidiaria: las distribuidoras, las librerías, los periódicos, la radio y la televisión.

Los premios internacionales, y particularmente los comerciales, merecen una mención especial, pues estarían no solo asignando valor en base al principio heterónomo, sino, de acuerdo con los argumentos de James English, a partir de un descentramiento o no correspondencia geopolítica. En sus palabras, “What I wish to emphasize at this stage is that the recent frenzy of prizes and awards has begun to foster not merely a denationalization but a more radical *detritorialization* of prestige, an uncoupling of cultural prizes, and even of symbolic fields as such, from particular cities, nations, even clearly defined regions” (2005: 282). Esto, dicho en otros términos, significa que los premios internacionales estarían reconociendo o exaltando literaturas supuestamente locales de acuerdo con horizontes de expectativas y de ventas no locales. Las escrituras reconocidas por estos medios no responderían, por lo tanto, a representaciones del mundo locales

⁴ En su artículo “How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)? A Sociological Approach to World Literature” (2016), Sapiro examina, precisamente, los factores que pueden favorecer u obstaculizar la circulación internacional de literatura. Según sugiere, estos factores son de cuatro tipos: políticos, culturales, económicos y sociales. No obstante, aclara que “Economic considerations are [...] involved in the production and circulation of books and in many cases prevail over other considerations” (87).

y heterogéneas, sino correspondientes a la cultura de recepción, internacional y hegemónica, es decir y finalmente, al paradigma de la democracia liberal occidental. Acá –advirtamos– es donde la *literatura mundial* se manifiesta con mayor contundencia como una selección de las literaturas del mundo a partir de una perspectiva local hegemónica. O, dicho de otro modo, donde la buena conciencia del Norte, la de los centros de producción cultural a nivel mundial, hace valer su poder para seleccionar y jerarquizar las literaturas locales del Sur de acuerdo con su propia agenda de política cultural⁵. La *literatura mundial*, por esto mismo, sería un producto cultural destinado no a poner en cuestión el lugar en el mundo del sujeto lector, sino, al contrario, de constatarlo en la medida que corrobora la representación del mundo que ya posee. Se trata de un tipo de lectura tranquilizadora y confirmativa, puesto que, al mismo tiempo, constata el orden geopolítico y las jerarquías establecidos.

Alguien podría argumentar que frente al poder consagratorio de la industria cultural transnacional habría que considerar la crítica especializada o la investigación académica, la de la comparatística o de los estudios culturales. Es conocido el caso de Ignacio Echevarría y su suerte, al practicar el ejercicio crítico en un sentido estricto. Después de publicar una reseña desaprobatoria del libro *El hijo del acordeonista* (2003), de Bernardo Atxaga, en el suplemento *Babelia* de *El país*, Echevarría fue apartado por la dirección del diario, que responde al grupo Prisa del mismo modo que en ese momento lo hacía la editorial Alfaguara que había publicado el libro de Atxaga⁶. Valga el caso como un claro ejemplo de la derrota del polo autónomo frente a la lógica heterónoma. Y los foros académicos: diría que gran parte de lo que se lee –y se celebra– como *literaturas locales* en realidad es parte del corpus de la *literatura mundial*, quiero decir que, en casos, un texto que es leído como testimonio documental de algún orden cultural específico, en realidad fue seleccionado, de acuerdo con políticas culturales desterritorializadas, y distinguido por la industria editorial transnacional para alentar la buena recepción en los foros académicos del Norte, de tal suerte que estos espacios pasan a desempeñar una función confirmatoria pasiva y de agregado de valor simbólico; de reproducción, finalmente, de la lógica de selección articulada por el mercado. Juan Gabriel Vásquez, valga como ejemplo, recibió el

5 Al respecto, puede consultarse el capítulo “Prizes and the Politics of World Culture” del libro de English (2006), particularmente en lo que refiere al caso de Wole Soyinka.

6 En carta abierta a Lluís Bassets, director adjunto del periódico, Ignacio Echevarría haría explícitas sus “dudas sobre el sentido de tratar de hacer una crítica independiente en un medio que parece privilegiar, con descaro creciente, los intereses de una editorial en particular y, más en general, de las empresas asociadas a su mismo grupo. No parece casual que sea un libro de Alfaguara el que haya alentado tus escrúpulos sobre el tono que eventualmente empleo a la hora de hablar sobre un libro que considero francamente malo” (2006 [2004]: 94).

premio Alfaguara en el 2011; en el 2015 se realizó un congreso dedicado en exclusivo a él en la Universidad de Montpellier⁷. Andrés Neuman, por su parte, lo obtuvo en el 2009, mientras que en el 2012, en la universidad de Neuchâtel, se celebró el Coloquio Internacional Andrés Neuman⁸. A este tipo de aval legitimador que ofrece la academia del Norte a producciones asociadas de algún modo con las periferias, pero seleccionadas por la industria cultural con base en la metrópoli, voy a proponer entenderlo como un pacto de colaboración entre mercado y saber destinado a confirmar la representación del mundo hegemónica.

III

Frente al modo de producción de la *literatura mundial*, uno que por las condiciones que acabo de exponer relativas a la necesidad de racionalizar recursos económicos y humanos, podríamos denominar “profesional”, existe el de las *literaturas locales*. Las *literaturas locales* son, precisamente, las que quedan excluidas del modelo de Damrosch, las que no circulan y las que, me animo a postular, pueden ser portadoras de diferencias formales, culturales y políticas auténticas; las que, en su conjunto, darían lugar a un escenario mundial no dominado por una perspectiva centralizada, del Norte, sino heterogéneo y, acaso, verdaderamente desafiante para la ideología multiculturalista liberal.

La infraestructura productiva de las *literaturas locales* sería la que se desarrolla espontáneamente en condiciones de precariedad relativa, es decir, ante todo en las localizaciones y zonas del mundo donde el capitalismo fracasa como mesianismo modernizador. La publicación independiente y autogestionada, los microemprendimientos editoriales y los proyectos unipersonales, todos aquellos que, por escasez de recursos económicos, no aspiran –no pueden aspirar– a la trascendencia o circulación a gran escala constituirían el soporte material del modo de producción que voy a llamar “artesanal”. Por supuesto que podría –y seguramente convendría– establecer una taxonomía y diferenciar, por ejemplo, entre la autoedición a mano y los emprendimientos editoriales con cierto nivel de proyección de ventas y cobertura territorial, pero lo que ahora me interesa resaltar es: en primer lugar, que estos complejos circuitos productivos operarían como una alternativa disruptiva frente a la lógica “profesional”; en segundo, que si bien existen en todo el mundo, en el Sur global han florecido con especial énfasis

⁷ Véase: http://www.univ-montp3.fr/llacs/wp-content/uploads/Programme_JGVASQUEZ.pdf.

⁸ Véase: <http://www.unine.ch/irene.andres/home/grands-seminaires-de-neuchatel.html#cid10a396b6-d841-450b-b245-cce3b357d5cb>.

en los últimos años y; tercero, que, puesto que no dependen de cantidades significativas de capital, representarían espacios de producción donde el principio autónomo todavía puede hacer valer sus criterios. Esto, a su vez, implicaría que allí estaría contenida –o habría mayores garantías de ello– la diversidad, que cada nodo productivo, al responder a una demanda localizada y a un horizonte de expectativas correspondiente, estaría dando cuenta de una representación del mundo específica. De modo que, en su conjunto, estas tramas de producción localizadas en el Sur global estarían ofreciendo el corpus de literaturas del mundo no alineadas con una perspectiva única, heterónoma y eurocéntrica.

Escribe José Ignacio Padilla que

Dada la inexistente infraestructura editorial en Perú, Ecuador o Bolivia, el circuito de la vida literaria opera con frecuencia bajo auto-edición: sin registro de ISBN, sin depósito legal en las bibliotecas nacionales, sin editor de oficio, sin una mínima distribución, sin presencia en las escasas librerías. Desde esta posición, sin referencias claras de valor, los participantes de la vida literaria tienen que negociar su estatuto con los otros circuitos y esforzarse por asistir, “dejarse ver” en la “escena” (Laddaga 2008). Ajenos al circuito mediático y muchas veces surgidos pero no partícipes del circuito académico, operan con nula visibilidad en la lucha por el control simbólico del campo. (2014: 31)

Estos modos de producción localizados, artesanales y escasamente formalizados, pero todavía fundados en ciertos criterios de autonomía y capaces de dar cuenta de la diferencia local, pues no responden a pautas de recepción del mercado internacional, son también, como señala Padilla, víctimas de un sistemático ninguneo. Una invisibilización que, por otra parte, sería un mecanismo de borramiento de la diferencia local y, con ello, de la diversidad –formal, política y cultural– en el ecosistema mundial.

Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani ganó el Commonwealth Writers’ Prize en 2010 con su novela *I Do Not Come to you by Chance* (2009), y con ello se convirtió en una de las pocas escritoras/escritores africanos, no residentes en el Norte global, en ganar un premio internacional. En 2014, haciendo un uso estratégico de la visibilidad adquirida gracias al premio, escribió en el *New York Times* lo siguiente: “Some of the greatest African writers of my generation may never be discovered, either because they will not reach across the Atlantic Ocean to attract the attention of an agent or publisher, or because they have not yet mastered the art of deciphering Western tastes” (2014: s.p.).

La publicación localizada, la de las editoriales *independientes* –no voy a abordar ahora las complejidades del término– del Sur global, es, por lo tanto, la única que en principio no aparece formateada, al menos directamente, en función de los consumidores occidentales, de su representación del mundo y de sus criterios de valor estético y cultural. Pero, tal vez justamente por esto, porque puede

problematizar el orden geopolítico establecido y la imagen complaciente que Occidente elabora del mundo, las *literaturas locales* tienden a permanecer silenciadas. Tanto en América Latina como en África estas editoriales se han propagado sensiblemente en los últimos años como reacción a la creciente concentración de la industria editorial. Y, sin embargo, carecen de representatividad en los foros internacionales: ya sea en las ferias o, incluso, en la academia⁹. No van en busca de lectores internacionales, sino que, por el contrario, reclaman que los lectores internacionales con sentido crítico vayan tras ellas. Podría nombrar editoriales como Bajo la luna, Germinal, Tumbona o Índole Editores de América Latina. El colectivo Jalada, Amalion o Modjaji Books de países de África. Todas ellas, a pesar de estar haciendo desde hace años una contribución genuina, sistemática y alternativa al paisaje literario mundial, apenas si son (re)conocidas en los centros mundiales de producción cultural. No vale lo mismo, claro está, para Planeta o Alfaguara, para Methuen Publishing o Random House; editoriales que suelen ser las de referencia para pensar las literaturas del mundo desde el *submundo* occidental.

IV

¿Qué hacer? La pregunta, hace tiempo transitada, me parece, ante este panorama, actual y oportuna. En su estudio sobre los modos de producción de no existencia, Boaventura de Sousa Santos advierte cómo la particularidad dominante —para el caso los centros de producción cultural occidentales con su repertorio de saberes— logra inhabilitar fórmulas vernáculas disidentes al calificarlas de “locales” y, por lo tanto, sin significado para el dominio global. A este fenómeno lo denomina “lógica de la escala dominante”:

En los términos de esta lógica, la escala adoptada como primordial determina la irrelevancia de todas las otras posibles escalas. En la modernidad occidental la escala dominante aparece sobre dos formas principales: lo universal y lo global. El universalismo es la escala de entidades o realidades que valen independientemente de los contextos específicos. Tiene por ello, precedencia sobre todas las otras realidades que dependen de contextos y por esa razón son consideradas particulares o vernáculas. La globalización, en los últimos veinte años, adquirió una importancia sin precedentes en los más diversos campos sociales. Se trata de una escala que privilegia las entidades o realidades que alargan su ámbito a todo el globo y que al hacerlo, adquieren la prerrogativa de designar entidades o realidades

⁹ El caso de las editoriales cartoneras puede valer como ejemplo. Lo paradójico de este fenómeno es que, si bien ha recibido cierta atención académica en el Norte en tanto práctica cultural identificada con un soporte innovador (Bilbija/Celis Carbajal 2009, entre otros), el contenido de los libros, los textos en sí, no ha sido en absoluto examinado.

rivales como locales. En el ámbito de esta lógica, la no existencia se produce bajo la forma de lo particular y lo local. Las entidades o realidades definidas como particulares o locales están aprisionadas en escalas que las incapacitan de ser alternativas creíbles a lo que existe de modo universal o global. (2009: 111)

Una sociología de las ausencias aplicada a la literatura mundial, a diferencia de la sociología de la literatura en su formato hoy “clásico” que –como propuse– creo que resulta insuficiente para pensar el sistema mundial de producción literaria como un circuito con sobreflujos, interferencias e interrupciones, sería la encargada de visibilizar las *literaturas locales* y, con ello, de promover, y con suerte garantizar, una auténtica –valga el acento– *bibliodiversidad*. Este enfoque sugiere que una academia que se pretende atenta a las diferencias que componen el mundo no debería reproducir servil o ciegamente las decisiones de la industria editorial concentrada, pues este filtro tiende a homogeneizar las producciones en función de sus naturales intereses económicos. Destaco en este punto que esta metodología no apunta tanto a cuestionar políticas culturales llevadas a cabo por actores privados de acuerdo con sus necesidades –lo que a mi entender es en absoluto legítimo y comprensible–, sino mucho antes a interpelar a los estudios literarios del Norte con proyección mundial para que agudicen su mirada (crítica). Esto se funda en el supuesto de que solo una mirada (también) focalizada en los sistemas productivos locales y en lo no circulante¹⁰ podría dar cuenta de la especificidad y, por consiguiente, de la verdadera heterogeneidad. Quiero decir, las literaturas del Sur estarían comprendidas *tanto* por las que efectivamente circulan como por las que *no* lo hacen. Esto, claro está, conlleva riesgos, pues es probable que las *literaturas locales* no confirmen algunas o varias de las consabidas hipótesis elaboradas en los centros, por lo pronto porque tienden a perturbar premisas implícitas del pacto entre mercado y saber. Pero me gustaría subrayar que indagar las producciones alternativas, no alineadas, es ante todo parte de una responsabilidad profesional que no corresponde descuidar. ¿O, acaso, no es tarea de una academia que se autoproclama crítica contribuir a darles visibilidad a los productos culturales que no confirman el orden eurocéntrico, que no circulan por los canales establecidos y que no van en busca de la aceptación del mercado occidental? En este sentido, una sociología de las ausencias aplicada a la literatura mundial sería, pues, una herramienta teórica para asignarles reconocimiento a las soluciones locales y designarlas como “alternativas creíbles” a las fórmulas que postula la industria cultural concentrada y que el paradigma de la circulación avala.

¹⁰ Para una crítica a la definición de literatura mundial centrada en el principio de circulación, véase el artículo de César Domínguez en este volumen.

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Gustavo Guerrero

La Croix du Sud (1945–1970): génesis y contextos de la primera colección francesa de literatura latinoamericana

Le Brésil et l'Amérique du Sud ne signifiaient pas grandes chose pour moi. Néanmoins, je revois encore, avec la plus grande netteté les images qu'évoqua aussitôt cette proposition imprévue. Les pays exotiques m'apparaissaient comme le contre-pied des nôtres, le terme antipodes trouvait dans ma pensée un sens plus riche et plus naïf que son contenu littéral.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (1955)

En 1945, cuando Roger Caillois llega a un acuerdo con la casa Gallimard para crear una colección destinada a publicar exclusivamente traducciones de obras latinoamericanas, la denominación “Cruz del Sur” podía denotar varios objetos diferentes y relativamente familiares en la cultura francesa. El primero, y el más obvio, era la constelación austral compuesta por cinco estrellas dispuestas en forma de rombo o losange, un cuadrante celeste que tradicionalmente funge de gemelo sureño de la Cruz del Norte en tanto punto de referencia para la navegación marítima, terrestre y aérea. Conocida desde tiempos remotos, esta pequeña constelación entra en el repertorio occidental durante los siglos de la expansión europea hacia América, Asia y Oceanía, y por ello hoy aparece en las banderas de un buen número de países que hacen de su ubicación hemisférica un signo de identidad y la indican a través de un símbolo asociado a su pasado colonial. Tal es el caso de Australia, Samoa y, más cerca de nosotros, Brasil. La portada original de la colección de Caillois no solo reproduce las cinco estrellas de la constelación (y agrega otras cuatro) sino que parece aludir también, con sus líneas y colores, a la bandera brasileña, acaso una evocación inconsciente de un caro recuerdo de infancia, como lo escribió el propio editor (Caillois 2008: 94).

Pero la Cruz del Sur es también por entonces otra cosa: el nombre que se le da en francés a una alhaja de origen tuareg (llamada asimismo Cruz de Agadés) en la cual la constelación aparece representada por cuatro o cinco estrellas. Ampliamente difundida a todo lo largo del Sahara, en los territorios que formaban parte del África Occidental Francesa, esta prenda llega pronto a la metrópoli y es reproducida por los joyeros y artesanos en formas diversas y estilizadas, destinadas a

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alimentar el mercado parisino de la moda y sus tendencias étnicas y orientalistas (Dieterlen/Ligers 1972: 29–53).

En fin, *last but not least*, a mediados de los años cuarenta del siglo pasado, como bien lo ha destacado Annick Louis, la denominación Cruz del Sur no podía menos que evocar en Francia el nombre del famoso hidroavión de Jean Mermoz, que desaparece durante un dramático vuelo sobre el Atlántico en diciembre de 1936 (Louis 2013: 78). Motivo de un sentido duelo nacional, la muerte del aviador y hombre político, junto a la de los cuatro tripulantes, rodea de un aura de tragedia y heroísmo la apertura de la línea aérea entre Dakar y Natal, justamente entre el África Occidental Francesa y la América Latina. De hecho, Mermoz y su avión quedarán en las memorias como íconos de la aventura de Aeropostal en los dos continentes y como emblemas de la voluntad gala de establecer y usufructuar una vía de comunicación directa hacia Latinoamérica a través de las colonias africanas, un inédito y arriesgado corredor aéreo que debía reducir drásticamente la distancia entre ambos territorios, creando entre ellos una cierta continuidad espacial.

El sur al que alude el título de la colección de Roger Caillois en 1945 arrastra consigo todas estas referencias y no solo designa unos objetos bastante precisos, sino que connota, además, los contextos en que se inscriben dentro de la historia de la navegación y la formación de los imperios europeos, así como también al interior de las estéticas del orientalismo o en esas páginas de la epopeya de la aviación moderna en las que se combinan con naturalidad los ideales cosmopolitas, las proezas tecnológicas, las ambiciones coloniales y a veces algún drama personal. Accesoriamente, tal y como consta en la correspondencia que Caillois mantuvo con Victoria Ocampo, el sur de la Cruz del Sur encierra un velado homenaje a la célebre revista y al grupo de escritores que acogió al francés en Buenos Aires durante los años de la Segunda Guerra Mundial (Caillois/Ocampo 1996: 174–175). Casi todos los principales estudios que se han hecho sobre la colección no dejan de subrayarlo (Molloy 1972; Fell 1992; Villegas 1992; Louis 2013). Sin embargo, hay que reconocer que la referencia argentina le resultaba menos familiar al público al que se destinaban originalmente los libros. Este leía más bien en el título y en la portada una invitación al viaje hacia un horizonte lejano y exótico, avalado por la firma de un gran especialista de aquellas regiones (el nombre de Roger Caillois figurará siempre en las portadas) y por la reputación de una editorial que se había labrado parte de su prestigio, apostando por la traducción y por la difusión de literaturas extranjeras.

En efecto, tal y como nos lo recuerda Lévi-Strauss, no era mucho lo que se sabía de América Latina en Francia a mediados del siglo XX. A despecho del tan celebrado vínculo que nuestros modernistas y vanguardista tejen con la cultura literaria francesa, el continente no tiene un perfil preciso en el imaginario galo y en tanto *sur* solo representa unas antípodas indiferenciadas e

inconmensurables, que acaso comparten, con otros territorios coloniales, la promesa de una alteridad radical. La colección de Caillois constituye, en este sentido, una avanzadilla y una propuesta inaugural: se trata de uno de los primeros intentos de elaborar y difundir una cierta idea de América Latina no solo de cara al público francés sino también europeo, gracias a la influencia de la que aún goza entonces París como gran vitrina de las literaturas del mundo. Gallimard es justamente una de las casas que más y mejor encarna esta vocación internacionalista, pues, desde sus inicios, su catálogo es concebido por el grupo fundador y sus compañeros de ruta (entre los cuales se encontraba, no habría que olvidarlo, Valéry Larbaud) a la manera de una ambiciosa biblioteca universal, en la mejor tradición enciclopédica de la Ilustración francesa (Assouline 1984: 245–249). Tras dos décadas durante las cuales se publican sin distinción bajo el sello de *NRF* las obras extranjeras traducidas junto a las obras francesas, la creación de la colección *Du Monde Entier* (literalmente “del mundo entero”) en 1931 le da esta aspiración una forma autónoma y propia. Con ella se abre un espacio específico para la traducción, la promoción y la comercialización de las literaturas extranjeras y se les ofrece a los lectores la posibilidad de acceder a una cartografía continuamente actualizada y ampliada de la literatura mundial.

La pregunta que se plantea enseguida es, evidentemente, por qué era necesario abrir en 1945 una colección destinada exclusivamente a la traducción de autores latinoamericanos cuando existía otra que habría podido hacerles un lugar más holgado dentro del proyecto universalista de la editorial. Más allá o más acá de la ambición personal de Caillois, la o las respuestas a esta interrogante son cruciales, creo, tanto para entender la verdadera naturaleza de la Cruz del Sur, como para acercarse a las ideas de su fundador y a su postura ante América Latina en el contexto político, literario y cultural francés al concluir la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Ambas cosas, en realidad, van juntas porque no se puede entender el surgimiento y las características de la colección si no se tiene en cuenta su inserción en un momento histórico clave de las relaciones franco-latinoamericanas y dentro de un proceso histórico en el cual Roger Caillois y su peculiar manera de entender la literatura y la cultura desempeñaron un papel capital.

En efecto, con el final de la guerra, se produce una intensa y rápida reactivación de los vínculos entre Francia y los diferentes países del continente. Para la geopolítica gala, se trata, en un principio, de reanudar los intercambios comerciales, de volver a poner en marcha algunos programas de cooperación que ya existían en los años treinta y de redorar los blasones de una doctrina de la latinidad que se niega a morir; pero pronto se hace evidente que la posguerra trae consigo una ambición nueva, pues a lo que se aspira, en el fondo, es a extender y a profundizar las relaciones atlánticas, sentando las bases institucionales y políticas para

la emergencia de un campo autónomo y estructurado, a saber: el área cultural de un latinoamericanismo propiamente francés (Huerta 2013: 39–62). Caillois es uno de los más destacados miembros del selecto grupo de intelectuales, universitarios y diplomáticos que, a partir de la Liberación, recorre la región y participa activamente en el proceso de construcción de un dispositivo compuesto de distintos organismos, disciplinas y prácticas cuyo objetivo común es renovar y ampliar los lazos entre Francia y Latinoamérica. La creación de la Cruz del Sur en París constituye uno de sus mayores aportes a la formación del campo y es contemporánea de la aparición de un puñado de establecimientos que permiten organizarlo. Citemos la red de Institutos Franceses de América Latina (IFAL) que abren en México, en 1944, luego en Chile, en 1947, y que se completan con la apertura del Centro Francés de Estudios Andinos en Lima, en 1948. A estas instituciones destinadas a recabar informaciones y datos para el desarrollo de la investigación en ciencias sociales y humanas, como señala Mona Huerta, tenemos que agregar entidades como la Casa de América Latina en París, que se inaugura bajo los auspicios de la diplomacia francesa en 1945, la Cámara de Comercio Franco-Latinoamericana que se funda en 1946 y el Grupo de Amistad Parlamentaria Franco-Latinoamericano que se crea en la Asamblea Nacional en 1947 (Huerta 2013: 33). Otros hitos que habría que mencionar son la reactivación de la Unión Latina en 1954 y sobre todo la fundación del Instituto de Altos Estudios de América Latina ese mismo año (Rolland/Touzalin 1995: 173). Este centro de enseñanza e investigación, adscrito a la Sorbona, abre sus puertas en la calle Saint Guillaume, frente al prestigioso Instituto de Ciencias Políticas, y con él se reafirma la independencia de una política científica que aspira a producir un saber propio de y sobre Latinoamérica, sin pasar por las aduanas norteamericanas o británicas.

Por lo que toca específicamente a las humanidades y a los estudios literarios, sin duda uno de los eventos mayores durante el período es el viaje de Marcel Bataillon por varios países de la región en 1948. Efectuado bajo los auspicios de la cancillería gala, y gracias a la mediación de figuras como Alfonso Reyes y Paul Rivet, dicho viaje lleva por primera vez al gran profesor del Collège de France hasta América Latina y señala su encuentro tardío con la historia y las letras del Nuevo Mundo. Recordemos que, a su regreso, Bataillon escribe un sonado artículo intitulado “Nuestro hispanismo ante América” que es como un manifiesto a favor del desarrollo de los estudios latinoamericanos en la universidad francesa (Bataillon 1949). En él llama a formar a una nueva generación de hispanistas que reduzca el retraso acumulado en esta área y llene las lagunas en los programas de enseñanza, pues, en sus palabras: “toda cultura hispánica comporta hoy un conocimiento renovado de las cimas de la literatura de América latina con sus contextos geográficos e históricos” (Bataillon 1949: 7).

La Cruz del Sur parecería responder fielmente a esta necesidad enunciada en 1949 por Marcel Bataillon en el marco de un proceso general de estructuración del latinoamericanismo en Francia. En los seis años que separan la firma del acuerdo con Gallimard y la aparición de los dos primeros títulos en 1951 –*Ficciones*, de Jorge Luis Borges, y *Doña Bárbara*, de Rómulo Gallegos–, Roger Caillois concibe una colección cuyo objetivo más explícito no es solo crear un espacio editorial propio e independiente para las traducciones de obras latinoamericanas, al margen de la colección Du Monde Entier, sino componer una biblioteca cuya lógica interna refleje y acompañe la emergencia misma de un área de estudios sobre América Latina, arrojando una luz distinta sobre las realidades del continente y tratando de acercarlas y de hacerlas accesibles a públicos nuevos. Tal es el mensaje que se desprende de la presentación de la Cruz del Sur redactada por el propio Caillois, y destinada principalmente a las librerías y los libreros, que aparece en el *Bulletin de la NRF* del mes de abril de 1951:

En la colección La Cruz del Sur se incluirán las obras más diversas: obras maestras de la literatura, en primer lugar, obviamente; pero también libros de crítica o de sociología –entre los cuales, algunos son ya clásicos–, los libros más idóneos para dar cuenta de la formación y de los modos de desarrollo de los grupos humanos y de los valores en un continente aún nuevo, apenas domesticado, donde la lucha contra el espacio y la naturaleza sigue siendo ruda, un continente que posee un estilo de vida particular y al cual sus inagotables recursos predestinan para jugar un papel de primer orden en un futuro próximo. (*Bulletin de la NRF* 1951: 17)

La idea inicial de Caillois no es, pues, la de ofrecer al público una simple colección de cuentos y novelas latinoamericanas contemporáneas, teñidas ciertamente de exotismo; la idea de Caillois es algo más compleja e implica construir, con la Cruz del Sur, una propuesta de lectura e interpretación, una suerte de máquina de aprendizaje que trace un puente entre la ficción y las ciencias sociales, iluminándolas mutuamente y mostrando sus relaciones solidarias y necesarias en una aproximación a las realidades de América Latina. No en vano la palabra “documento”, como bien ha observado Claude Fell, es el término más empleado en las presentaciones de las contratapas o cuartas de forro de la colección, para describir el tipo de texto que se publica, trátase de cuentos, novelas o ensayos (Fell 1992: 182). Detrás de esta pedagogía de lo latinoamericano, que, insisto, acompaña en el tiempo el proceso de emergencia de un latinoamericanismo francés, podemos adivinar la presencia no del Caillois de *Sur* sino del Caillois miembro fundador del famoso Colegio de Sociología en los años treinta: me refiero al joven renegado del surrealismo que, junto a George Bataille y a Michel Leiris, se lanza a la aventura de buscar un territorio común entre la literatura, las ciencias sociales y la acción política. Ese Caillois, al igual que otros científicos sociales franceses, herederos al fin del positivismo, adopta una postura escéptica ante la idea de

una autonomía de las artes y las letras, e incluso la pone abiertamente en tela de juicio en algunos ensayos polémicos, como *Impostures de la poésie*, que aparece en Buenos Aires en 1944. La unidad de representaciones, poderes y saberes que animó los trabajos del Colegio fue, sin lugar a duda, una de las ideas a las que Caillois siguió siendo fiel a pesar de sus contradicciones y es un principio que parece adquirir un peso específico a la hora de diseñar la colección. A la pregunta de por qué era imperioso crear un sello latinoamericano dentro de la casa Gallimard en 1945 cuando existía ya la colección Du Monde Entier, una primera respuesta se enlaza con este proyecto disciplinario, pedagógico y divulgativo que, sin ocultar sus ambigüedades, le daba un perfil particular a la Cruz del Sur en la coyuntura francesa de la inmediata postguerra.

Entre los textos que nos permiten acercarnos hoy a la recepción más temprana de la colección, ninguno hace tan explícito el proyecto que va infuso en su diseño como la reseña que firma el antropólogo Roger Bastide en la revista *Annales* en 1958 (Bastide 1958: 30–46). Intitulada elocuentemente “Bajo el signo de la Cruz del Sur: América Latina en el espejo de su literatura”, la larga nota se presenta como un recorrido por los principales títulos publicados por Caillois hasta entonces y su objetivo es doble: mostrar, por un lado, cómo la literatura puede servir de base para la investigación en distintas disciplinas de las ciencias sociales y, por otro, cómo las ciencias sociales pueden aprender a cernir ciertos fenómenos complejos si toman por modelo las obras de ficción. Bastide parte una lanza a favor de una relación privilegiada entre los dos ámbitos y se detiene a formular una severa crítica de la sociología y las ciencias sociales norteamericanas, tan orientadas hacia la estadística y las matemáticas. Para probar sus dichos, echa mano de los ensayos de Gilberto Freyre editados por la Cruz del Sur, *Casa grande & Senzala* y *Assucar*, así como también de las novelas y cuentos de Borges, Asturias, Amado, Carpentier, Güiraldes y Gallegos, entre otros. A lo largo de la reseña, todos pasan a formar parte de una argumentación que no solo aspira a circunscribir, desde una perspectiva francesa, un cierto perfil de América Latina y sus problemas políticos y sociales, sino que pone de relieve al mismo tiempo, y en el mismo acto, las ventajas de una metodología que integre los datos y los modelos de conocimiento inscritos en las obras literarias.

Valga un botón de muestra. Después de insistir en la importancia de la novela *Juyungo*, de Adalberto Ortiz, para la comprensión de la cultura de las poblaciones afro-descendientes en Ecuador, Bastide agrega:

Este interés documental de la literatura sudamericana, lo encontramos asimismo en muchas otras obras de la colección en las que la novela precede a la ciencia. El sociólogo, al menos hasta años recientes, para no mezclar sus reflexiones personales con su obra y para conferirle a esta última un carácter más objetivo, ha tomado en cuenta sobre todo aquello que en el mundo social estaba ya *cristalizado*. La regla de Durkheim, que impone estudiar los hechos sociales como *cosas*, ha desembocado en una *cosificación* de una

realidad frecuentemente fluida. El novelista nos permite observar, por el contrario, los hechos sociales *in statu nascendi*, como, por ejemplo, Jorge Amado en *Capitães da Areia* o Miguel Ángel Asturias en *Viento fuerte*. (Bastide 1958: 31)

Al final de su recorrido por la Cruz del Sur, Bastide llega a una conclusión que, a mi modo de ver, hace explícita la idea de Caillois y la plasma en una propuesta disciplinaria bastante ambiciosa, a saber: reivindicar la necesidad de una sociología literaria de las áreas culturales como la manera más idónea de estudiar las formas diferenciales de sensibilidad, de imaginación y de inteligencia entre grupos humanos heterogéneos y desfasados en el tiempo con respecto a la sociedad francesa. Se trata de un modelo de lectura, afirma el antropólogo, “que permite un conocimiento más profundo de esta literatura que el que puede aportarnos una crítica de tipo tradicional” (Bastide 1958: 46). Bastide lleva agua a su propio molino y al de Caillois, evidentemente, defendiendo, así, el principio de una lectura especializada. Pero, al mismo tiempo, semejante postulado no puede menos que recordarnos hoy con cuánta regularidad la dependencia contextual aparece como una de las condiciones de recepción de las literaturas periféricas, subalternas o no-occidentales en los centros metropolitanos. Para decirlo con otras palabras: la colección la Cruz del Sur se erige en un espacio para la alteridad que encierra una metodología destinada a una comprensión de lo latinoamericano; pero, al mismo tiempo, preserva las distancias y jerarquías entre los dos mundos, cerrando los accesos a la experiencia estética como manifestación moderna de lo general y lo universal. No es otra la contradicción profunda que recorre la colección desde sus inicios y que se expresa en el pensamiento de un hombre que no cree ni creyó nunca en el relativismo cultural, según se desprende de la agria polémica que lo opone a Lévi-Strauss a mediados de los años cincuenta, justamente en esa década en la que está lanzando a Borges, Carpentier, Ramos y tantos otros (Panoff 1993: 43–63). Para él, que haya muchas literaturas diversas por todo el planeta no significa que todas valgan lo mismo ni que todas puedan o deban aspirar al mismo tipo de reconocimiento. Quizás por ello la imagen que se forja Caillois de la literatura mundial no es la de un haz de redes y de flujos incesantes, sino la de un conjunto de compartimientos separados, estancos y, de preferencia, impermeables. Es lo que describe en el prefacio de un álbum de las literaturas del mundo en 1959 cuando señala que cada cultura debe tratar de descubrir la forma irremplazable que le pide “una historia infinitamente particular”. Y agrega a renglón seguido: “Un pueblo no confiere a su literatura un alcance mundial sino a partir del momento en que deja de vestir su propia cultura con ropa prestada y logra sacar del espesor de sus deseos, sus miserias y sus virtudes, el único estilo capaz de expresarlo plenamente” (Caillois 1959: 10).

A la pregunta de por qué era necesario crear en la casa Gallimard, en 1945, una colección exclusivamente destinada a editar autores de América Latina cuando ya existía la colección *Du Monde Entier*, una segunda respuesta se halla en este afán de Caillois, no exento de paternalismo, de preservar una cierta diferencia latinoamericana y darla a leer a través de su catálogo, como cifra o esencia de América Latina. La Cruz del Sur representaba, en este sentido, un laboratorio o un vivero donde se asistía al desarrollo y a la eclosión de nuestras letras en su expresión más auténtica, madura y necesaria, al margen de corrientes e influencias que pudieran afectarla. Así se explica la formación de un catálogo del cual Roger Caillois ha de excluir expresamente a autores como Adolfo Bioy Casares o Carlos Fuentes; así se explican también los muchos malentendidos que la traducción, la edición y la recepción de las obras de Jorge Luis Borges acarrear en Francia.

A principio de los años sesenta, y tras la vertiginosa aceleración histórica que representó la Revolución Cubana, la Cruz del Sur no solo empieza a ser percibida por algunos escritores latinoamericanos como una empresa anacrónica y excluyente, sino que comienza a ser blanco también de ataques más o menos abiertos por parte de otras casas y editores franceses que avanzan una visión distinta de América Latina, acaso más cónsona con el clima de efervescencia que rodea por entonces a todo lo latinoamericano. Tal es el caso de la editorial Julliard y de Maurice Nadeau, uno de los críticos y editores parisinos de literaturas extranjeras más reputados. Es él quien se encarga de preparar, junto a su amigo Octavio Paz, una suerte de *aggiornamento* que toma la forma de un dossier hoy histórico, “Nuevos Escritores de América Latina”, publicado en 1961 por la revista *Les lettres nouvelles*. En él se puede ver y leer una crítica bastante explícita del latinoamericanismo de la Cruz del Sur. Nadeau no duda, así, en señalar en su introducción que lo que se quiere ofrecer a los lectores franceses con este dossier es algo nuevo: no ya una literatura de contenido social, inspiración folklórica o compromiso político, sino otra que ha sido ignorada y que permite descubrir el verdadero nivel de desarrollo actual de las técnicas poéticas y novelescas en el continente latinoamericano (Nadeau 1961: 4). Paz, por su parte, y como abundando en el mismo sentido, escribe en el prólogo:

Hemos querido, ante todo, poner de relieve las tendencias que conciben la literatura como invención, como experiencia o como aventura. Literatura problemática, literatura que trasgrede lo prohibido en el lenguaje, en las significaciones o en la realidad. Algunos lectores no dejarán de notar la ausencia de tal o cual nombre, o acaso piensen que tal otro está de más. Tal vez estén en lo cierto. Pero este número no es ni un manual, ni un anuario, es una carta de navegación. Lo que cuenta aquí es la dirección, el sentido, el movimiento. Y añadiría, no la corriente sino la contra-corriente: los heterodoxos, los trabajadores subterráneos, los destacamentos que combaten en fronteras indecisas. (Paz 1961: 5)

A lo largo de esta década, y hasta su desaparición en 1971, la Cruz del Sur ha de convivir con las críticas que proceden de las nuevas generaciones latinoamericanas, del campo literario y editorial francés y aun, internamente, de otros editores de literaturas extranjeras que trabajan dentro de la casa Gallimard, como Juan Goytisolo y Ugné Karvelis. Mario Vargas Llosa, Guillermo Cabrera Infante y Julio Cortázar, todos inicialmente autores de Caillois, se pasan a la colección *Du Monde Entier* en los sesenta, mientras otros editores y casas editoriales parisinas van sacando a la luz nuevos autores y obras del continente, no solo Julliard y Nadeau sino también François Maspero y Christian Bourgois, Le Seuil y Robert Lafon, entre otros. Caillois pierde su monopolio y, con él, el control que podía ejercer sobre la recepción francesa e internacional de las letras latinoamericanas. Todo ello no obsta, sin embargo, a que la colección la Cruz del Sur haya ejercido una importante influencia en el proceso de internacionalización de nuestra literatura, sirviendo, además, de experiencia piloto para su traducción, edición y difusión en otros países europeos y aun en los Estados Unidos.

Tres conclusiones rápidas para cerrar. La primera es que la Cruz del Sur debe ser releída a la luz de las condiciones que determinan su génesis en la historia de la inmediata postguerra europea y como expresión de la muy arraigada voluntad política francesa de establecer una red científica y cultural propia en sus relaciones con los países de América Latina. La colección de Caillois es una de las formas que adquiere este corredor directo e inmediato, como si se tratara de una prolongación de la aventura de la *Aeropostal* con otros medios. La segunda conclusión es que la colección de Caillois debe ser releída dentro del marco del proceso de formación del área de los estudios latinoamericanos en Francia y como una propuesta de lectura e interpretación que da cuenta de la influencia que las ciencias sociales francesas aspiran a ejercer en la comprensión de las realidades de América Latina a nivel local y global. Finalmente, creo que la colección de Caillois y su historia deben ser leídas en el contexto de una lucha poscolonial por la igualdad de acceso a la experiencia estética, por la posibilidad de exigir el mismo tipo de reconocimiento que se concede a otras literaturas. En este sentido, es necesario revisar con atención las hipótesis que ven en la traducción y la edición de una literatura periférica, subalterna o no-occidental un mecanismo casi automático de adquisición de un capital simbólico que permite romper con las dependencias contextuales. La cuestión de la autonomía, que es un problema de arbitraje de valores, puede ser bastante más complejo de lo que parece a primera vista e insertarse en un debate apenas velado en términos de colonialidad/decolonialidad.

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3: Epistemologies

Robert Stockhammer

World literature or Earth literature? Remarks on a distinction

If, as Jean Paul notes in passing in his *Preparatory School for Aesthetics*, “in jest and in earnestness one could set a different poetry on every planet” (Jean Paul 1987: 92), if one could reckon with the existence of Venusian elegies, Martian epics and Saturnian comedies, it follows, among other things, that the entirety of the poetry arising on the Earth could no longer simply be called world literature; we would have to call it Earth literature.

This play of ideas is only in jest insofar as I do not seriously expect the detection of such poetry any time soon, nor am I anticipating a situation in which humans perhaps – as currently planned¹ – settle on Mars starting in 2026 and then presumably start to write poetry there. My play of ideas is also in jest insofar as I do not wish to rename the discussions about *Weltliteratur* that since Goethe, and above all in the last decades under the influence of contemporary globalization processes (nowadays mostly labeled *World Literature*), have grown to comprise entire libraries; there is hardly a scholar of comparative literature or a self-respecting Germanist or Sinologist of cosmopolitan disposition who has not written any programmatic contribution to this topic. Nor is *Earth literature* suited for a title of a future anthology that could compete with those of *World Literature* – the playfully invented term would be better suited to questioning the practice of anthologizing itself.

However, I am quite serious in testing out this term, rather seldom used to date (evidently almost only in science fiction as well as in the sense of “literature on earth radiation”) for its ability to open a different perspective on the literature that arises on this planet. It might seem pedantic to insist, with Alexander von Humboldt, on a “scientific sequestration of world and Earth”, and conclude, for example, that *Weltumseglung* or circumnavigation of the world would be more accurately called “circumnavigation of the Earth” (Humboldt 2004: 61)².

¹ See <http://www.mars-one.com/> (last visit: 04/12/2015).

² For further objections to world-composites referring to the Earth (especially Paul Scheerbart’s critique of the term *World War*) see Stockhammer 2014 (Some lines of thought found there are also reproduced here in modified form).

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Humboldt's aim to restrict the meaning of *world* to the whole universe was clearly already unfeasible in his time.

The word *Welt*³ has throughout its history described population groups, times and spaces – it has assumed social, temporal and spatial functions that are no longer to be factored out of it. Every person is a world, we each live in our own world and if we leave it, it is only to go out into the wider world; even when we leave the world behind it is to land in the world of the convent or the afterlife. This broad spectrum of uses was catalogued by Johannes Erben in 1954 for the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* in twelve meanings (or rather groups of meaning) (Erben/Grimm/Grimm 1955).

Even if we initially restrict ourselves to the aspect of spatial extension, we see quickly how diverse in size these can be. The extension equivalent to the whole earth is just one of these (the fifth in Erben's classification), a mid-sized extension somewhere between the universe as a whole (the seventh), which Humboldt would reduce the word to, and an "All in miniature" (the eighth, such as in "the world of the ant"). Accordingly the word does not have the fixed function of "a geographical term that covers the entire globe" (Longxi 2013: 246). Hence a plea for the inclusion of non-European literature cannot simply rely on an allegedly fixed referential scope of *world*. This can be seen in Goethe's wavering use of the term *Weltliteratur* as the step beyond European literature ("a European, even a general world literature") (Goethe 1989: 79) and then as identical with it: "European, i.e. world literature" (Goethe 1999: 724). This wavering corresponds to a state of use of the word *world* one could call "Eurocentric", although *this* eurocentrism – unlike some forms of habitual eurocentrism, such as in the academic operations of comparative literature – is the result of a conscious construction. This constructed character can be clearly seen in Hegel, who, almost simultaneous to Goethe's remarks on world literature, restricts the *world* as the theater of "world history" to Europe, northern Africa and parts of Asia and explicitly excludes the rest of the Earth (Hegel 1969–1971: 105–132). Hegel's project doesn't simply ignore things that are out there "in the world" – he conveys information about swampy America and its presidents elected for risibly short terms, or the slave trade in Africa – he simply does not ascribe these things to the *world*, but rather only to the *Earth*. As abstruse as this way of proceeding might seem to us today, we can see here, through a kind of double negation, that a *world* that includes *the whole Earth* likewise does not make itself available but rather must first be constructed.

³ In the following, the differences between *Welt* and *world* will be regarded as *relatively* neglectable.

Without wishing to ascribe great conceptual coherence to Goethe's rather disparate and strategically accentuated remarks on *Weltliteratur*, nonetheless they can explain the seeming contradiction in the fact that on the one hand he reads a legendary Chinese novel and of course Persian poetry, and on the other hand at least once deliberates whether the referential scope of *Weltliteratur* might be extensionally equivalent with Europe. From the fact that "*poetry* is the common property of mankind" (Eckermann/Goethe 1999: 224, emphasis added) it does not automatically follow that all poetry will be integrated into the future world literature. Put somewhat differently, using a distinction that is frequently blurred in humanistic recourse to Goethe's remarks: poetry might have a *universal* character transhistorically – the standard English translation of the passage just quoted reads, certainly not entirely falsely, "*poetry* is the universal possession of mankind" (Longxi 2013: 242); *world literature* only arises in the concrete historical process of *globalization*, and it is a matter of continuous debate whether and to what extent this encompasses the whole Earth⁴. The referential scope of the *world* in "world literature" is for Goethe not any more predetermined than the referential scope of *world* is for Hegel in "world history". If on Goethe's or Hegel's estimation there is nothing in America or in sub-Saharan Africa that corresponds to a European concept of "history" or "literature", or if the history or literature of these parts of the globe has not (or not yet) entered into any relation with the history or literature of Europe, then the *world* of this world history or literature will be consistently and demonstrably smaller than the Earth. The criteria for what is to be counted as part of world history and what isn't are relatively clearly defined for Hegel – the bearers of world history can only be fully formed states; the criteria for what counts as world literature and what doesn't are in contrast not clearly defined for Goethe – later conceptions that see world literature as the

4 This passage is quoted only in its English formulation in Longxi 2013, which offers a characteristic example for the blurring of the distinction between the *universal* and the *global*, in the general tendency of the article but also with an additional philological error that is quite minor in itself. In Eckermann's report of Goethe's remarks, between the reference to "*poetry* [as] common property of mankind" and the oft-quoted sentence "*national literature* is now a rather unmeaning term, the epoch of world literature is at hand" (Eckermann/Goethe 1999: 225) there are several remarks of about fifteen lines' length, which Longxi not only omits but does not mark as such. This generates the impression that "world literature" is directly identical with poetry as the "common property of mankind". However, for Goethe non-German poetry, possibly including non-European poetry as well, is first of all only the material he is sorting through (between these sentences we find the remark "I like to look about me in foreign nations") to assess whether it can be used for the then-incipient process of construction of world literature.

convening of national literatures have a remarkable structural equivalence with Hegel's scheme.

If we wish to insist, to the contrary, that there is also something outside of Europe, which we could then, in a second step, classify under the European concept of "literature", then it would be more precise to follow Erich Auerbach and to proceed on the basis of "material from six millennia, from all parts of the *Earth*, in perhaps fifty literary languages" (Auerbach 1967: 304, emphasis added). But this material is not yet in and of itself a *world* literature, perhaps not even a world *literature* – which could at best be configured in a process of transports and readings, by readers whose "philosophical home" for Auerbach can no longer be the nation, yet at the same time is not (yet) the world but rather, in Auerbach's very consistent terminology, "the Earth" (Auerbach 1967: 310); the title of Auerbach's article quoted here, "Philology of World Literature", is accordingly to be read as "Philological Construction of World Literature".

This process of a still necessary construction is suppressed from view if we use *world* in unstated synonymy with *Earth*, as is increasingly typical today, not just in everyday use, but also in most debates about *World Literature*⁵. In this way of speaking two different meanings of *world* get carelessly blurred together which presuppose the same extension but have quite different connotations: the "geographical" meaning of world as globe (the fifth in Erben's classification) and the anthropocentric variation of the "sphere of all inhabitants of the Earth" (meaning III.A). This brings with it the assumption, usually not explicitly declared, that the world represents "*a region closed in itself [...] which in its autonomy and independence somehow represents an All in miniature*" (meaning VIII) – to quote Erben's concise structural description, which explains quite succinctly why units of "diverse types" (the words omitted from the previous quotation), including something as small as "the world of the ant", can still be called *world*. Yet whereas these units have to be explicitly specified as such with a compound

5 In fact there are several indications that the "forgetfulness of the earth" on the part of literary scholars as well as many other academics has increased through history. For an example see below (with regards to Hayot). Another example can be found in Maire and Edward Said's translation of the article of Auerbach's quoted above. Here *Erde* as "our philological home" is translated as *Earth* (Auerbach 1969: 17); however, the translators fail to recognize Auerbach's strict terminology, according to which the "material of the philologist" at first simply comes "from all parts of the Earth", and translate the expression quoted above as "literatures ranging over six thousand years, from all parts of the world" (1969: 8). And for the relatively unusual expression *Erdkultur* (in the equally famous formulation of the "Standardisierung der Erdkultur" or standardization of Earth-culture (1967: 304)) the Salds without any linguistic necessity choose the less unusual-sounding "world-culture" (1969: 7).

noun or adjective phrase, this same cannot be said of *the* world when it is identified with the current habitat of humanity: to say *world* for *Earth* is an anthropomorphism that we have forgotten as such (an anthropomorphism found in the etymology of the word itself, deriving from *wer-alt*, “age of man”, hence an anthropomorphism explicitly declared as such in ancient times). If we follow the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, which explicitly identifies *Welt* as corresponding to Erben’s meaning VII while however adding the notion of “a whole sensefully structured in itself”⁶ (Dirks 2004: 407), we almost arrive at a synonymy of *world* and *sense*: “a world is a totality of sense”⁷ (Nancy 2002: 34).

It could however be the case that the “material from six millennia, from all parts of the Earth, in perhaps fifty literary languages” does not “make any sense” or at least does not produce *one* sense, does not cohere into a “totality of sense”. This is, rather pointedly formulated, the suspicion of several US-American literary scholars who have criticized *World Literature* in recent years. A title such as *Against World Literature* can only be understood against the background of the institutional context in which this book intervenes. For of course in objecting to *World Literature* Emily Apter is not arguing for a return to national literatures – which might seem suggest itself in light of the Goethian dichotomy on which the debate is still in many places primarily oriented. Rather Apter completely and emphatically shares the interest in a “deprovincialization of the canon” (Apter 2013: 2) under the broader heading of a de-nationalization of literatures. Apter, however, argues against a certain formation of the literary that is increasingly implied above all by the expression *World Literature*: an anthologization and curricularization of texts from all parts of the Earth (Apter 2013: 3), in the course of which these texts, and in the meanwhile even the theories of *World Literature*, are brought together in handy compilations. A good example of this consolidation of the field is the work of David Damrosch, who as author or co-publisher is responsible for *What Is World Literature?*, *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, “Where is World Literature?”, *How to Read World Literature*, “Toward a History of World Literature”, *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* and *World Literature in Theory*. Texts that were not already written in English typically are considered exclusively in English translation, with the implicit assumption of fundamental translatability⁸.

⁶ The original reads: “eine in sich sinnvoll gegliederte Ganzheit” (Dirks 2004).

⁷ In the original: “un monde est une totalité de sens” (Nancy 2002).

⁸ *What is World Literature?* is explicitly exempt from this criticism; there Damrosch works either with original texts from several European languages or (in the case of Chinese) with various translations and a discussion of their differences with at least an occasional recourse to the original.

The literary epistemology premised here, hence the methodological premises that go along with such a project, are made particularly clear in Franco Moretti's proposal to master large volumes of literary texts spanning the whole Earth with a "distant reading", through the classification into a set of typified characteristics. Texts are transformed into data-sets, into structured arrays with searchable parameters, which can then be statistically assessed such that the results (to use the field of geodata as an example) could be represented in maps, whether of the spatial conditions of their formation or of their theaters of action.

Against this mono-linguality and the associated notion of universal parameters Emily Apter insists upon a "Politics of Untranslatability" (the sub-title of her book). This politics of untranslatability is, we should note, no essentialist politics, no hypostatizing of radical otherness; Apter opens her earlier book *The Translation Zone* with twenty theses, the first of which reads "Nothing is translatable", the last of which "Everything is translatable" (Apter 2006: xi f.). This tension between two equally correct and equally false theses also runs through her only apparently paradoxical attempt to publish Barbara Cassin's *Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* in English translation – a philosophical dictionary in French of lemmas from the most various languages, which incidentally contains neither *monde* nor *world*, but *Welt* (Cassin 2014). Untranslatability is for Apter the decidedly linguistic constitution of the incommensurable, which thwarts any attempt to level off the world. Such moments of untranslatability, of unlocalizability, of that which does not fit any parameters or paraphrase, which are constitutive of the literary, can only be encountered in the mode of a close reading. The incommensurable is not a definable point in an already fixed network of coordinates, but rather a "point of departure" (Auerbach 1967: 306) from which lines can be drawn to other points, not according to generalizable laws and *within* the philological procedure itself.

If we begin by tentatively calling the "material" encountered by the earthly philologist *Earth* literature, from which *world* literature has yet to be constructed, this tension can be connected not least of all to a famous essay of Martin Heidegger's that identifies the work of art as the theater of a "battle between world and earth" (Heidegger 1977: 63)⁹. The work of art brings "the setting up [*Aufstellen*] of a world" into relation to the "setting forth [*Herstellen*] of the earth" (Heidegger 1977: 34) – whereby the setting forth is to be understood as "bringing out into the open" (Heidegger 1977: 33) or, a bit more soberly, as a "placing before someone". This relation is as antagonistic as it is complementary: "In setting up a

⁹ A thorough engagement with the essay, written in 1935/36, should not ignore its problematic aspects, such as the reference to a "historical people" (p. 63).

world, the work sets forth the earth” (Heidegger 1977: 32). Heidegger emphasizes however that with *earth* he means neither the material nor the planet (Heidegger 1977: 28), but rather the “essentially self-secluded” (Heidegger 1977: 33, whereby he claims to be offering a translation of *phýsis* on 28). Of course both senses of the word *earth* also resonate here, precisely in their tension to *world* as well. *Earth* however does not ground another totality here (as a certain notion of the planet would suggest), but rather is seen as the “massive and weighty” (Heidegger 1977: 32) that “rises up through [*durchragt*]” the wholeness of the *world* (Heidegger 1977: 35). This “battle between world and earth” can be understood in the categories of language, for Heidegger, since it is carried out in “the work of language” above all (Heidegger 1977: 29). And this in turn exposes a process that plays out within language itself, insofar as language is conceived as poetic and poetry as the theater of the battle conducted within language itself (Heidegger 1977: 62). In semiotic terms: language sets up sense (world) and sets forth not-sense (earth); it has an intention toward sense, towards universal translatability; but its own materiality, its untranslatability, its incommensurability, its not-sense continuously “rises up through” it or undermines it.

This not-sense is often omitted in the name of the *world*. The recent book of Eric Hayot’s is symptomatic of this; he narrows down the discussions about *Weltliteratur* (and *World Literature*) with the interesting proposal that literature composes such “worlds” – we might think of formulations like “the world of Stifter’s *Nachsommer*”. This does not answer the important question of how literature mediates world as an “All in miniature” (VIII in Erben’s classification) with world as the “sphere of all inhabitants of the earth” (III. A.), but it does raise the question at least. However, Hayot had already excluded earth (and the Earth): in a passage of several pages’ length where he draws a connection to Heidegger’s “Work of Art” essay, Hayot mentions only in passing that *world* cannot be separated from its antagonist *earth*, and concentrates entirely on the former (Hayot 2012: 23–26)¹⁰.

The most important exception to this forgetfulness of the earth (or Earth) in literary studies is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who – skeptical of conceptions of World literature like Apter, and also like Apter in the interest of a range of objects going far beyond Europe and North America – brought the figure of the planetary into the discussion of the formations of the literary¹¹. “Planetary literature”

¹⁰ There is only one sentence on the “battle” between both (on p. 23); the index lists twenty references to *world* but has no entry on *earth* (Hayot 2012).

¹¹ Besides the polemic quoted below, *Death of a Discipline*, see also many articles – including several responding to Wai Chee Dimock – that have now been collected in revised form in Spivak 2012.

can at least at the moment be relatively unambiguously translated as “Earth literature”. However “the planetary” does not, for Spivak, only or even primarily describe something large (as in the phrase “of planetary dimensions”), but something quite small: the “space-ship Earth” (to use Buckminster Fuller’s metaphor), one heavenly body among others, which, we should note, does not describe a perfect circle around the sun but rather an ellipse (Hamilton 2014: 1–16)¹². This perspective on an “airport Earth” (Sloterdijk 2006: 42) is taken up frequently not just in science fiction and space travel but in the long tradition of *pluralité des mondes* stories – a tradition which German-language writers like Jean Paul and Johann Peter Hebel (among several others) have also taken part in. Spivak stands in this tradition – though she does not state this explicitly – when she evokes the largely dark space this heavenly body transverses: through an other that is neither similar to “us” (the human inhabitants) nor our dialectical negation:

If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away. [...] what is above and beyond our reach is not continuous with us as it is not, indeed, specifically discontinuous. (Spivak 2003: 73)

Spivak explicitly proposes the planetary as a counter-figure to the global: “I propose the planet to overwrite the globe”. She conceives the global as essentially a “gridwork of electronic capital”, as an “abstract ball covered in latitudes and longitudes”, as something that today is produced by computers and appears on them: “The globe is on our computer. No one lives there”. Spivak opposes the picture of the Earth that appears in electronically generated maps on the screens of airplanes with the one she reassures herself of with a look out the airplane window (Spivak 2003: 72).

However, here the Earth – unlike for Heidegger – is used as a figure of the whole, the holistic character of which however is no more self-evident than that of the world. Once we concede that the globe is just an “abstract ball”, and concede further that in contrast there are concrete spots on the Earth on which people live on those occasions when they are not living in their computer, the question remains, for whom and under what conditions the Earth exists as a “concrete ball”. As long as we are not viewing the Earth from space (or imagining it, or looking at a globe, or a photograph of it or, again with electronic support,

¹² Kepler’s proposal that the orbit of the planets describes an ellipse, thus an “imperfect” geometric figure, famously met with great resistance by his contemporaries (including Galileo Galilei), since it did not seem compatible with their assumptions about a well-ordered cosmos (cf. Galilei 1980: 251–252).

at *Google Earth*), it is not an object of immediate self-evidence one could refer to with a deictic gesture. Not only is Spivak's reassuring glance out the plane at the Earth dependent on contingencies such as whether she has booked a window seat or not and whether the sky is cloudy – in the best case one sees, for a start, just some particular, in Spivak's example a region of Anatolia, that does not allow for any simply inference from the part to the whole.

In contrast Heidegger's "battle between world and earth" can be understood as a tension between an intention towards wholeness and the resistance of the particular. If there could be an exemplary case of the particular, if this were not a contradiction in itself, I would choose the toponym of a Mexican peninsula. According to an anecdote dating back to the 16th century, which is disputed but at least well wrought, the name of this peninsula comes from the answer its inhabitants gave to the Spanish-speaking conquistadores when they landed and asked what it was called – to which these are alleged to have answered in Maya, if it could be called an answer – "Ma c'ubah than". In English roughly: "We don't understand your words" (Todorov 1985: 121).

If we assume that the toponym *Yucatán* is the result of this mangling of an answer¹³, it preserves an incomprehension, of course in such a manner that this incomprehension remains incomprehended as such – otherwise the Spanish would hardly have decided on this toponym. Against Spanish as a world language (which was explicitly conceived as such since Nebrija's grammar published in 1492), significances from a non-world language that today cannot even be halfway reconstructed continue to assert themselves. Since then a crux, to use a metaphor from edition philology, has been sitting in the text of the conquerors, namely in their maps – something incomprehensible that cannot be conjectured despite all hermeneutic efforts¹⁴.

Often, literature intensively engages with such moments of the incomprehensible. Confrontations between colonizers and the colonized, between the "North" and the "South" are without a doubt a particularly important field of

¹³ There are quite diverse hypotheses on the emergence of the toponym (for an overview see https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toponimia_de_Yucat%C3%A1n, accessed: 04.12.2015), all of which at least agree that the inhabitants did not understand the question and that the Spanish did not understand that their "answer" was no answer.

¹⁴ See the anthology by Bohnenkamp et al. 2010. That the crux is marked today with the same signs marking death and the dead is – in light of the numbers of deaths in the course of the Spanish conquest of South and Central America – which can also be read in Todorov's *Die Eroberung Amerikas* (see p. 161), an intended association.

such engagements. Accordingly, it is necessary to include texts that present these engagements from non-European perspectives. But it is not enough to just integrate them into the existing grid of World literature. When fictional narrative texts from the territory of modern-day Nigeria are classified without further ado as novels, as Nigerian novels – in order to show that the production of novels rose in various nations with similar trajectories, but with some temporal delays – the European categories of genre and nation remain untouched (Moretti 2007: 6)¹⁵. Even if the comparative study proceeding in this manner no longer “essentializ[es] the cultural roots of national identities” – as an older tradition of comparative studies did, in only apparent contradiction to its international orientation (Hamilton 2014: 4) – it still remains indebted to a methodological nationalism which is only conditionally suited to the situation today. Rather the objects coming into consideration for the first time, non-European as well as European, must always be taken at the same time as the occasion to review the organizing categories that *World Literature* (or *Comparative Literature*) works with¹⁶.

And conversely the engagements with the question of (in-)translatability are of course not restricted to the contact between colonizers and colonized. We might recall an encounter with a structural similarity to the Yucatán episode, which however plays out in the difference between two closely related idioms. This encounter occurs in the *Rheinländischer Hausfreund*, a “new calendar” – which could be said to take a planetary perspective in several senses, that would however go unnoticed if one only knew its most famous anecdotes.

Johann Peter Hebel opened the calendar with “Reflections on the Universe” or, more literally translated, “Reflections on the World-Edifice” (*Betrachtungen über das Weltgebäude*) in all the years for which he was decisively or solely responsible for it. These quasi-planetary texts, which recurred year after year with few changes, offer basic astronomical knowledge about the Earth and sun, the moon, planets, fixed stars and comets. The Earth occurs twice here, as the non-disjunctive list of topics already hints: once as “our place of residence”, (Hebel 2010: 85) the only place known so far on which reflections on the universe occur; another time it is approached as a station on the planetary journey from

¹⁵ Based on Griswold 2006. She does briefly discuss why she does not include Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drunkard* and what definition of *Nigerian Novel* she is assuming. However, these questions, quite volatile for the constructional mechanisms of national literature, are assumed to be already answered in the further statistical evaluation. For a similar criticism of Moretti’s model of a unidirectional transport of literary genres from the “center” to the “periphery” see Warwick Research Collective 2015: 55–56.

¹⁶ The most important contribution to this question (and one that is not discussed very much in postcolonial studies) is still in my view Godzich 1994.

the sun to Uranus and proves, to the surprise of the travelers, to be “our Earth itself”. More than making other planets more familiar to us by populating them with other creatures, Hebel makes “our Earth itself” more unfamiliar. We have hardly arrived at Venus before Hebel’s space traveler looks back at “the Earth”:

“Look there”, he would say to the first acquaintance he makes, look at that lovely star, that’s where I came from, and my father and mother still live there. My mother is someone born so and so. It must be a wonderful pleasure to see the Earth under the stars of the heavens and see it wandering entirely as itself. (Hebel 2010: 411)

When the Earthling returns to his “place of residence”, he no longer sees this as a whole. Even on journeys of a relatively small distance a “misunderstanding” can easily arise (as three of these anecdotes are explicitly headed). When, in another famous anecdote, a man from the Southern German village of Duttlingen has traveled to Amsterdam, he takes the thrice-repeated information *Kannitverstan* in response to his thrice-repeated question, for the name of a man who got rich in East Indies trade, built a large house for himself, and then was carried to his grave (Hebel 2010: 162–164). In translating the Maya expression *Yucatán* into a Germanic idiom with *Kannitverstan* (“cannot-understand”), Hebel makes the reader understand that the man from Duttlingen does not understand that his questions are not understood – in contrast to the Maya expression which is not even understood as not understood. Whereas the Earthling fluently converses with the Venusian, the translation between speakers of two Germanic idioms proves quite difficult. Hebel’s stories count on these confusions of close/far relations, because the cosmos can no longer be imagined as a formation of concentric circles in which the familiarity lessens in proportion to the distance from the central point; newer definitions of globalization emphasize precisely this decoupling of close and far from local distances¹⁷. Interplanetary communication and intra-planetary “misunderstanding” are two aspects of the same dynamic.

For the 67 poems in his only volume consisting entirely of anagram poems (Pastior 2008: 207–283)¹⁸, Oskar Pastior used many titles of Johann Peter Hebel’s texts as material. The longest of these anagram poems by number of lines plays through one with the smallest number of letters: that of *Kannitverstan*, the transposition of which tends to seem more Norwegian than Dutch (e.g. “tankvarintens / stanitverkann / knirtannavest / stennknarativ” (Pastior 2008: 259)).

¹⁷ See for example the oft-quoted definition of globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens 2009: 64).

¹⁸ Pastior of course used the same procedure for other poems, but not for another entire volume.

In the case of the poem *ALLGEMEINE BETRACHTUNG UEBER DAS WELT-GEBAEUDE* (“General Reflection on the World-Edifice”) the anagrammatical method rests on the Kabbalistic assumption that the universe arose through the manipulation of letters by its Creator – an assumption for which the ambiguity of the Greek *stoicheion* or Latin *elementum* (meaning both “atom” and “letter”) paved the way:

ALLGEMEINE BETRACHTUNG UEBER DAS WELTGEBAEUDE

Unter dem Galactaeer gebeugt – du ein halbes Webel
am Ball des Achtel Gebube. Wenige, ruede Untertage.
Auch wenig Labsal am Berge der gedeuteten Beutel.
Am Rauch bestellt dein Ab-Auge Duebel gegen Werte.
Eingeblute Strauchelwale, Magenbaeder, Budget,
durch Basteleien am Tage gebuegelte Wunder-Albe.
Weil Tagnaechte am Gebaeude, und Sterbegebruell,
geben sich Brut, Webe, Maut elegantere Geduld-Aale.
Eingeschaltet beben Wuermelbude, Dualaggregate,
Multischallgegenden, Wege der Taube ueber Ata Be.
Eigelbe Meuchelwabe das – entgegen der Tabulatur
(Pastior 2008: 248).

Bowed under the galacteer – you a half-turn
On the ball of a cubit of fools. Few and rude sub-days.
And little balm on the hill of the interpreted bag.
On the smoke your off-eye orders pegs against values.
Stumble-whales hammered in, stomach baths, budget,
With day-time bricolages bagelled wonder-imps.
Because day-nights on the edifice, and dying roaring,
Brood, tissue, tolls give themselves more elegant eels of patience.
Switched on, worming-digs tremor, dual-aggregates,
Multi-sound neighborhoods, ways of the dove over Ata Be
A yolkly murderous honey-comb it is – against the tabulature.

However, what Pastior puts into question is precisely the generality of the reflection, and thus at the same time the well-ordered nature of that which is contemplated. The universe is now entirely subject to “arbitrariness” in a doubled sense: the arbitrariness of the circumstance that Hebel’s title (after conversion of the umlauts) consists of 41 letters, but also the decisions of the arbiter pushing around Scrabble tiles, who from an unimaginably large number of possibilities (roughly $2,134 \times 10^{39}$) selects just eleven, which, on the periphery of German, make just a little sense. The “edifice” remains, but nothing of the “world”: what remains in this “bricolage” is rather the Earth, with all its “stumble-whales” and “worming-digs”, an association of “multi-noise neighborhoods” where sounds are heard that cannot longer be noted in any “tabulature”, in any score or table.

These sounds that can be registered in a codified writing system (that belong to “literature” in the broadest sense) never quite stop making sense; even in the “stennknarativ” it is impossible not to recognize any sense. Yet they hardly cohere into a “totality of sense”: The interpreter will find only “little balm on the hill of the interpreted bag”.

It is not for nothing that elsewhere – and incidentally long before the most recent debates in the US – Pastior had expressed skepticism towards those models of world literature that seek to administer a universal with all its purported indissoluble commonalities and allegedly secondary differences: “And that magnanimous concept of ‘world literature’ goes down the drain: discontinuous spaces, disintegrating presents in acceleration – not a pretty picture” (Pastior 1994: 104).

(A German version of this article appeared in: *Poetica* 47 (2015), pp. 135–150; translation by Karsten Schoellner.)

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The World-Literary formation of Antonio Candido

Antonio Candido, a central figure in post-Second World War Brazilian literary criticism, wrote an essay in 1988 entitled “The Right to Literature”¹. He claims there that our age is marked by extreme hypocrisy in relation to the ideal of justice. Never before has it been as technically feasible to achieve social equality. Never before have human rights been so widely proclaimed. Never, in fact, has civilisation been so advanced and so pervasive. And yet, social injustices remain, inequalities are aggravated and barbarism is rife. But it is *because* of this situation, in which “barbarism is directly connected to a maximum level of civilisation” (Candido 2011b: 172)², that human rights are being pursued more intensively than ever before. Being a dialectical thinker, Candido sees in other words not merely incoherence, but a dynamic relationship between contradictory phenomena. Hypocrisy can therefore, in Candido’s view, be given an optimistic interpretation. Contrary to earlier eras, it is no longer possible for leaders to valorise barbaric deeds. Instead, they must be denied or camouflaged, since there has developed at least a minimal consensus concerning the right to human rights.

Literature enters Candido’s argument in two ways. First as an anthropologically generalisable phenomenon: “[A]ll poetic, fictional or dramatic creation at all levels of society and every cultural context, from what we call folklore, legends, jokes, to the most complex and difficult written artifacts of the great civilisations” (Candido 2011b: 176)³. The verbal organisation of the imagination has what he calls a “contradictory but humanising role in society (or perhaps humanising because of its contradictory nature)” (Candido 2011b: 178)⁴. This is why, he says, there is a substantive *right* to literature that should count among the human rights. But, importantly, Candido also connects literature and human rights historically by

1 Original title, “O direito à literatura” (my translation here and elsewhere, unless otherwise indicated).

2 “uma barbárie ligada ao máximo de civilização”.

3 “todas as criações de toque poético, ficcional ou dramático em todos os níveis de uma sociedade, em todos os tipos de cultura, desde o que chamamos folclore, lenda, chiste, até as formas mais complexas e difíceis da produção escrita das grandes civilizações”.

4 “o papel contraditório mas humanizador (ou humanizador porque contraditório)”.

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reminding his readers how literature itself has contributed to shaping the public conception of human rights. As examples, he mentions how “the poor” enter literature through the work of Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens, but also how a Brazilian poet such as Castro Alves brought the horrendous practice of slavery to the readership’s awareness. Not unlike Erich Auerbach, who in his *Mimesis* saw the “mixing of styles” (Auerbach 2003: 313) in the long history of realism as being connected to a gradual process of democratisation, Candido grants literature a privileged role in the historical and, indeed, global emergence of egalitarian ideals.

For those who know their Candido, this mode of reasoning will seem familiar. In his work, he consistently maintained a very un-postmodern, non-Foucaultian faith in Enlightenment universalism. A faith in universal reason forms both the precondition and ultimate horizon of his thinking. Without speculating too much on why, one could point to the time he spent in Paris as a boy, as well as the strong French influence on the University of São Paulo and Brazilian intellectual life generally – this faith is evident in his countless critical essays which then *de facto* engage the historical particularities of writers and texts. To the extent that his work deals with Brazilian literature, he never treats the national context (at least not explicitly) as an end in itself. As Roberto Schwarz has often pointed out (1999: 18–26, 54–70), national literature, and even literary nationalism, is *an object of study* for Candido, but the impetus of his critical interventions is to understand and explain the emergence of national literature from a supposedly universal standpoint. In that respect, “The Right to Literature” is both consistent with his other work and a logical end point to a trajectory that begins with his first emergence as a critic in the 1940s.

This universalist tendency does, perhaps, go some way towards explaining why I am writing about Antonio Candido in the context of a volume devoted to World Literature. It is a universalism that notionally places literature outside of national constraints altogether, but it is also a universalism that needs to be approached sceptically and as a work-in-progress that shifts during Candido’s career. The central claim of this short essay, then, is this: in his work, Antonio Candido consistently combines a supposedly universal but *de facto* Eurocentric conception of literature with a historicising sensitivity towards the locally grounded ways in which literature evolves, especially in colonial and postcolonial Brazil. This doubleness in his thinking could be seen as a weakness or a contradiction. I argue instead that it invites a conceptual-historical analysis of how “literature”, pressured by social conflict, becomes semantically layered. From his early reading of Brazilian literary history to later essays on “underdevelopment” and human rights, one can detect a continuous process of such semantic layering in Candido’s work. This has important implications for how we approach World Literature. If World Literature were only a matter of geographical extension, then

Candido is impossibly limited. (And the limitations are real: my claims on behalf of Candido are restricted). If, however, World Literature is a matter of investigating how literature is imbricated with local as well as distant histories, then there are methodological lessons to be learnt here. The word “formation” in my title alludes thereby to three things: Candido’s famous study *Formação*, the gradual formation and development of his own position, but also to “formation” as a paradigmatic concept in Brazilian intellectual history that could be exploited to world literary ends. As an illustration of the latter, I will conclude by briefly discussing the extent to which the African reception of João Guimarães Rosa – not discussed by Candido – can be understood through Candido’s framework.

Think of this as an attempt at reshuffling the terms of the World Literature debate. The concept of World Literature has generated much scholarly energy over the last two decades, but it has also provoked hostile reactions, particularly on two counts. The first concerns language and the untranslatable, as discussed most famously by Emily Apter in *Against World Literature*. Apter’s key charge is that World Literature scholarship has relied on a “translatability assumption”, which thereby elides the messy, incommensurable and irreducibly specific qualities of literary texts (2013: 3). World Literature has, in her view, promoted “an ethic of liberal inclusiveness” which tends to blunt political critique (2013: 41). To counter this, her ambition is instead “to activate untranslatability as a theoretical fulcrum of comparative literature” (2013: 3). In a somewhat related vein, the second accusation against World Literature concerns its complicity with capitalist globalisation, especially its flattening bias towards spatial extension. A recent instance of this criticism can be found in Pheng Cheah’s *What is a World?*, the gist of which is that World Literature studies, as it has been developed by David Damrosch, Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova, has too readily acted as a handmaiden to the neo-liberal reconfiguration of the humanities and the cultural needs of a globalised but stratified economy. Cheah argues that all three scholars pursue an analogy between World Literature and “the circulation of commodities in a global market”, which diminishes what he calls “literature’s worldly force” and reduces it to an epiphenomenon of capitalist globalisation (2016: 28). The most problematic manoeuvre, for Cheah, is the “conflation of the globe, a bounded object in Mercatorian space, with the world, a form of belonging or community” (2016: 30). His alternative is instead to approach the world in terms of time and duration – as something that persists and is constructed gradually.

The critics, I find, tend to overstate their case by making it appear as though literary scholarship were a choice between mutually exclusive methodologies. Both Cheah and Apter seem to ignore that studying the circulation of literary texts across spaces and languages is a fully legitimate (and difficult) endeavour which can by no means just be reduced to an ideological function. To mention one

prominent example: Gisèle Sapiro's work on the sociology of translation testifies to the enormous scholarly potential of mapping the conditions and practices of publication across languages and continents. Indeed, anyone who has empirically tried to track down translations of works in different languages will know just how challenging and unpredictable such a task can be. It presents precious little of the flattening smoothness of which Apter and Cheah complain.

This being said, the theoretical point in Cheah's work I find useful for my purposes here is his attempt to think the world as time rather than space. To think of world as a temporal category means emphasising that "[a] world only is and we are only worldly beings if there is already time". Therefore, the unity and permanence of a world are premised on the "persistence of time" (Cheah 2016: 2) – and it is by engaging this temporality that literature can acquire the normative authority needed, within a radically cosmopolitan ethos, to hold the world together. However,

Unlike teleologies of world history, the unity at stake here is not that of the whole of humanity. It is more modest and fragile: the gathering- and holding-together that maintains a place of habitation in the face of the leveling violence of global technologies of temporal calculation. The survival of these worlds is necessary to the constitution of a larger world of humanity that is truly plural. (Cheah 2016: 12)

Not unlike Candido, then, Cheah is enlisting literature in the long and uncertain march towards human freedom. Transposed to a slightly less philosophical vocabulary, the point here is that literature – also World Literature – needs to be understood historically, as being involved in, and produced by, historically specific circumstances. Its force (to use one of Cheah's favourite terms) need not be reducible to the categories of social and political history, but it is in history, and in and with time, that the literary unfolds. The question is, however, how this fundamental and obvious claim can be factored into World Literature studies generally, and into a discussion of Candido specifically? As will become clear, the main methodological proposition of this paper is to pay attention to the very concept of literature and its (productively) incoherent history, an angle which proves particularly illuminating both for a reading of Candido and the World Literature debate.

Always closely connected to the University of São Paulo, Candido entered the public arena in the early 1940s and would thoroughly reconfigure Brazilian literary studies with his magisterial *Formação da literatura brasileira* and subsequent work in the 1960s and 1970s. The novelty of *Formação* was, among other things, its combined approach to literature as both a social institution and an aesthetic phenomenon. Against the New Critical tendency at the time spearheaded by Afrânio Coutinho, but also in resistance to Marxist reductionism, Candido's interest lay in the gradual autonomisation of Brazilian literature as a coherent, self-reflexive tradition and corpus of works. By dismissing the scattered production of

texts in the early colonial period as “literary manifestations”, he reserved the term “literature” for the fully fledged *system* of writers, publishers, critics and readers that together enabled the consistent local production of aesthetically valued texts. This is arguably the most important methodological manoeuvre in all of *Formação*, as it brings together the spatial predicament of colonial society, exiled across the ocean from what is valued as “great literature”, with the temporal sedimentation of local production. In the terms of this essay, one could say that he approaches literature both as an *inherited* concept and an *emergent* historical phenomenon.

The question of inheritance is a familiar problem in World Literature studies, not least in Christopher Prendergast’s identification (*pace* Arjun Appadurai) of “Eurochronology” as an obstacle to thinking literature globally (Prendergast 2004: 6). If the aesthetic notion of literature we make use of today took shape in a very particular, romanticist moment in Europe, is it even possible to apply it to verbal art from other parts of the world without committing epistemic violence? The most elaborate and pessimistic answer to that question can be found in Aamir Mufti’s recent book *Forget English!*, which sees World Literature as steeped in the legacy of Orientalist epistemology. What Mufti does is locate the European shift from neo-classicism to romanticism in the larger context of the emergence of philology, particularly the study of Asian languages. The work of Johann Gottfried Herder and William Jones, the emergence of romanticism and the subsequent flourishing of national literatures are therefore ultimately all part and parcel of European imperialism and the “assimilation of human life into an expansionist bourgeois order encompassing the world” (Mufti 2016: 243). World Literature, in his view, resurfaces as a problematic at times of crisis for the management of cultural diversity within this bourgeois order, and it does so by transferring difference to “the plane of equivalence that is literature” (Mufti 2016: 250), a turn of phrase that recalls the concerns of Apter and Cheah.

There is much to be said in favour of Mufti’s thorough argument. World Literature scholars are destined to return to the momentous but complex transition from classicism to romanticism – which is, moreover, Candido’s focal point in *Formação*. Even so, my own approach in this paper is almost diametrically opposed to Mufti’s. Rather than assume that “literature”, by dint of its association with imperial history, has a deterministic stranglehold on our thinking, I am arguing – under inspiration from Reinhart Koselleck – that the semantic content of the concept is *never* fully settled, never quite coherent. It carries authority, yes, and this authority is derived not least from Euro-imperial histories, but the meaning of that authority is not uniform to begin with, and becomes even less so in its continued deployment. As the intellectual historian Christopher Hill puts it, “the quality of universality” in a concept emerges only when it is used “*outside* [its] point of origin” (Hill 2013: 148). Hence, literature *cannot* simply serve as a “plane of equivalence”, but is better

thought of as a site of negotiation between the inertia of inherited meanings and the disruptions of history. It is in this respect that Candido's work can illustrate both the problems and possibilities of engaging the concept.

At first glance, *Formação* and later essays by Candido seem to confirm Mufti's critique. In *Formação*, Candido famously claims that he intends to produce a study of the Brazilians "in their desire to have a literature" (Candido 2012: 27)⁵. This desire gathers force in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which is precisely when national literatures in Europe begin to be conceptualised *as such*, as national and vernacular. Brazilian literature is in other words imbricated with the European Herderian moment, undergirded by a slave-owning, white creole elite and predicated on a violent disavowal of indigenous voices that later become recoded symbolically in romantic terms as a figure of national origin (and hence of symbolic rupture from Europe).

Candido would provide numerous accounts that roughly corresponded with this narrative to Brazilians and outsiders alike. "Our literature", he wrote in *Formação*, "is merely an offshoot from Portuguese literature which, in turn, is a minor shrub in the garden of the muses" (Candido 2012: 11)⁶, a statement whose self-deprecating tone indicates a cosmopolitan desire that underwrites all of Candido's work. The "national" element in his thinking is always conceived in this way in relation to "the universal", as I mentioned before, but the universal is linked to a (western) European heritage. Candido's project was never to provincialise Europe, in the spirit of the postcolonial historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, but rather to bring the critical appraisal of Brazilian and Latin American literature to the same level as corresponding European criticism. Arguing *against* a particular Brazilian discourse of hybridity which saw the Portuguese, Indian (indigenous) and African cultural traditions as the three currents that make up Brazilian identity, he had the following to say – in English – to a North American audience at Cornell University in 1966:

Upon the evolution of the written literature the Indian and African cultural traditions worked only in an indirect manner, in that they brought about a transformation of Portuguese tastes, favoring a new approach to life which, in turn, came to influence literary creation. What occurred, then, was not an initial confluence to create a new literature, but rather a widening of the universe of a pre-existent literature, imported so to speak with the conquest and undergoing during the colonial period a general process of adjustment to the New World. (Candido 1968: 29)⁷

5 "uma 'história dos brasileiros no seu desejo de ter uma literatura'".

6 "A nossa literatura é galho secundário da portuguesa, por sua vez arbusto de segunda ordem no jardim das Musas".

7 Candido 1968: 29.

In this respect, Brazilian literature was purely the expression “of the culture of the colonizer and, later, of the Europeanized colonist”, whereas the direct influence of the African and indigenous populations was noticeable “only in the area of folklore” (1968: 29). Candido’s tendency to work from within an already established hierarchy of values is evident here in so far as “African” and “Indian” cultures are confined to the parochial sphere of folklore, leaving the European version of literature with exclusive access to the universal. Tellingly, in that same North American lecture, Candido speaks of how the Brazilian classicists of the eighteenth century “made it possible for the intellectual to create a world of spiritual autonomy and liberty” within “the universal republic of letters” (1968: 40), which once again demonstrates the ultimately – and paradoxically – Eurocentric framework within which Candido’s approach to literature is played out at this time.

However, Candido’s conceptual Eurocentrism is always combined with an acute awareness of the historically grounded and textually specific quality of literature – ultimately leading to a semantic crisis or shift in the concept. It is at this point worth rehearsing Koselleck’s understanding of temporal sedimentation in concepts. Since “history is never identical with its linguistic registration” (Koselleck 1985: 164) a concept will, throughout its life-span, encompass “persisting, overlapping, discarded, and new meanings” (1985: 83). Koselleck even suggests that the very definition of a concept resides in its capacity to embrace a “plenitude of meaning”, which is what distinguishes it from mere words:

The concept is bound to a word, but is at the same time more than a word: a word becomes a concept when the plenitude of a politicosocial context of meaning and experience in and or which a word is used can be condensed into one word. [...] A concept binds a variety of historical experiences and a collection of theoretical and practical references into a relation that is, as such, only given and actually ascertainable through the concept. (Koselleck 1985: 84)

It is here, in respect of what I call the conceptual worlding of literature, that I am somewhat more optimistic than Mufti and find methodological inspiration in Candido. For it is not only the case that Candido’s own position evolves – the definition of “literature” provided in “O direito à literatura” is far less elitist and restricted than in his early criticism. It is above all the way he develops arguments through an incessant dialogue between opposing positions, discrete methodological foci and different types of material that manifest in practice how World Literature can be understood as a temporal process – and that national literature in the post-colonised world must be understood as one dimension of World Literature.

The 1969 essay “Literature and Underdevelopment” is a pivotal moment for Candido’s own thinking on these matters. This is the first time he confronts the implications of illiteracy and poverty for his elite notion of literature. It is also the first time he places Brazilian literature in not only a Latin American but also

a more general “Third World” context. This recalibration of his thinking begins with his identification of a fundamental shift in the Latin American horizon of expectation, in the very quality of the future. If the dominant narrative until the 1930s had framed Brazil, optimistically, as “the new country” that hadn’t yet come into its own but possessed a glorious future, an increasingly pervasive sense of “underdevelopment” emerged from the 1940s onwards. According to the temporal structure of underdevelopment, the future would not entail transcendence but only – at best – an evening out of differences with the “advanced world”.

This had its advantages, since it discouraged delusions of grandeur. Instead of producing literature for an imagined ideal audience in Europe, works that were like “false jewels unmasked by time, contraband that gave them an air of competitors for some international prize for beautiful writing” (Candido 1995: 127)⁸, and, likewise, instead of producing regionalist works that ultimately reproduced the exoticising gaze of the elite European readership, the acceptance of “underdevelopment” could result in a stronger understanding of what was aesthetically adequate in the current historical situation. Aesthetic anachronism may in fact be perfectly legitimate, as he says with reference to the extended life of naturalism in Brazil. Indeed, this type of legitimacy is the only durable antidote to the extroverted predicament of Latin American literature, which the successes of Latin American writers testify to. Here, Candido is at one with the moment of the Latin American “boom”, but not as a translational phenomenon produced in North America. Rather, what he sees in these writers is a reconfiguration of the aesthetic field that takes the inherent anachronisms of Latin America as its substance and point of departure, rather than anxiously locate the centre of aesthetic gravity elsewhere, in Paris or New York.

It is here, finally, that we arrive at the African reception of João Guimarães Rosa (1908–1967), mentioned in Candido’s “underdevelopment” essay as one of the foremost among the later wave of Latin American writers. Possible to describe in parallel with William Faulkner as a vernacular modernist, Rosa has something of an African history as well. The clearest and most famous instance is when the Angolan writer José Luandino Vieira (persecuted at the time by the Portuguese for his anticolonial activism) discovered Rosa’s work in the 1960s. It has also been argued – most insistently in an early article by Mary L. Daniel – that the Mozambican writer Mia Couto should be regarded as a literary heir to Rosa, particularly on the basis of three characteristics: “(1) the major role of children, (2) the importance, respect, and affection accorded animals, and (3) the joco-serious linguistic creativity that is a constant, especially in his short narratives” (Daniel 1995: 3).

⁸ “muita joia falsa desmascarada pelo tempo, muito contrabando que lhes dá um ar de concorrentes em prêmio internacional de escrever bonito” (Candido 2011a: 179).

Couto's vast literary output since the 1990s has complicated that early assessment, and it is certainly wiser in general to think in terms of resonance rather than direct influence among writers. But not only is the question of resonance directly relevant to my argument here – it is *also* the case that with Vieira, the impact of Rosa's work was direct and dramatic, as he himself once explained:

I had already understood that it was necessary to make literary use of the spoken language of the characters, who were the people I knew, who reflected – from my point of view – the true characters that should figure in Angolan literature. It's just that I hadn't yet seen how it could be done. I knew how it should *not* be done, as for example in the case of Oscar Lewis and his *The Children of Sanchez*, where tape recordings produce a good sociological documentary but fail to produce literature. In other words, the process of registering language in naturalistic detail wasn't worth the effort, since a tape recorder would do it much better than me anyway. What I still hadn't grasped – and this is what João Guimarães Rosa taught me – was that a writer has the liberty to create a language that is not the same as that spoken by his characters [... W]hat interested me was not just the phonetic deformations but the structure of the phrase, the structure of the discourse, the internal logic of the discourse. [...] So this was Guimarães Rosa's lesson: that the way one can mangle the classical language, the language of learning, in order to suggest a more popular form of the language, must be done on the basis of an intimate knowledge of the language and not by not knowing it. What I am saying is that the people mangle things out of "ignorance", but that a writer can only legitimise these mistakes by way of his "erudition", quote unquote. (Quoted in Trigo 1981: 438–440)⁹

At this level of linguistic embeddedness, it would seem that we are leaving the context of World Literature behind completely in favour of a national and even

9 “Eu já sentia que era necessário aproveitar literariamente o instrumento falado dos personagens, que eram aqueles que eu conhecia, que me interessavam, que reflectiam – no meu ponto de vista – os verdadeiros personagens a pôr na literatura angolana. Eu só não tinha ainda encontrada era o caminho. Eu sabia qual não era o caminho, sabia, por exemplo, que uma experiência como a de Lewis, *Os Filhos de Sanchez*, as experiências chamadas de registo magnético, dão um bom documento, e dão um documento sociológico, mas que não é literatura. Portanto, que o registo naturalista de uma linguagem era um processo, mas que não valia a pena esse processo porque, com certeza que um gravador fazia melhor do que eu. Eu só não tinha percebido ainda, e foi isso que João Guimarães Rosa me ensinou, é que um escritor tem a liberdade de criar uma linguagem que não seja a que os seus personagens utilizam [...] não me interessavam só as deformações fonéticas, interessava-me a estrutura da própria frase, a estrutura do próprio discurso, a lógica interna desse discurso. [...] E foi, isso é a lição de Guimarães Rosa: os atropelos que se possam fazer à língua erudita, no sentido de propor uma linguagem mais popular, têm que ser atropelos que se fazem por conhecimento muito íntimo da língua e não por se desconhecimento. Quero dizer que o povo atropela, digamos assim, por ‘ignorância’ entre aspas, mas que um escritor só pode legitimar esses atropelos desde que seja por, entre aspas, ‘erudição’”.

nationalist conception of literature. But this would be once again to miss how multiple historical experiences and meanings are sedimented in a concept such as “literature”. The writer’s “erudition”, or knowingness, of which Vieira speaks is precisely an indication that his poetics do not spring organically out of the Angolan soil, but are shaped historically in a process that brings the distant and the proximate, the theoretical and the experiential, together. There are in fact two distinct ways of reading Vieira’s appreciation of Rosa in world literary terms. The first would be to see it in a purely spatial frame, as an after-effect of the Portuguese imperial expansion and its establishment of a Lusophone, trans-oceanic discourse network. This would ultimately reaffirm the known facts of political dominance and cultural hegemony, yet bypass the impetus Rosa provided Vieira to write *differently*, to approach “literature” from an unexpected and liberating angle. Hence, the second option would be to approach Vieira’s statement in temporal terms, as an indication of certain resonances between the historical predicaments of Brazil, Angola and Mozambique – in shorthand, “underdevelopment” and “anachronism” – that make Rosa’s peculiar combination of vernacular language games, existential philosophy, folk tales and myth aesthetically valid, as Candido would say. In this sense, World Literature need not merely be a matter of consecration in Paris or New York, or an epiphenomenon of capitalist globalisation, or Orientalism in disguise, but the story of “literature’s” contradictory and inevitably incomplete ways of achieving relevance in social contexts that are both world-systemic and irreducibly specific.

If Candido’s essay on literature and underdevelopment could be read as an attempt at discerning how local aesthetic validity could be nurtured *within* a transcontinental condition of unevenness between centres and peripheries, and if Vieira’s statement (and writerly practice) retraces the gist of Candido’s critique of both regionalism and ungrounded aestheticism, what we arrive is a dual optic for World Literature studies. The spatial and geographical dimension of colonial history and globalisation cannot be ignored. Yet, it is the temporal formation of belonging and community by literary means, within this predicament of distant and diffuse power, that require closer and careful attention. Vieira’s language labour – to borrow a term used by Nicholas Robinette (2011) – is in this respect not just a local or national matter, but yet another chapter in the aesthetic and well as semantic formation of literature in the world.

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Hermann Herlinghaus

On the concept figure of the Global South, and ecological narrative promises and deceits

1 Remarks on the “Global South”

Major parts of the discussion of World Literature deal with conceptual mapping. The metafigure of the map has led us to consider categories less as stable entities, and rather as moveable frameworks that help drawing transversal and yet recurrent links between distant imaginaries, and sometimes realities. What comes quickly to mind is Franco Moretti’s treatise *Graphs, Maps, Trees* and, above all, his critical remark that comparative literature, as a discipline, has not lived up to “its beginnings”, which he ties to Goethe and Marx (Moretti 2007). Comparative literature has “been a much more modest intellectual enterprise, fundamentally limited to western Europe, and mostly revolving around the river Rhine (German philologists working on French literature). Not much more” (Moretti 2013: 45). From an angle that does not take literature as its vantage point but the transnational and transregional constitution of new, ethno-geographically diverse spaces, experiences, and maps of imagination, Arjun Appadurai has suggested the figure of global ethnoscapes. Today, the “*ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality” (Appadurai 1996: 48–53).

The explorative term “Global South” proffers a major change in perspective, as it does regarding questions of status and legitimacy regarding unequal distribution and exchange, including the realms of narrative culture and criticism. The term has emerged in order to further make flexible the conundrum of the planetary, the regional, the local, and foreground paradoxes in contrast to previous “world system” models that talked of a core, a periphery and a semi-periphery. Although there has been an avid uptake of the term in many academic labels and conversations, its meaning is diverse. Caroline Levander and Walter D. Mignolo, among others, have attempted to set a mark by editing a special issue of the journal *Global South* entitled *The Global South and World Dis/Order* (2011) however, the contributions therein on literature are scarce. The preliminaries state their major interest in a “global southern grid”, prioritizing “South-to-South-networks that have the potential to engage decolonial forces of art, knowledge, ethics, politics, and creative practice” (Levander/Mignolo 2011: 1). In this case, the grid-like relationships with

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the North appear as secondary, and the central regions (Central Europe, Central America, Central Asia) seem to be of less interest. This is, to an extent, understandable since North-South, as well as South-Central relationships are always implied: we are dealing with categories that have been historically constructed by modern discourses, politics, and economics. “East” and “West” are concepts that come from the Renaissance; “North” and “South” from the Enlightenment¹ (Levander/Mignolo 2011: 2). Once regions were classified, these classifications started acquiring a both symbolic and material force, and were applied across centuries.

There is another perspective, that of Djelal Kadir, who discusses World Literature in terms of convergence and sustainability, while maintaining a comparativist stake. Written, oral, cognitive texts from highly diverse spaces regularly converge within certain scenarios and at certain points of time. What converges are multiple fields of literatures, stories, and networks of their intersections. “The maximal convergence”, writes Kadir who is inspired by Erich Auerbach and Edward Said, “is called world literature” (Kadir 2011: 2). The other term, sustainability, refers to the privileged place of texts and textuality which are seen as keystones “for the sustainability of our cultural edifice” along the lines of memory, ethics, poetics and ekphrasis (Kadir 2011). In his book, *Memories from the Besieged City*, the author takes the figure of the “besieged city” as a lens for a globally oriented reflection about various authors and scenarios of writing (South and North), scenarios traversed by energies – says Kadir recalling Walter Benjamin – that labor to wrest memory away from comforting strategies of ruling discourses and interests. There are other important conceptual figures, such as “global narcoepics” that help to map heterogeneous ethico-narrative territories in their own right, in order to decenter as well as reformulate traditional North-South discourses (Herlinghaus 2013: 27-50). For an aesthetico-conceptual rethinking of narratives emerging around the Mexican-U.S. border, without prioritizing “high literature”, see for example the study, “Troposcapes of Imagination and the Figural Engagement of Border Crossing” (Herlinghaus 2009: 57–66).

It remains somewhat difficult to give a conclusive description of the Global South. One may, however, conceive of the Global South as a hermeneutic, conceptual and ethical lens that allows the strategic foregrounding of an experiential epistemology marked – to different degrees – by both present-time experiences of forced neoliberal adjustments and past-time layers of colonization and precarious, or heterogeneous modernities. “Heterogeneous modernity” is understood, in the first place, as markedly different from a normative modernity. The Global

¹ See also Mignolo (2011).

South is not an allegory, and it is not necessarily a referential mapping limited to southern territories. We are, rather, dealing with new spaces of reflexivity and self-consciousness, as they come connected to narrative and imaginary formations of surprising affective, as well as epistemic force.

A Global South-sensibility among writers, artists, and other intellectuals is not an entirely new phenomenon; the difficulty lies in the fact that modern categorial systems have for a long time barred, or closed the avenues that could allow for the translation of such sensibility into major concepts and segments of legitimate academic reflection. The relationships between writers with a Global-South sensitivity and particular aesthetic categories, or styles is not conclusive. Yet tendencies can be observed that require closer examination such as, for example, uncommon negotiations between newly emerging forces of epical writing and non-epical narrativization, or approaches of a global aesthetics of sobriety, by which I mean a consciousness of minimalism and simplicity among writers and artists in view of an overflowing universe of superfluous information, pathological media addiction, and languages of excess or waste that pertain to global commodity cultures.

Since Postcolonial Studies has achieved major standing, a principal interrogation resonates stronger than it once had. It is related to a major doubt: if Western philosophical and scientific traditions of reflexivity and self-reflexivity are the most suiting for comprehension and analysis today, or if they should be amplified and rethought with the help of more dialogic, as well as holistic (*ganzheitlich*) ways to make sense of the dilemmas of human beings in today's world, and their resonating genealogies of the immediate and distant past – whether dating back one year, 27 years, 500 years, 2000 years, or 5000 years.

With the Global South, contemporaneity turns most paradoxical and thought-provoking. Scenarios of, and sensitivities resonating with the Global South can be perceived as being more “contemporary” than the Global North (Herlinghaus 2013: 29–30). That can mean uneven or heterogeneous contemporaneity is appropriated or thought of as heightened contemporaneity. Whatever preference one might take, we think that the terms “decolonial imagination/decolonial thinking” provide a necessary signpost. To speak of a “Global South” today, in decolonial terms implies a multiple awareness, taking into account (a) the (political and cultural) historicity of the concepts, (b) the particular epistemological and creative resources that emerge from de-centered experience and imagination, and (c) an ethically alert reflexivity regarding any kind of discourse construction that works with the major divisions, or dualisms invented by colonialism and perfected, as well as sublimized by, our hegemonic Western modernity.

2 Categorical irritations, abnormal interpretation

Let me evoke a few scenarios that may incite trouble at the interface of literary analysis and cultural understanding. “Translation” can work as de-localization, it can for instance allow for an interruption of a continuum of discourses, making visible moments of emergence, transformation and displacement of existing meanings. We might take the example of translation of the concept of “magical realism”. Let’s ponder, for a moment, its translation into concerns that characterize our situation today as literary theorists whose theoretical baggage has become highly paradoxical. Regarding Latin American magical realism, we can, on the one hand, look for a fairly unlimited chain of “magical realist” (re)narrations as they have spread across the world, including the United States, India and other parts of the globe. One might, on the other hand, shift perspective for a moment and remember that both Alejo Carpentier (“lo real maravilloso”) and Gabriel García Márquez (“lo mágico real”) had shaped their conceptual preferences in order to make a point about particular “poetics of reality” in Latin America. In other words, it is not enough and perhaps not even very original to look for “magical realist” writing styles on the basis of traditional categories of literary analysis. Rather, it seems interesting to reconsider (retranslate) the term so as to reflect on modes of perception of the “incredibly real”, one that is not possible to categorize as that which we know as the commonly real “with a positive content”, or then “real” that serves as the basis for a normative logics.

In order to illustrate the point let me briefly mention two literary texts from Colombia that have been belittled – by elements in literary criticism – as pseudo-sociological, or “too sociological”. Quite on the contrary, their innovativeness consisted in exploring and shaping documentary narratives to the point at which they seemed to dissolve the borders between anthropology and politics, as well as fiction and magic. I am referring to Alonso Salazar’s *No nacimos pa’ semilla* (1990) and *Pablo Escobar, auge y caída de un narcotraficante* (2001). At stake are the criteria with which we understand and judge literary projects that do not fit into commonplace academic denotations. A brief hypothesis, at this point, may simply state: *Pablo Escobar* written by Salazar is one of the most surprising magical realist books of the global present, not because of its style but owing to its narrative epistemology. This is to say, we are not referring to a portentous fabulosity, or oneiric talent, nor to particular synesthetic effects that can draw the reader headlong into the most astonishing peripeties; rather, the book calls for attention as “magical realist” because it defamiliarizes a mythifying public discourse, and Manichaeic media coverage that have turned the image of Escobar into the hyperbole of evil, while hiding crucial mechanisms at the governmental, juridical, economic, and geopolitical scale, which have contributed to nurture

and sustain, for more than a decade, the conundrum of “evil”. Wouldn’t it make sense to rethink magical realist narratives by attending, for example, to their power to demythify hegemonic narratives with the help of a variety of unconventional means including magical and fantastic elements²?

There is no doubt that Escobar’s history can be viewed as at least as compelling and “fabulous” as the genealogy of the entire Buendía family. It is common knowledge that “El Capo” was one of the biggest criminals, and also that big criminals tend to fail when they are not backed any more by existing major power networks. The demythifying effect of the book, together with its sober, almost notarial, slightly ironic style is paradoxically strong because it was neither by fortune, nor mere evil that Escobar could impose an informal state of exception on Colombian society for several years. With genealogical and ethnographic accuracy, including the use of a fantastic figure, Salazar turns into a chronicler of the most disconcerting facts and non-modern dynamics within the history of a modern political system, while focusing on Escobar’s trying to “re-write” twenty years of national and hemispheric destiny. The testimonial account on the narcotraficante is still a fictional text, its fictionality resting on the combinatory talent of the author, as well as on the invention of ghosts speaking for those witnesses that wanted to remain anonymous. It is also a matter of the defamiliarization of norms: the epic discovery and renarration of the life of the “Gran Capo” allows the capturing of the Baroque excess that marked Escobar’s life and death, while avoiding any hyperbolic expression on the linguistic and stylistic side. Epic writing and investigative accuracy are fused together. This way, the entire, improbable and unbelievable story can be brought forth as if it were pure fiction. “Magical realism” as deconstruction of a public mythical discourse, yet narrative reconstruction of a baroque setting brought about by an informal sovereign who sought to decide life and death in one of Latin America’s pathological arenas of global capitalism. The “disease” did not only lie in Escobar’s human nature, it was also rooted in an unbearable degree of social crisis and overall situation on the Western hemisphere.

I would like to use a second example in order to deliberately mistranslate a second concept – the concept of fantastic writing: *La virgen de los sicarios* by Fernando Vallejo (1994). Without doubt, Vallejo’s is one of the most hyperbolic, even transgressive narratives of contemporary literature – rhetorically, morally, politically, and aesthetically – from irony to satire to cynicism, and back. If we

² Here it is interesting to remember Walter Benjamin’s relevant remarks on how “minor narratives”, such as the fairy tale “meet the forces of the mythical world with cunning and with high spirits” (Benjamin 2002: 157).

submit it to an exercise in reduction, we might realize that, devoid of all its hyperbolic rhetoric, what remains is a sober story whose peripeties are nothing less than highly improbable (“*altamente inverosímil*”). Fernando, an elite intellectual (“*el último gramático de Colombia*”), and homosexual, returns, at advanced age, to Colombia from abroad in order to die in his country; the time is shortly after the death of Pablo Escobar. In the antediluvian (“*predeluvial*”) environment of an old friend’s chalet he receives an adolescent youth – “un sicario” who is also gay – as a “present”, together with whom he will endeavor to launch a vendetta of assassinations among Medellín’s civil population. When Alexis, the adolescent *sicario* is killed by another hitman, Fernando the “*gramático*” falls in love with his assassin, Wilmar, who will later be killed as well. After having played the role of his country’s violent Messiah, and miraculously not being held responsible for the assassinations that he inspired, Fernando decides to leave his country again, and the novel ends with a sarcastic remark directed to the reader. The mere story line, devoid of its hyperbolic rhetorical ornaments, would perfectly suit Jorge Luis Borges’ *Historia universal de la infamia*. It would allow for a sweeping fantastic tale, the difference being that Fernando is not a small criminal of modest social status but an elite intellectual. The rest of the story is fantastic literature in Borges’s framework: the improbable, “*lo inverosímil*”, is turned probable and narratively shaped as if it were self-evident. Here I am reading the concept of fantastic literature against the grain. My purpose is not to make Vallejo’s tremendous literary, and ethical provocation invisible but to raise a major doubt: are the categories of interpretation that are still in common usage suitable for these and other salient cases of literary stance taking from the “Hemispheric South”?

Here I present a third example for reflection: Roberto Bolaño and the ecological paradox. In what way might 2666 be read as an “ecological novel”? Nothing seems to point in that direction. The text is, in its Spanish version, over a thousand pages long; it repeatedly indulges in epic storytelling, and it displays the life lines of a large variety of characters. In what looks like a novel of excess, ecology is not a thematic issue, and in terms of language and composition reduction, minimalism, and the modest use of narrative resources seem unlikely to have been major criteria for writing. However, there is something to 2666 that lends the novel a profoundly antipsychological, notarial, and sober tone. I will discuss the “ecological” aspect in the final segments of this text.

My aim, by referring these three examples, is to offer test cases of “abnormal interpretation” (Herlinghaus 2013: 30–31). I am not suggesting a new kind of paradigm. The argument is that abnormal interpretation arises as a challenge at the point at which vital narratives and experiences that emerge from the Global South (Latin America, in the above cases) should not be contained any longer within the discursive logics of “qualified” criticism the way it has developed from

“normalized” lettered citizenship, or canonical representations in the centers of modernity. From the Global South there arise crucial impulses to rethink the normality of the normal, owing to modes, or *dispositifs* of globalized imaginaries, and identities that however, can or prefer not to lay claim to an “enlightened” cosmopolitanism or strictly subject-centered epistemologies, or even to a normative civility as a promise of good life. As it seems, we have to become aware of a *Global South Literary and Epistemological Sensorium* that is not properly “cosmopolitan” yet charged with uncommon features of worldliness.

3 Emergences – Challenges

Let me finally address a possible relationship between what Gregory Bateson called an *Ecology of Mind* and literary, as well as cultural interpretation (Bateson 1972). Bateson spoke of simple and yet paradoxical relations between spiritual health and disease, between the destruction of resources for sustained planetary human and non-human existence, and the chances for healthier, “ecologically” relevant modes of thinking and interpreting. We might not share Bateson’s bio-cybernetic hypotheses, but can still draw some considerations from his metaphorical concept.

Aristotle spoke of “*physis*” as existing reality and “*techné*” as the world created by human beings. Bateson names these two kinds of reality with the gnostic terms “*pleroma*” and “*creatura*”. *Creatura* is that part of living, organic nature which possesses consciousness, while *pleroma* is physical or inorganic nature. In his book *Mind and Nature*, he discusses them as interactive unity. *Creatura*, the world of spiritual processes is “both tautological (related to itself and constantly confirming itself) and ecological (interacting with a found environment)” (Bateson 1979). Bateson suggests, according to my interpretation, that a large segment of *creatura* – the human segment, so to speak – has become “tautological”. It shows a dynamic toward inner consistence of (logical) ideas and formalized (for example linguistic) representations, which circle around themselves. Here we can recognize the idea of a culture of consciousness that, fascinated and empowered by the consistence of its own truths and discursive orders (as in Michel Foucault) becomes tautological: repetitive, self-referential, and exclusionary. This culture of consciousness tends to become wasteful – *verschwenderisch* – in that it obsessively legitimates the perpetuation of that which Bruno Latour called the modern labor of separation and purification: on the left knowledge and representation of things, on the right, politics and economy, and beneath both the so-called nature (Latour 1993: 20–21). At issue is the well-established autonomy of the sacred realms of Western modernity, which

allows the bringing of the sphere of consciousness – sublimely sustained by science and philosophy – into a self-referential spiral that circles vertiginously. However, the underlying situation of modern societies is outrightly hybrid; this is why Latour entitled his book *We Have Never Been Modern*.

I continue freely referring to Bateson here. There is, on the one hand, an obsessively creating, appropriating, ordering and accumulating mind that has become omnipotent, and which can be identified as the superlative, great moving force of a statistical, technological-military and economic high modernity. On the other, and paradoxically, the *creatura* of the human being has black holes in its consciousness, registers gaps of causality, and limits of both understanding and communication. The “gap of consciousness” is especially manifest in our analytical and interpretive thinking habits. Why? Because rational consciousness thinks of itself as a distinct subjective entity, or agency, and assumes that it corresponds to the center of the human brain, ignoring that the brain has powerful spheres that – in terms of life processes – regulate much more than the cortical cerebral spheres. I am alluding to the brain stem that is responsible for the autonomic body functions and nervous system, and the limbic system that actively partakes in the regulation of our emotional existence.

Taking this into account, Bateson speaks of a kind of immanent, permanently active and creative, and regulative “mind”; one that is not ego-driven, that is to say distanced from the environment. This is the other mind which, in biological and anthropological terms, is more relevant than the rationalizing and tendentially self-reflective supermind. The problematic relationships between both minds in modernity has been discussed with singular plasticity by Aldous Huxley in his essay “The Education of an Amphibian”. In sum, an *ecology of mind* addresses a realm of consciousness that is not merely focused on the “I”, the ego-driven part that strives for perfection, wasting of nature, and self-reference but considers a more heterogeneous mind that constantly incorporates flows of connectedness with other human beings and the environment on a non-instrumental basis. Here we might ask ourselves about the possibility to think of an ecology of literature as well. This would not necessarily mean, as I have tried to show, to search for another literature but for different approaches to literature.

To scrutinize (the concept of) world literatures today offers genuine resources for recognizing, or conceptualizing a literary consciousness that transcends the representational conventions of an individually subject-driven and divisive (in Latour’s sense) identity. This is not new, especially not for literature. For example, several perspectives have already pointed to the limits of the modern psychological, introspective, or obsessively self-reflexive novel. A significant Latin American case is Borges’s prologue to Adolfo Bioy Casares’s novel *La invención de Morel* (1940). This short text adds to the reflections, and narratives in which Borges exemplifies his concept of fantastic narration in which paradox, reason and the completely

inverosímil constantly coexist. In other words, at issue is not an abandonment of consciousness novels but the question how seriously we venture to think of *different kinds* of consciousness novels. An interesting case that comes to mind is the novel *Plasma* (2005) created by the Chilean writer Guadalupe Santa Cruz, a masterwork of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call “minor literature” (Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 16–17). It can teach us that an ecological narrative is not a text *about* ecology, the way it tends to be posited by the instrumental discourses of today’s societies, rather *Plasma* is inherently ecological in its way of poetically and linguistically capturing a flow of exchanges; we could say between *creatura* and *pleroma*. The storyline of this genuinely multilayered text: Rita, a marginal woman from the Chilean cordillera is turned into a victim by regional and local players of global economic adjustments of the country, because of her capacities to communicate somatically and spiritually with both living nature and the environment.

At this point, we can recall our previous thoughts on Roberto Bolaño. His overflowing novel *2666* can well be scrutinized for a kind of reflexivity that is neither explicit nor guided by ego-based affects. For example, the reader is (fictionally) acquainted with several characters who are European literary critics of high academic standing. These critics act on the basis of schooled erudition and well trained rational conventions. They are university professors that are very successful in their social systems of professional life but incapable of resolving the core questions that the narrative weaves together. Deeper “consciousness” is located elsewhere, not in one or the other character nor in a distinct narrative agency. “Consciousness” is immanent to the narrative process and the experiential realm in its fictionalized form. The ecological posture that traverses *2666* is a matter of deep skepticism regarding the possibilities of an individual, that is, a subject-centered hermeneutics of the world. Such hermeneutics, divided between instrumental and transcendental reason, cannot sensibly think about the forms of violence that a global modernity is producing, and facing today because it is located within a dualistic frame of rational versus irrational violence. To understand violence, different forms of rationality (scientific and experiential, ethnographic and ethical) need to coexist in non-autonomous ways, and interact with transrational epistemologies whose categories are still precarious, or not yet taken seriously. There is an immanent thread to Bolaño’s narrative, related to the question of how a new sustainability of ethical intellectual (ad)ventures in today’s highly uneven world can be imagined; one that is able to reunite creative independence (the artist) and academic expertise (the scholar). The implicit network of possible answers into which we as readers are drawn is accompanied by uncomfortable images, shocking signposts for reflection, and terse experiences that are located more often in the realm of bare life than that of qualified life. As an epistemological denominator keeps resonating, allow me to state it again, the skepticism regarding subject-centered, well-schooled and sublimely

modernized identities which strive for perfection and safety, but have unlearned how to listen to the very profound needs of sustainability and sobriety.

My aim with this short reflection was to argue that the narratives of heterogeneous descent discussed here, as well as others are not just calling for a more inclusive stance within the existing symbolic and institutional cultural fabric, they may well suggest notions of literature that are theoretically and anthropologically unfamiliar, and thus warrant different frameworks to be understood and taken seriously. One of the challenges inherent in this discussion is to rethink a notion of ecological literatures based on the way in which they emerge from the existential quests, narrative fantasies and epistemological needs of the Hemispheric South, or even the Global South.

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Vittoria Borsò

Orientalismo y realismo mágico al revés. Juan Rulfo y Salman Rushdie o los desafíos del Sur global para la literatura mundial

En sus ensayos, Salman Rushdie declara explícitamente que su propia literatura fue inspirada por el realismo mágico de autores latinoamericanos. Gabriel García Márquez y Carlos Fuentes fueron sus amigos; Juan Rulfo, un escritor admirado y tomado como modelo. Varios autores y autoras en la India comparten dicho entusiasmo, de modo que existe ya una considerable tradición de lo que se puede llamar “realismo mágico” de la India¹. Lo mismo vale para unos excelentes ensayos sobre este género literario redactados en y desde la India. No cabe duda de que estamos frente a la circulación de textos de literatura mundial escritos desde distintas partes del Sur global y es menester preguntar acerca de las transposiciones que se despliegan en estas rutas entre Sur y Sur. Un texto seminal para el *realismo mágico* situado en la India es *Midnight's Children*, de Salman Rushdie, que ganó el Booker Price en 1981, lo que hizo de él un autor de fama mundial. Especialmente en los oídos acostumbrados a los idiomas de autores llamados mágico-realistas de América Latina, resuenan varios ecos. Entre ellos cabe mencionar: la genealogía de un pueblo –representado en *Cien años de soledad* por la estirpe de los Buendía y en *Midnight's Children* por los Sinai– con la superposición de los tiempos llevada a cabo por el narrador, Saleem Sinai, nacido como el autor en 1947; además, la ruptura de la cronología y la performance del discurso metahistórico sobre el catastrófico devenir de una nación que trae en sí las heridas de la colonización. Resuenan también *Tierra nostra* y *Cristóbal Nonato*, de Carlos Fuentes, y a veces nos sentimos cerca de los paisajes andinos de *Los ríos profundos* cuando, como en Arguedas, se superponen los idiomas de dos mundos que conviven en el mismo lugar y a la vez chocan entre sí. Especialmente al comienzo, cuando se relatan las décadas precedentes e inmediatamente

¹ Me refiero, entre otros, a *Beethoven Among the Cows* (1984), de Rukun Advani, *Looking Through Glass* (1995), de Makarand Paranjape, *An Angel in Pyjamas* (1996), de Tabish Khair, *Bombay Duck* (1990), de Farukh Dhondy, *The Memoir of Elephants* (1998), de Boman Desai, así como a *Asylum, U.S.A.* (2000), del mismo autor.

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sucesivas a la independencia del sub-continente indio, la exuberancia del lenguaje tiene mucho en común con el barroquismo de García Márquez e incluye a la vez un lenguaje que en México llaman “cursi”, en el sentido de vulgar, grotesco o habla popular.

En fin, los mundos de la literatura mundial latinoamericana entran con profusión en este texto. Sin embargo, el desplazamiento en la experiencia biográfica indio-británica de Rushdie evoca, además, otros mundos, recordándonos a la vez que las redes que se tejen en la literatura escrita en América Latina van también hacia los clásicos y modernos, sin restricciones históricas o geopolíticas. Con respecto a Rushdie es menester tomar en cuenta que el apellido mismo fue adoptado por su padre a raíz de su admiración por Ibn Ruschd, conocido como Averroes, y que, además, a los 14 años, Salman fue enviado a un internado en Warwickshire, desde donde se fue a estudiar Historia al King’s College y Cambridge. Si leemos el texto en español, se añaden también los mundos de su traductor, Miguel Sáenz, traductor de Günther Grass, Thomas Bernhard, Franz Kafka, W.G. Sebald, Emine Sevgi Özdamar y William Faulkner, entre otros, además de la propia experiencia biográfica e intelectual de Miguel Sáenz formada entre Marruecos, su lugar de nacimiento, y su temprano interés por Frantz Fanon, así como por los “horrores del poscolonialismo”. Sería pues necesario un estudio aparte para re-trazar la topología rizomática que se forma en el *entre lugar* de lecturas y traducciones entre los mundos que se inscriben en la circulación y las traducciones del *Sur global*. Quiero, sin embargo, subrayar de antemano que no se trataría de plantear una dicotomía entre el Sur global y *Occidente*, proyectando la construcción de un occidente imaginado, encerrado en totalitarismos y opuesto al mundo enriquecido de desterritorializaciones en el hemisferio sur, como lo proponen tendencialmente escritos declamatorios de Boaventura de Sousa Santos acerca de la “epistemología del sur” (2009: 160–209). En lo que concierne a la epistemología que se desprende de la literatura y también de la filosofía, justamente la serie de autores traducidos por Sáenz nos demuestra que literaturas desterritorializadas y desterritorializantes, que podemos denominar “littérature mineure” (Deleuze/Guattari 1975), se escriben en ambos hemisferios del mundo. Rushdie mismo parece subrayar esta tesis también con respecto al imaginario visual cuando en su página web personal yuxtapone el *Capricho* 43, de Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, e íconos del imaginario “oriental” como la flor de loto, imagen de la pureza espiritual. Publicado en 1981, *Midnight’s Children* se presenta como la elaboración de la independencia que la India declaró el 15 de agosto de 1947 contra la dominación inglesa con las sucesivas luchas entre hinduistas, sijes y musulmanes tras la partición del territorio indio entre las repúblicas de India y Pakistán. Lo que formalmente parece una epopeya se desarrolla más bien en el sentido de *Nueva novela histórica* (Menton 1996; Borsò 2001) o del *New Historicism*, de Stephen Greenblatt

(1980), al que se refiere la mayoría de los críticos en la India. Es un método de relatar la historia de la nación más allá de la cronología, con la que rompe evidentemente la mezcla de autobiografía, ficción e historia, así que se consideran el nacimiento y la vida de los Sinai como una alegoría del nacimiento y de los complejos periplos de la nación independiente². Contrariamente a la epopeya, que consiste en la narración extensa de acciones transcendentales o dignas de memoria para un pueblo en torno a la figura de un héroe, en *Midnight's Children*, de manera análoga a *Cien años de soledad*, el nacimiento es acompañado por enfermedades o anomalías. De hecho, la metáfora de la enfermedad es la más común interpretación que se le da a la “medianoche”, el momento en el que nacen el narrador Saleem Sinai, su padre y abuelo, así como todos los hijos que vendrán. Con esta información empieza Saleem a escribir, proponiéndose contar, antes de morir con solo 31 años, los eventos y las experiencias en las vidas de tres generaciones de la familia Sinai. La historia de la familia empieza en Srinagar, pasando por Amritsar, Agra y Mumbai hasta Karachi, de donde Saleem regresa al “origen”, escondido en la cesta de la bruja Parvati para poder experimentar los terrores del estado de emergencia nacional proclamado por Indira Gandhi el 25 de junio de 1975. Los tres libros que estructuran el texto tratan, pues, seis décadas de la historia del subcontinente indio. El primer libro abarca el periodo que va del incidente de Jallianwala Bagh en abril de 1919 hasta el nacimiento del narrador Saleem en 1947; el segundo libro se extiende hasta el final de la guerra indo-pakistaní en septiembre de 1965; el tercer libro relata el periodo hasta el final del estado de emergencia el 21 de marzo de 1977 incluyendo la guerra de Bangladesh (Mitra 2006: 2).

Ahora bien, aunque la autobiografía ficcional de Saleem y las biografías de toda la familia Sinai están abiertamente entrelazadas con momentos fundacionales de la India independiente y con la amenaza de su derrota, y si bien la enfermedad es a la vez física y una metáfora de los males del país, cabe, sin embargo, diferenciar la tesis poscolonial acerca de la alegoría del nacimiento de una nación enferma. La infancia del abuelo Aziz Sinai, relatada al comienzo de la novela, está más bien vinculada a la emergencia de fuerzas que abren al futuro. De hecho, en 1920 Mahatma Gandhi estaba transformando el partido del Congreso Nacional Indio en un movimiento de masas en protesta contra la dominación británica.

2 “The metaphor of birth is part of the larger metaphor of the nation as a person that is inseparable from the imaginative construction of the nation. Historians (and politicians conscious of making history that historians will record) speak of growth and maturity, as if the nation were a human child, of direction and progress and dangers, as if the nation were on a journey, of wounds and memory, desire and fear, as if the nation had a psychology” (Kortenaar 2004: 45).

Por el contrario, es el último de los Sinai, Aadam, el hijo de Layla y Saleem, nacido el 25 de junio de 1975, el día del pronunciamiento del estado de excepción, el que tiene una tuberculosis incurable. Como Saleem, “he is mysteriously handcuffed to history” (Rushdie 1981: 405). En el último libro, en el contexto de la tuberculosis, el texto cita directamente la tesis de Susan Sontag (1978) concerniente a la somatización de la carga metafórica relacionada a la enfermedad física³, a la degradación sociopolítica y su poder contaminador: “en aquellos meses de medianoche en que la era de mi conexión-con-la-Historia se superpuso a la suya, nuestra emergencia privada no estaba desconectada de la enfermedad mayor y macrocósmica, bajo cuya influencia el sol se había vuelo tan pálido y enfermo como nuestro hijo” (Rushdie 1997: 718–719)⁴. Además, el texto tiene matices que van más allá de la demostración de las heridas de la colonización.

Ahora bien, revisando las críticas escritas en la India, encontré dos paradigmas que articulan las lecturas. El más interesante es el ya mencionado marco de la *nueva novela histórica* o del *new historicism*: la historia se transforma en un proceso, en la fluctuación de sentidos, por lo que el significante cultural se forma y reconforma en una escena transnacional o, diría yo, transcultural. Si el poder colonial trató de reformar la historia –según el ejemplo de *Heart of Darkness*, de Joseph Conrad–, Rushdie reescribe la historia y la política liberando el sujeto colonial del imperialismo y llegando a formular un concepto de cultura cuya potencia está en el fluir de las culturas. Soumyajit Samanta opina, por ejemplo, que Rushdie, subvirtiendo la identidad del colonizador y deshaciendo las relaciones históricas de dominación racial y de subordinación cultural, “turns back the table right back on the colonial power by accepting the fluidity of cultures and identity in his very person as well as his multiple fictional selves” (2006: 116). El segundo paradigma al que se inclina Reena Mitra en el prefacio a la edición de *Midnight’s Children* de 2006 sigue siendo una tendencia general que pone el énfasis en la búsqueda de la identidad por parte de un país poscolonial. Es una identidad basada en la polaridad de influencias contrarias. Es la dualidad de “hijos de medianoche” lo que expresa por un lado el momento del pasaje de distintos tiempos (según Rushdie mismo, *children of the times*), así como de culturas incompatibles, y por el otro, el instante en el que ocurren creaciones mágicas. La generación de Saleem fracasó en su intento de consolidar las posibilidades de

³ Entre las causas de la tuberculosis, frecuente durante el periodo en el que Tolstoi escribe *Guerra y Paz*, se mencionan “emociones depresivas” (Sontag 1978: 54).

⁴ “in those midnight months when the age of my connection-to-history overlapped with his, our private emergency was not unconnected with the larger macrocosmic disease, under whose influence the sun had become as pallid and diseased as our son” (Rushdie 1981: 408).

la independencia. La magia, al contrario, hubiera podido curar de la enfermedad de la historia, a condición de que, en el pasaje a otra generación, se hubiera borrado el peso de los antecedentes coloniales y de su memoria para construir una identidad independiente –así reza el segundo paradigma que se inspira en discursos sobre el realismo mágico latinoamericano entendido, según mi opinión de manera equivocada⁵, como una búsqueda de identidad “otra”, urdida desde la imaginación mágica⁶, o como una mezcla entre culturas indígenas y no-indígenas con sus efectos en la concientización de la posindependencia (Benny 2013)–.

Ahora bien, aunque es evidente la presencia de dicha dualidad en la novela, interpretar en el sentido mágico-realista los procesos rizomáticos en los que la novela relaciona y transforma los distintos mundos que se inscriben en la materialidad del texto sería anexar la escritura a un discurso geopolítico: la identidad perdida en la historia colonial. Esto dejaría de lado otros vectores cuya transcendencia no se debe subestimar. En lo siguiente me limito a tratar los siguientes vectores: 1) La desarticulación del orientalismo por una mimesis que ironiza su propia lógica y economía, y que, además, hace hincapié en la analogía entre orientalismo y realismo mágico como proyección del exotismo eurocéntrico; 2) la propuesta de otro concepto de magia así como de cultura e historia. Justamente en estas dimensiones, el diálogo con escritores latinoamericanos, especialmente con Juan Rulfo, es tan profundo como productivo porque desplaza las comunes lecturas del llamado realismo mágico.

***Midnight's Children*: el nexo entre orientalismo y realismo mágico, y su deconstrucción**

El primer libro, cuyo primer capítulo introduce el mundo mágico del barquero Tai, se titula: “La sábana perforada”, “The perforated sheet”. Esta imagen se refiere a una escena que aparece en el segundo capítulo y es una *mise en abyme* de la mirada voyerística y colonializante del dispositivo orientalista, cuyas pulsiones

⁵ Remito a mi crítica del concepto de “realismo mágico” (Borsò 1994).

⁶ Con razón subraya, por ejemplo, Karamcheti la obsesión de *Midnight's Children* acerca de la narración del comienzo, remarcado desde las tres primeras palabras “I was born”. El comienzo está enmarcado en un estilo típicamente de cuento de hadas, mientras que el narrador más tarde se transforma en un *storyteller*: “denuded of magical powers, he becomes a transmitter, a storyteller chronicling his nation's identity, and so inventing its national mythology, that is, its causes and significance, Saleem creates literary identity out of time, which is his embroilment in history, and out of origins, which embroil him in causes and mythology” (Karamcheti 1986: 81–82).

son la apropiación y a la vez la fascinación por lo extraño. *Voyage en Orient*, de Gustave Flaubert, o *Azyadé*, de Pierre Loti, son textos seminales de dicha mirada. Es una mirada que descubre y conquista al otro, transformando fascinación y miedo en el *empowerment* de un sujeto narcisista. La pulsión de conquistar el cuerpo penetrando o quitando los velos, aumenta el deseo y fragmenta a la vez el cuerpo de la mujer. En directa contigüidad con las técnicas del realismo mágico, tenemos, pues, la escena fundacional del orientalismo que conocemos desde Edward Said: como construcción del fantasma del otro, objetivándolo y fragmentando su cuerpo y su sujeto. Sin embargo, también en textos orientalistas la reproducción de esta escena en la escritura abre espacios a varias tácticas de resistencia. Justamente la materialidad del cuerpo que la mirada colonizadora encuentra le impulsa a abandonar la distancia de la proyección fantasmática y a acercarse a la corporeidad de *lo extraño* que desestabiliza o desempodera al sujeto colonial –*Tristes tropiques*, de Lévi Strauss, sería un ejemplo–. Rushdie escoge la mimesis como estrategia. En el primer capítulo de *Midnight's Children* el escenario fundacional del orientalismo es humorístico y a la vez cáusticamente citado por la divertida situación en la que a Aziz, joven médico formado en Heidelberg y regresado a su país, se le pide visitar a una joven mujer, hija de Ghani, el terrateniente ciego. Por la interdicción de mirar a mujeres extrañas dentro de la cultura musulmana, el escrutinio del médico se efectúa delante de una sábana que cubre el cuerpo de la mujer. Solo un hueco en la sábana presenta de cerca la parte *enferma* del cuerpo. Además, se repiten las enfermedades que afectan cada vez más a las partes más íntimas del cuerpo hasta que, finalmente, una enfermedad en el ojo de la mujer hace que el médico, ya desmayado por “el fantasma de una mujer en porciones” (Rushdie 1997: 40)⁷, pueda ver por primera vez la anhelada cara de la mujer. Sigue la boda de la pareja, mutuamente encendida de amor pasional, y muy pronto se rompe el encanto: “el tono de su matrimonio [...] se convirtió rápidamente en escenario de contiendas frecuentes y devastadoras, bajo cuyos estragos la joven de detrás de la sábana y el desmañado médico joven se volvieron rápidamente seres diferentes y extraños” (Rushdie 1997: 54)⁸.

El paradigma orientalista es citado y a la vez deconstruido en todos los elementos. Por ejemplo, el encuentro con la mujer requiere una difícil y larga penetración del palacio, cuya atmósfera extraña espanta al “viajero”. Desde el comienzo, para Aziz que viene de afuera, lo extraño tiene evidentes señas de

7 “This phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him” (Rushdie 1981: 26).

8 “the tone for their marriage, which rapidly developed into a place of frequent and devastating warfare, under whose depredations the young girl behind the sheet and the gauche young Doctor turned rapidly into different stranger beings” (Rushdie 1981: 34).

degradación, sucio y ruinas. Es una cita de la decepción del viajero al enfrentarse con la discrepancia entre sus fantasmas alimentados por lecturas y la realidad física del país (por ejemplo, en *Voyage en Orient* o *Tristes Tropiques*). El desconocimiento de la realidad concreta conlleva a la vez la derrota del encuentro con el otro. Dicho diagnóstico se desdobra en esta novela por el entrelazamiento con la historia de la colonización y la escisión de la identidad en dos identidades incompatibles. Por su educación musulmana en la India y sus estudios de medicina en Heidelberg con amigos ateos y marxistas, Aziz percibe un agujero en el lugar de la identidad. Si para quien busca una identidad el agujero se transforma en el lugar atópico de la pérdida de la identidad, para el narrador, por el contrario, es motivo de reflexiones irónicas: “Se convirtió... ¿en qué? En algo estúpido, ni una cosa ni otra, un mitad y mitad” (Rushdie 1997: 26)⁹.

Ahora bien, justamente esta “zona intermedia entre la fe y la falta de fe” (Rushdie 1997: 16) se transforma en un motivo crucial. Cabe subrayar que el poder destructivo que llevará a los hijos de medianoche a la enfermedad está en la interpretación que se le da a la “zona intermedia” entendida como el agujero o el vacío dejado por la colonización, esto es, como carencia y patología cultural. El texto parece optar por otra versión: “Y [...] quedó en ese lugar intermedio, incapaz de adorar a un Dios en cuya existencia no podía dejar de creer por completo. Alteración permanente” (Rushdie 1997: 16)¹⁰. Si el personaje queda indeciso en el umbral entre dos tendencias, el narrador se interpone para comentar que el espacio intermedio es una alteración permanente. Esto remite a la función del *entre lugar* que desestabiliza los polos de dualidades excluyentes, desterritorializando la cultura, singularizando la experiencia, y empujándola a alteraciones y transformaciones continuas. Justamente aquí se encontraría el camino para actualizar fuerzas vitales, entendidas como “sinónimo de una inclusión mutua de diferencias” (Massumi 2014: 34)¹¹. El *entre lugar* de las culturas es la

9 “He became – what? A stupid thing neither this nor that, a half-and-half with” (Rushdie 1981: 19).

10 “And was knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve. *Permanent alteration*” (Rushdie 1981: 14). [El subrayado es mío].

11 La ético-estética que Massumi denomina “lo que los animales nos enseñan” concierne a la vida: “Life lurks in the zone of indiscernibility of the crisscrossing of differences, of every kind and degree. At each pulse of experience, with each occurring remix, there emerges a new variation on the continuum of life, splayed across a multiplicity of coimplicating distinctions” (2014: 34). Evidentemente no se trata de “diferencias absolutas”, sino de tendencias que Massumi, en base a la ontología procesual de Whitehead, denomina transindividuales, desterritorializantes y en continua transformación. El concepto de tendencia “immanently surveys the inclusion of differences in the field of life and consciousness, affirming them from the singular angle of mutually inclusive becoming” (2014: 50).

situación privilegiada para entender la vida y la cultura como un proceso continuo y un espacio de posibilidades, tanto en la actualización presente como en la proyección del futuro. Vida, cultura, historia son metamorfosis continuas. Esta ontología inmanente y procesual, desde la que el hueco no es un vacío sino una espacialidad rellena de relaciones entre las entidades –relaciones que desahacen esquematizaciones geopolíticas–, requiere el abandono precisamente de estos esquemas. En esta vertiente, la medianoche es el momento de la crisis –en el sentido médico de la cumbre de una enfermedad en la que el estado del cuerpo puede morir o desarrollar fuerzas vivientes–. Es también un posible pasaje hacia las fuerzas inmanentes en los recursos más elementales de la *Umwelt*, en el espacio ambiental más singular, exigiendo el abandono de creencias trascendentes en la identidad, en la política, en entidades soberanas que administran la vida. Este es, pues, el momento común de *Pedro Páramo*, de Juan Rulfo, y de Salman Rushdie.

***Pedro Páramo* y *Midnight's Children* o la magia como fuerza performativa**

La crisis de la enfermedad está directamente citada en el último capítulo de *Midnight's Children*, en el que se repiten las alusiones al inframundo de Rulfo (Rushdie 1981: 775). La peculiaridad de *Pedro Páramo* es justamente llevar al protagonista, Juan Preciado, y al narrador mismo hasta el límite extremo entre vida y muerte. Comala, el lugar ficticio de la novela *Pedro Páramo*, publicada en 1955, nos informa acerca del hecho de que la violencia es un “modo de existencia” en México, con una larga genealogía que va desde la conquista a las luchas de la Independencia y la Revolución, incluyendo los gobiernos posrevolucionarios hasta hoy en día. Las escenas fantasmales de Comala y su raíz machista que se repite en la violencia del narco se favorecieron de los mitos que encubren las violencias en la historia de México. En *Pedro Páramo* los mitos son citados por una narración fragmentada; además, el narrador autobiográfico Juan Preciado muere en el medio de la novela. Comala es un pueblo muerto donde las figuras yerran como espectros o cuentan sus recuerdos desde las tumbas (Monsiváis 1980: 28; García Márquez 1980: 25). Desaparece la lógica narrativa; las heridas que la revolución quería sanar y las que aportaron las luchas revolucionarias y el biopoder posrevolucionario se hacen visibles. La última frase de *Pedro Páramo*, “y se fue desmoronando como si fuera un montón de piedras”, referida al cacique, vacía el centro del poder y pone en evidencia “el desajuste entre palabra y acción que resulta de la ruptura de un orden” (Monsiváis 1980: 30), poniendo así en

escena toda la inanidad del poder (Nancy 2002). Dicha estética no permite soluciones catárticas, sino que provoca una irreparable inquietud. La lectura simbólica de la novela y de la Revolución se agota (Borsò 1994: 266). Caen también “las mediaciones culturales [de los campesinos, de los indígenas] en beneficio de una lectura cuyo punto de partida sea el cuestionamiento del propio lector” (Monsiváis 1980: 28; Borsò 1994: 88). Asimismo, mientras que la novela denuncia la violencia del cacique, desconecta el lenguaje de la lógica del poder y, además, con una rebeldía insurgente, desplaza las narrativas hacia una gramática del vivir. Después de la muerte del narrador Juan Preciado, los personajes son localizados en un verdadero espacio intermedio: entre, por un lado, la muerte del páramo tras la violencia de la Revolución y, por el otro, la vida en los recuerdos, sueños, deseos. Un momento crucial es el lugar en el que se encuentra Juan Preciado, hijo ilegítimo de Pedro Páramo, cuando yace en la misma tumba de Dorotea, que en vida deambula cargando un molote en su rebozo creyendo que es su hijo. En la tumba, Juan Preciado yace en sus brazos. El lenguaje de la novela actúa en dos niveles: el nivel simbólico de la violencia política que domina en Comala y el nivel terrenal, material de la vida. Este último expresa justamente la experiencia de Juan Preciado en la tumba con Dorotea:

Allá afuera debe estar variando el tiempo. Mi madre me decía que, en cuanto comenzaba a llover, todo se llenaba de luces y del olor verde de los retoños. Me contaba cómo llegaba la marea de las nubes, cómo se echaban sobre la tierra y la descomponían cambiándole los colores. Mi madre, que vivió su infancia y sus mejores años en este pueblo y que ni siquiera pudo venir a morir aquí. Hasta para eso me mandó a mí en su lugar. Es curioso, Dorotea, cómo no alcancé a ver ni el cielo. Al menos, quizá, debe ser el mismo que ella conoció. (Rulfo 1981: 84–85)

En toda la novela es el ambiente el actor que detiene la vida y da signos de vida. La lluvia que Pedro oye caer sobre el techo en sus recuerdos de niño llenos de deseos por Susana San Juan, las luces y los colores del amanecer y de la puesta del sol, los momentos del pasaje y de las metamorfosis –del sol a la lluvia, del día a la noche– son signos de vida a los que los personajes, en el páramo como forma de vida, no tienen acceso. Tampoco pueden acceder al cielo pues el cielo “está tan alto, y mis ojos tan sin mirada que vivía contenta con saber dónde quedaba la tierra” (Rulfo 1981: 85), dice Dorotea. El texto subraya dos opuestas semánticas del cielo: una terrenal, representada por la “naturaleza”, por el ambiente, y una simbólica, el símbolo del poder soberano, representado por la religión y la política. Los personajes no tienen acceso al sentido ambiental del cielo, nunca lo pueden ver, sino que deben sufrir lo que representa simbólicamente: el biopoder y su nefasto nexo entre economía, política y religión. En toda la novela el poder está basado sobre la economía del débito que es a la vez deuda y culpa

sin redención (Benjamin 1991; Borsò 2017). Sin embargo, justamente Dorotea, el personaje más humilde y a la vez la figura intermediaria de la “loca”, representa la profunda relación de los personajes con la vida concreta, como se ve en el siguiente extraordinario pasaje.

A la pregunta de Juan Preciado acerca de su alma: ¿Adónde crees que haya ido?, Dorotea contesta:

Cuando me senté a morir, ella [el alma] rogó que me levantara y que siguiera arrastrando la vida, como si esperara todavía algún milagro que me limpiara de culpas. Ni siquiera hice el intento: “Aquí se acaba el camino –le dije–. Ya no me quedan fuerzas para más”. Y abrí la boca para que se fuera. Y se fue. Sentí cuando cayó en mis manos el hilito de sangre con que estaba amarrada a mi corazón. (Rulfo 1981: 85–86)

La rematerialización de la vida ocurre en la extraordinaria imagen del “hilito de sangre con que [el alma] estaba amarrada a mi corazón”. Dorotea resiste al poder simbólico que arrastra la vida y apuesta por procesos vitales, aunque sea en punto de muerte. Liberada de su alma al momento de morir, Dorotea se deshace también del sentido de culpa impuesto por el poder político y religioso. Este pasaje es central para la epistemología inmanente que se perfila en la novela después de la caída de las creencias en la transcendencia del poder, cuando los personajes yacen en las tumbas. Además, está presente en los sueños y deseos de Susana San Juan o en Pedro mismo, cuando, joven enamorado de Susana¹², percibe su deseo en la atmósfera concreta del ambiente (en la lluvia que hace tic tac, en las perlas lucientes de las gotas de agua, en el sonido del viento).

Al comienzo de *Midnight's Children*, el apego al mundo y la inmanencia de la vida se encuentran en el personaje de Tai, el viejo barquero que fascina a Aziz adolescente. Justamente este personaje, con su fea y vieja figura, y que en su rol de barquero que lleva a la otra parte del lago es una cita de Caronte o Carón, invierte el vector del viaje: Tai no lleva a las penas de los infiernos, sino que por su apego a su propio ambiente, deja vislumbrar otras fuerzas y potenciales de acción.

Mágicamente, después de haber superado varias veces la muerte Tai parece ser eterno: “A pesar de palizas y ebulliciones, Aadam Aziz flotaba con Tai en su *shikara* [barco], una y otra vez, en medio de cabras, heno, flores, muebles, raíces de loto, aunque nunca con los sahíbs ingleses, y oía una y otra vez las respuestas

¹² Como Dorotea, también Susana San Juan es el personaje femenino enfermo de pasión por su amante muerto, deseada por el cacique al que ella resiste hasta el final, una resistencia que pulverizará al cacique Pedro Páramo como a un montón de piedras.

milagrosas a aquella pregunta simple y aterradora: –Taiji, ¿Cuántos años tienes?” (Rushdie 1997: 25)¹³.

Tai tiene poderes singulares, por ejemplo, la facultad de transformar la curvatura del cuerpo impuesta en la oración musulmana en la forma curvada de un cuerpo que, remando en su barco, interacciona con los elementos materiales de su propio mundo. La acción del ambiente hace de su cara una “escultura del viento en el agua: ondas hechas de cuero” (20)¹⁴. Es pues con Tai que Aziz es capaz de percibir la *magia* del ambiente y las fuerzas que generan la *Stimmung* que da aliento al niño y que el personaje adulto pierde luego a raíz del vacío producido por el conflicto de culturas. Las descripciones de los elementos ambientales recuerdan la frecuencia de verbos de acciones que encontramos en la narrativa de Juan Rulfo y que desde nuestra racionalidad llamamos “animismo”:

El mundo era nuevo otra vez. Después de una *gestación* de un invierno en su cáscara de hielo, el valle, húmedo y amarillo, se había abierto camino a picotazos hasta el aire libre. La hierba fresca aguardaba bajo tierra su momento; las montañas *se retiraban* a sus puestos de las alturas para la estación cálida (En invierno, cuando el valle se encogía bajo el hielo, las montañas se acercaban y gruñían como fauces coléricas en torno a la ciudad del lago) (Rushdie 1997: 13)¹⁵.

Tai opone al tiempo (cronológico) sus propios ritmos: “(Tai se está acercando. Él, que reveló el poder de la nariz y que está trayendo ahora a mi abuelo el mensaje que lo catapultará hacia su futuro, rema con su shikara por el lago del amanecer...)” (Rushdie 1997: 19)¹⁶. Nótese que en la misma frase hay dos opuestas definiciones de futuro: a) catapultar hacia el futuro; b) amanecer. Luego, al final, Saleem se percatará de que la enfermedad procede del hecho de que “los hijos de la independencia, nos precipitamos locamente y a prisa hacia el futuro” (723)¹⁷. Contrariamente a la furia teleológica del futuro, la acción de amanecer es un

13 “Despite beating and boiling, Aadam Aziz floated with Tai in his shikara, again and again, amid goats hay lowers furniture lotus-roots, though never with the English sahibs, and heard again and again the miraculous answers to that single terrifying question: ‘But Taiji, how old are you, *honestly*?’” (Rushdie 1981: 18).

14 “a sculpture of wind on water: ripples made of hide” (Rushdie 1981: 16).

15 “The world was new again. After a winter’s gestation in its eggshell of ice, the valley had beaked its way out into the open moist and yellow. The new grass bided its time underground; the mountains were retreating to their hill-stations for the warm season (In the winter, when the valley shrank under the ice, the mountains closed in and snarled like angry jaws around the city on the lake)” (Rushdie 1981: 12).

16 “(Tai is getting nearer. He, who revealed the power of the nose and who is now bringing my grandfather the message which will catapult him into his future, is stroking his shikara through the early morning lake...)” (Rushdie 1981: 15).

17 “We, the children of Independence, rushed wildly and too fast into our future” (Rushdie 1981: 425).

ritmo musical en armonía con el ambiente, un *ritornello* singular que responde a los vectores del ambiente. La medianoche puede ser, por un lado, el momento de los espectros, de las obsesiones fantasmáticas que agarran al sujeto; por el otro, también el pasaje espaciotemporal a un día nuevo, según los ritmos ambientales. Es en este pasaje que reside la potencia de lo posible, y aún más, de lo todavía impensable; justamente ello podría ser el fundamento de otras políticas y de otras historias. Con Tai, Aziz se acerca a este potencial en el momento en que la metáfora de la medianoche hubiera podido implicar el *entre lugar*, la huella temporal y espacial de otros comienzos¹⁸. Son posibles comienzos reales de otras historias que fueron descartadas por la *patología* de la historia que, orientada a discursos excluyentes y a dualidades destructoras, es incapaz de desarrollar las olas vivientes de lo posible. Figuras poscoloniales, como la unión de tradiciones indígenas y no indígenas como nueva seña de identidad, no podrán curar a posteriori de la enfermedad de un punto de partida excluyente. Al final de la novela el narrador se percata de que “En un país dominado por *las multitudes gemelas de los ruidos y los olores* hubiéramos podido formar un equipo perfecto” (Rushdie 1997: 723)¹⁹. Si en la historia del subcontinente indio ruidos y olores se convierten luego en pestilencia, y las imágenes en monstruosidades, como lo experimenta Saleem en Nueva Dehli (Rushdie 1997: 763), la magia de este mundo consiste en la capacidad de estar a la escucha²⁰ de centellas de dichos momentos que al final del texto el personaje percibe y, sin embargo, no reconoce como potencial. Al rato, Saleem logra ver a la lavandera, de nombre Durga, que –como Dorotea en la tumba– lo acompaña en su último viaje de la siguiente manera: “Era una mujer de bíceps abultados; de pechos preternaturales que soltaban un torrente de leche capaz de alimentar regimientos; [...] Su nombre [...] tenía el olor de las cosas nuevas;

18 Me refiero a los posibles “commencements” que Michel Foucault, en su lectura de la genealogía de Nietzsche, ve existentes en las crisis genealógicas (Foucault 1994 [1971]: 141). Su manifestación en forma de lagunas o excesos requiere una atención hacia la densidad del tejido histórico, hacia líneas de fuga lo mismo que hacia lugares de “materias enredadas” cuya intensidad y particularidad escapa a cualquier intento de reconocer o confirmar el saber histórico (Foucault 1994 [1971]: 149).

19 “In a country dominated by the twin multitudes of noises and smells, we could have been the perfect team; but my baby son rejected speech, and I failed to obey the dictates of my nose” (Rushdie 1981: 425).

20 Entiendo con ello una atención corpórea con respecto a las llamadas del entorno, de los otros –en el sentido de Jean-Luc Nancy (2002)–. La escucha implica todo el régimen de los sentidos (2002: 15); los sentidos son “tendidos” (“tendu, attentif ou anxieux”, 18) “vers un sens possible, et par conséquent non immédiatement accessible” (21); es una ontología singular-plural, un “être-avec” (33). Véase Borsò 2018.

representaba la novedad, los comienzos, la llegada de nuevas historias acontecimientos complejidades, y yo no estaba ya interesado en nada nuevo” (Rushdie 1997: 757)²¹.

En toda la novela es la *magia* de Tai el modelo de un gesto vital que se manifiesta en un exceso, en una creatividad lingüística que sobrepasa lo normal: “Era una charla mágica, las palabras le brotaban a raudales como brota el dinero de un necio [...] remontándose a los más remotos himalayas del pasado y picando luego bruscamente hacia algún detalle actual” (22)²². A esta altura de nuestras reflexiones tenemos que precisar el concepto de magia. *Magia* quiere decir, precisamente, apuntar a la potencia virtual del mundo, aquella virtualidad del amanecer en la que conviven los mundos posibles desarrollando la facultad de estar a la escucha de los ritmos ambientales. Y es aquí que encontramos otra definición de la magia como fuerza que se desprende de la interacción y cooperación entre las entidades del ambiente: no es ni una cultura alternativa, “propia” de países arcaicos, ni algo pegado a la metafísica de la tierra, a conceptos arcaicos del mito ctónico o a una “ecología profunda” que se podría proyectar a textos literarios²³. Si hablamos de magia entendemos la fuerza virtual inherente a los vivientes, cuyos potenciales se alimentan y crecen por sus relaciones intuitivas y afectivas con las situaciones materiales en las que están ancladas (Massumi/Manning 2014; Massumi 2014). Dicha relación ambiental se genera a partir de una “ecología de las prácticas”, que depende del grado en el que alguien responde a las obligaciones o restricciones del “milieu”, entendido como espacio intermedio en el que se genera la interacción (Stengers 2005a: 187). Es una relación que conlleva una

21 “She was a woman whose biceps bulged; whose preternatural breasts unleashed a torrent of milk capable of nourishing regiments; [...] Her name, even before I met her, had the smell of new things, she represented novelty beginnings the advent of new stories events complexities, and I was no longer interested in anything new” (Rushdie 1981: 429).

22 “It was magical talk, words pouring from him like fool’s money [...] soaring up go the most remote Himalayas of the past then swooping shrewdly on some present detail” (Rushdie 1981: 17).

23 *Deep ecology* es un acercamiento holístico al problema de los recursos ambientales que propone un igualitarismo biocéntrico, y es a la vez una axiología, es decir, la formulación de criterios correspondientes, propuestos por autores como Arne Naess, Fritjof Capra, en parte Gregory Bateson y Joanna Macy. Tras varias críticas, ha ido situándose entre ecosofía y crítica del antropocentrismo. Para un ejemplo de la proyección de la ecología profunda a textos literarios remito al artículo de José Ramón Naranjo (2004). Una de las tesis problemáticas de la ecología profunda supone, opina el autor, “una unidad total relevante que asimila la información atravesando las fases de intento y error” (Naranjo 2004: 86).

mutua inclusión (Massumi 2014)²⁴. Una semejante dinámica se percibe especialmente en la tonalidad de la estética material de los textos, en la lógica de las relaciones de un *oikos* singular. Ritmos e intensidades se forman y transforman en el plano de inmanencia (que es a la vez vida) y exigen un análisis de la microfísica de eventos en la escritura (Deleuze/Guattari 1980: 254). Mis reflexiones parten de las fuerzas ambientales observadas en la escritura de Rulfo y de Rushdie, antes consideradas como el signo del “animismo” de la naturaleza dentro de una lógica arcaica del pensamiento mágico y se inscriben en el paradigma de una ecología entendida como relación y orientada a una ontología procesual elaborada a partir de las referencias a Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson y Gilles Deleuze. Semejantes planteamientos ecológicos proponen actualmente un nuevo giro en la interpretación de la tierra que, lejos de ser entorno inerte y pasivo, es un ambiente integralmente “viviente”²⁵. Aún en el marco de la antropología, Tim Ingold opta igualmente por la fuerza de los materiales entendidos como procesos dinámicos que abarcan también los elementos de la tierra (2012: 431). La carga afectiva de la relacionalidad ecológica es, además, un momento trascendente de ecología de la experiencia (Massumi/Manning 2014), la ecología de un “pensamiento animal” (Massumi 2014), así como de “ecología relacional de los medios y de los afectos (Angerer 2017) –para mencionar solo algunas de las últimas vertientes ecológicas de la ontología procesual–.

Realismo mágico al revés: el mundo viviente visto desde el Sur global

Veinte años después de los textos canónicos del realismo mágico latinoamericano, se perfila en los itinerarios del Sur global un realismo mágico al revés que no solamente invierte las técnicas llamadas “mágico-realistas”, sino que

24 Para Stengers, el concepto de magia tiene una referencia política: “The efficacy of the ritual is [...] that of a presence that transforms each protagonist’s relations with his or her own knowledge, hopes, fears, and memories, and allows the whole to generate what each one would have been unable to produce separately” (Stengers 2005: 1002. Stengers distingue entre “empowerment” y “fostering”, siendo la magia –contrariamente al poder– una potencia que da fuerza a los actores del ambiente, sean estos humanos o no-humanos (Stengers 2005a: 194–195).

25 Bruno Latour retoma la hipótesis de Gaïa elaborada en 1970 por James Lovelock y, refiriéndose a *Le contrat naturel* (1990), de Michel Serres, subraya: “de nos jours, nous assistons selon Serres, à un second procès de Galilée....après avoir été condamné à garder le silence par tous ceux qui nient le comportement de la Terre, se met à murmurer pour lui-même: ‘Eppur si muove’, mais cette fois-ci, en lui donnant un tour nouveau et quelque peu inquiétant: non pas ‘Et pourtant la Terre se meut’, mais: ‘Et pourtant la Terre s’émeut!’” (Latour 2015: 136).

desmorona como un montón de piedras las dualidades, el vacío fundacional, la diferencia colonial y la búsqueda de identidad de culturas poscoloniales. El realismo mágico fue interpretado como la expresión de una identidad y cultura híbrida urdida por el encuentro de dos mundos incompatibles (el mundo indígena y no indígena) dentro de culturas poscoloniales. Si por lo tanto el punto de partida de esta interpretación reside en configuraciones discursivas y geopolíticas, así como en clasificaciones dualistas, la lectura que hemos propuesto viajando de América Latina a la India y al revés nos acerca más bien a la performance de la estética material, en cuyas tonalidades ecológicas reconocimos una fuerza singular proclive a la formación del “mundo” y de un concepto de mundo que inspira acercamientos a energías vitales de situaciones singulares, más allá –o más acá– de narrativas culturales, políticas e históricas que articulan formas de vida a partir de geopolíticas. El concepto de mundo que se desprende de estas lecturas está anclado en una ontología procesual, un devenir de diversidades situacionales formadas a partir de una relacionalidad inacabable. El proceso del devenir del mundo experimentado en la escritura no parte de lógicas excluyentes o mundos opuestos, sino de energías vitales potencial y mutuamente inclusivas. Las separaciones y oposiciones que las técnicas mágicorrealistas supuestamente superan son formaciones posteriores ocurridas desde exigencias de concientización y de organización discursiva como las que articularon la circulación de discursos orientados al realismo mágico dentro del Sur global. Frente a la presión del capitalismo global cuyas redes económicas determinan la visibilidad de la literatura mundial, se intensifican las exploraciones acerca de las diferencias entre conceptos de globo, planeta, cosmos, así como aumenta también el escepticismo con respecto al concepto de *mundo* (en singular) relacionado a la literatura mundial²⁶. Necesitamos lecturas orientadas a la materialidad de la escritura para pensar la literatura mundial de otra manera. Si hoy en día hablamos de literaturas del mundo en singular, tendremos que entender la virtualidad de un mundo en el que los múltiples vectores y las intensidades ambientales se relacionan cada vez más según sus propios ritmos, sus propios *ritornellos*, para postular el derecho común de cualquier forma de vivir. La escritura de Rushdie, como la de Rulfo, actualiza esta virtualidad con conexiones a-significantes, es decir, rizomáticas. Es así que en *Pedro Páramo* las pistas de lectura “brotan de los múltiples raudales” remontando a las más remotas tradiciones náhuatl como a las mitologías griegas, a los intertextos de la literatura

²⁶ Las críticas proceden, por un lado, del realismo especulativo, por el otro, de planteamientos ecológicos en el sentido mencionado más adelante. Cfr., por ejemplo, Timoty Morton: “The ‘world’ as a significant totality of what is the case is strictly unimaginable, and for a good reason: it doesn’t exist” (2013: 108).

mexicana y “universal”, interrumpiendo cada intento de encasillar los mundos en un mundo geopolíticamente localizado, aunque sea el Sur global, estructurado fundamentalmente por la hegemonía político-económica del mercado.

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Eduardo Devés

Hacia una teoría de la circulación, con énfasis en la circulación de las ideas¹

1 Planteamiento del problema

Esta contribución trata acerca de cómo pensar los grandes espacios y procesos desde la condición periférica. Para decirlo de otra manera, pretende ofrecer algunas ideas acerca de cómo elaborar una teoría de la condición periférica, que puede formularse también como una teoría de la circulación. Una teoría de la circulación apunta a entender la manera en que la condición humana se constituye, y cómo se transforman en opresiva de los otros humanos y de la naturaleza, a la vez que cómo se formulan las emancipaciones y los equilibrios... Una teoría que dé cuenta mejor que otras, mejor que las teorías de la modernidad-modernización, por ejemplo, de la condición de las periferias.

Voy a presentar, entonces, informaciones, criterios y reflexiones que me permitan revolotear en torno al tema de la circulación. Argumentaré principalmente desde los estudios eidéticos y por tanto desde la circulación de las ideas, para saltar desde aquí a algunas discusiones sobre la modernidad en África y a la manera en que circularon las redes republicanas chinas, de qué criterios depende la legitimidad de las ideas en el Sur, qué significa la fidelidad a la trayectoria intelectual de nuestros ecosistemas y cómo pensar mejor, asumiendo esta perspectiva. Voy a discurrir sobre estos asuntos y otros que vendrán a colación cuando corresponda profundizar en algunos aspectos como la dependencia afectiva, la sensibilidad periférica, la aceleración de los procesos, el transporte y las comunicaciones y la sociedad civil mundial, entre otros.

No se trata propiamente de hacer filosofía de la historia, pero no podría escamotearse una cuestión decisiva: las relaciones entre condición humana, circulación y devastación, sea en forma de exterminio, invasión, esclavización u otras, como tampoco podrían escamotearse las demandas por una vida mejor, por una existencia con sentido, con formas de expresión y participación.

¹ Este escrito conserva el tono oral de la exposición. En algunos acápites retomo y reelaboro algunos desarrollos míos presentes en otros trabajos. Producto proyecto Fondecyt 1150375.

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2 Recuento o revisión de algunas fórmulas eidéticas que han intentado pensar el Sur

Hacer un recuento de las tendencias que han intentado pensar el Sur sería muy largo. Bastará con mencionar algunas y las clasificaré en cuatro grupos:

1. Quienes desde el Norte pretenden normativizar el comportamiento de las periferias a partir de nociones como cristianización, civilización, progreso, modernización u otras. El caso de Walt W. Rostow es uno de los últimos y más criticados en el fin del siglo XX.
2. Quienes desde el Norte empatizan con la gente de las periferias y quisieran, desde sus respectivos ecosistemas intelectuales y desde sus marcos teóricos del Norte, interpretar-solucionar sus problemas del Sur. Ejemplo de esto es Boaventura de Sousa Santos quien inventando una expresión muy feliz y que ha tenido mucho eco, pretende desde los criterios de la primera y acaso segunda Escuela de Frankfurt, orientarnos acerca de cómo se debe pensar el Sur.
3. Quienes desenvolviéndose en los ecosistemas intelectuales del Sur, y habiéndose formado casi exclusivamente en el pensamiento del Norte, descubren la condición periférica y creen adánicamente que son las primeras personas en ocuparse de esto. Que el Sur no tendría discurso propio ni siquiera se lo preguntan dando por sentado que no existe, y acuden a su instrumental europeo para pensar, ejemplo de esto es Enrique Dussel, joven, cuando sus referentes son principalmente Levinas, Gadamer y acaso Marx. El Dussel maduro ha sido más abierto a escuchar el pensamiento del Sur.
Por cierto, no por esto, quiero decir que los primeros o los segundos, automáticamente erran en lo que dicen y deban guardar silencio. Rostow, Boaventura y Enrique Dussel son personas brillantes e influyentes y que, a mi juicio, han sabido elaborar muchos planteos relevantes.
4. Un cuarto grupo se compone de quienes desenvolviéndose en los ecosistemas del Sur, sin cerrarse a las formulaciones de otros ecosistemas, tratan de resolver los temas del Sur, a partir de la propia trayectoria eidética del Sur, ejemplo de esto es Leopoldo Zea. Me refiero a criterios epistémicos de fidelidad con la trayectoria de las regiones del Sur. Por cierto, con ello no quiero decir que las soluciones emergidas de esta perspectiva sean automáticamente correctas.

A partir de esta breve cartografía clasificatoria de cuatro modos de pensar propongo profundizar sobre todo en el cuarto modelo, el que corresponda a la circulación de ideas Sur/Sur. Debo recordar en este punto que, en algunos ecosistemas

intelectuales del Sur, se ha llegado a naturalizar que la circulación de las ideas es esencialmente influencia Norte/Sur, ello particularmente en Suramérica donde las intelectualidades han cuasi cortado, hace siglos y progresivamente, la conexión con los saberes ancestrales y donde “pensar” ha sido, en ocasiones, importar pensamiento desde el Norte; pensar es importar, pensar es repetir, pensar es citar, pensar es lucir referencias del Norte. En definitiva, pensar es “no-pensar”. Ello nos sitúa frente a una semiaporía: fidelidad a la trayectoria eidética en ciertos ecosistemas sería fidelidad al no-pensar.

Para avanzar, es clave explorar los vastos territorios del pensamiento de las regiones periféricas para cartografiarlos buscando recursos eidéticos que hayan emergido allí (y por qué no también en el centro) intentando dar cuenta de este fenómeno: de la condición periférica, de sus modos de emanciparse y de emancipar al mundo de esta desigualdad. Una manera privilegiada para sustentar y avanzar en un pensamiento respecto del mundo desde la periferia consiste en capitalizar lo que efectivamente se ha pensado, interrogándolo acerca de sus posibilidades para entender-transformar esa realidad. Ahora bien, las intelectualidades periféricas han tenido como problema más importante la disyuntiva “ser como el centro” versus “ser nosotros mismos”.

Me ha interesado particularmente la circulación de las ideas Sur/Sur, de las ciencias económico-sociales, del cepalismo-dependentismo, de la teología de la liberación a Asia, África y Oceanía, del maoísmo y del gandhismo, de las teorías de la negritud o de la subalternidad, entre otras. Inmenso campo de investigación acerca del pensamiento de las regiones del Sur así como una serie de problemas relacionados con esto. Uno de los mayores es probablemente que una gran parte de la energía para la circulación de ideas Sur/Sur la aporta el Norte. Puede señalarse, además, de pasada y como provocación, por qué el pensamiento de la América del Sur no tiene hoy el impacto que tuvo antes hacia las décadas de 1960 y 70. Y para reafirmar esto, ¿por qué nosotros mismos no creemos tener un pensamiento tan vigente como lo creíamos entonces?

3 Pensar desde las periferias significa poner en acción las siguientes operaciones

1. Pensar desde los ecosistemas intelectuales de las periferias.
2. Pensar con fidelidad a las trayectorias intelectuales de los propios ecosistemas y con apertura al mundo, no solo al primer mundo. Akinsola Akiwowo (1989: 51) lo formula como creencias, supuestos y prácticas que son transmitidas de

una generación de académicos a otra... como un cuerpo de conocimientos en particular, y como un modo de ver el mundo que es compartido por los miembros de una nación.

3. Pensar con pertinencia para hacerse eco de las necesidades y reclamos de las periferias, para emanciparse de la condición periférica, asumiendo la importancia de una perspectiva, hacia la eliminación de toda periferia posible. Tomar en consideración la propuesta egoísta, de una intelectualidad periférica que pretende superar la condición periférica para suplantarse al centro actual, transformándose en el futuro centro, como han pretendido algunos planteamientos del panasiatismo, del pensamiento soviético y del pensamiento “Brasil gran potencia”, por citar algunos casos.
4. Pensar con autonomía, por la superación de las formas de dependencia intelectual y afectiva. De hecho estas dependencias generan cuatro errores de perspectiva al menos: - porque esta dependencia afectiva, al focalizar la mirada, impide elaborar agendas propias; - porque desincentiva a mirar la mayor parte del mundo haciéndonos asumir que no es interesante lo que se piensa en las diversas regiones del Sur; - porque asumimos la inserción o la internacionalización de manera humilde, como quienes van a aprender de Europa o de Estados Unidos y no de forma igualitaria, como quien va a entregar y recibir de Asia, de África, de Europa oriental, de Oceanía; - porque acentúa la repetición de clichés eurocéntricos que nos engañan sobre nuestra realidad. Estos cuatro errores conforman un fatal círculo vicioso.
5. Pensar desde la periferia es en primer lugar prestar atención a la periferia en vez de asumir que basta con mirar y pensar desde el centro, ni menos creer que la intelectualidad del centro o una parte de esta automáticamente piensa bien. Se trata de pensar con información acerca de la propia región y de la condición periférica en general, apuntando a relevar las diferencias, asumiendo aquello que José Martí decía acerca de suplantarse la universidad a la europea por una universidad a la americana, en que se estudie esta realidad².

² Para una mejor comprensión, quizás ayude agregar que, en este caso, el “mal pensar” consiste en acoplarse a un conjunto de clichés que provienen: sea de haberse asimilado pasivamente la versión de la historia de los últimos siglos como “modernidad” más que como expansión o circulación o época del colonial-imperialismo u otras versiones posibles; sea de asumir la propia realidad como simple contraste: las periferias son “sociedades tradicionales”; sea de asimilar las tesis posmodernas que ven la superficie, la corta duración y el localismo; sea todo esto sobre una débil base carente de información que impide comparar, dimensionar o perspectivar las cosas, como quien mira con un solo ojo, incapaz de ver la profundidad.

4 Los estudios eidéticos como vía para el estudio de la circulación

Propongo, entonces, una aproximación a partir de los estudios eidéticos, en particular del tema de las redes intelectuales³ en relación al de la circulación de las ideas, que es como he llegado al macro tema de la circulación. Fue la elaboración del concepto “redes intelectuales” en tensión con la noción de “campo” de Pierre Bourdieu lo que condujo al problema y luego al concepto circulación de las ideas Sur/Sur, para ir más ampliamente a la cuestión de la comunicación de emisores, receptores, antenas retransmisoras. Esto se ha complementado con la noción “viaje intelectual”.

Los estudios eidéticos son una de las vías para estudiar la circulación, focalizándose, específicamente, la circulación de las ideas. La circulación global de la información-conocimientos-ideas nos lleva a cartografiar y re-cartografiar las ideas y las redes, comunidades e instituciones que las alojan y circulan. En los estudios sobre circulación de las ideas, los estudios eidéticos se encuentran con los fenómenos circulacionistas en general. Entenderé por “estudios eidéticos” el campo disciplinar que se ocupa del estudio de las ideas y sus relaciones con entes no eidéticos. Entre sus ocupaciones se cuentan la clasificación de los sistemas eidéticos, las relaciones en los ecosistemas donde prosperan, las intelectualidades donde se cultivan y las redes que estas constituyen, las condiciones de sus mutaciones y cruzamientos, las historia de los ecosistemas y sus evoluciones, el trabajo con los sistemas eidéticos, sea como ingeniería eidética o en otras formas, las escuelas o paradigmas que los estudian, y las maneras como circulan, entre muchos otros asuntos. Un elemento previo de sensibilidad, casi pre-conceptual, sería la perplejidad ante la llegada, presencia, cercanía del invasor, del nuevo centro que se va constituyendo y que llega con su poder, sus tecnologías. Las intelectualidades de las periferias pierden, así, esa conciencia ingenua y original de ombligo del mundo, estableciéndose una duda radical sobre sus posibilidades, al sentir que no maneja los criterios del poder. Ante ello, la respuesta por todas partes, y esquemáticamente, se resuelve en la fórmula siguiente: ¿debemos imitarlos para defendernos de su poder o debemos tomar recursos de nuestras propias identidades? Los sucesivos movimientos del centro, que son percibidos como otros tantos embates por la debilidad de las periferias, suscitan equivalentes reacciones.

3 Al respecto, véase Devés 2007.

De hecho, la reacción, por todas partes, de las intelectualidades de las nuevas periferias ante la ampliación y aceleración de la circulación europea, entendida como expansión-embate-invasión, permite pensar estas regiones como partes de un mismo conjunto eidético. Estas regiones, antes de la expansión europea se auto-asumían como mundos autónomos o como otros tantos ombligos del mundo, pasando luego a asumirse como partes de un mismo mundo desigual y heterogéneo. Me refiero a la cuestión de las ideas y a la conciencia de haberse transformado en periferia.

5 La condición periférica como asimetrías en la circulación

A partir de esta trayectoria es posible denunciar el concepto modernidad como equivocado-engañoso para pensar los últimos siglos de la humanidad. El concepto modernidad-modernización concibe los últimos siglos como un periodo de instalación de la racionalidad, el libre pensamiento, la emancipación de diversas tutelas, y esta no es la experiencia de las periferias, del colonialismo mundial, del tráfico de esclavos, de la rapiña extractivista, ni del colonialismo interno a las sociedades nacionales.

Quiero destacar la circulación como una característica del sapiens. Es también una clave constitutiva de la condición periférica de la relación centro periferia: el aumento de las expediciones, las dimensiones de estas, la cantidad de territorios comprendidos y, en 1520, la vuelta al mundo de la expedición Magallanes y Elcano; correlativamente, la frecuencia, la sistematicidad y la aceleración del proceso, por las embarcaciones y sobre todo por las empresas, constituyen un salto cualitativo respecto de épocas anteriores. Es en este sentido que la periferia es producto de la expansión circulatoria europea mucho más que de la “modernidad”, como dice un discurso eufemístico. A partir de ese momento, con el aumento-aceleración en la circulación, asociado a innovaciones tecnológicas, se constituye una relación centro/periferia cuasi global: toma forma un sistema mundial y la consolidación y mantención durante siglos de una relación donde el centro nordatlántico continuará afirmando su condición hegemónica sobre las periferias, hasta más o menos mediados del siglo XX. En ese momento, se desata el mayor proceso de independencias y descolonizaciones, con la creación de cien nuevos estados nación que irán progresivamente asumiendo formas de autonomía y concertación.

6 Gestión de la circulación eidética Sur/Sur

Si es necesario que, para que haya circulación, debe consumirse energía, esto vale incluso para la circulación de las ideas. Y en esto se expresan las asimetrías Norte/Sur como la falta de capacidad e iniciativa del Sur para gestionar su circulación y darle sentido.

Al estudiar el tema Sur/Sur, me encontré con un descubrimiento clave. La circulación de las ideas Sur/Sur se realiza en muchos casos a través del Norte y ello por dos razones: de capacidad técnica y de capacidad legitimadora de otorgar prestigio. La escasa capacidad de emisión y de recepción del aparataje de redes y de institucionalidad de las periferias conlleva que la comunicación directa Sur/Sur es con frecuencia precaria o nula. Ello significa que las antenas retransmisoras ubicadas en el centro, por cierto de mayor capacidad, pueden captar débiles mensajes y emitir con mayor potencia. A esta debilidad de las redes y la institucionalidad intelectual se suma la carencia de prestigio. La legitimidad y el prestigio de los saberes atractivos para las intelectualidades periféricas están altamente marcados por su interpretación de lo considerado válido por-en el centro, de modo que el pensamiento de las regiones del Sur es desconocido en sus vecinas; esto porque, al carecer de prestigio, carece también de interés.

7 Circulación y realización personal: la dimensión psicoafectiva

Sin embargo, sería estrecho entender la circulación como derivación de comercio y tecnologías, como sería estrecho asociar comercio a cuestiones de primera necesidad o a intereses de clases únicamente, sin asociarla a cuestiones psicoafectivas. Es clave que en la especie humana, la circulación se ha imbricado de muchas formas a la realización personal, como mérito, reconocimiento, diferenciación, etc. El descubrimiento de recursos para el mejor desenvolvimiento de los clanes originarios no solo fue premiado con una vida mejor para el clan sino que seguramente el descubridor fue premiado con recompensas específicas en prestigio-poder-realización. Estas formas de realización personal se articulan a las necesidades básicas de la alimentación y la reproducción, pero van más allá de estas y muchas veces hasta entran en tensión.

Ello dio un salto cuando esta propensión de intrepidez y heroísmo se ritualizó como pasaje hacia la adultez en los jóvenes: el viaje y el retorno con un trofeo

se hizo una prueba de madurez. Esto es paradigmático en el caso de los pueblos oceánicos que son los que han realizado las mayores proezas en la circulación, poblando pequeñas islas a miles de kilómetros y donde se ha hecho más verdad que en otros lugares la frase de Pompeyo: navegar es necesario y vivir no lo es. Ello se encuentra, por ejemplo, en los mitos y rituales de la Isla de Pascua. Traer el huevo del manutara para los jóvenes pascuenses es una prueba que requiere de un breve pero peligroso viaje hacia una isla para buscar un trofeo.

Pueblos emblemáticos de la condición humana son, así, los del Pacífico Sur, por su capacidad circulacionista y por su sometimiento a mitos que los obligaban a poner permanentemente en juego sus vidas para lanzarse hacia lo desconocido, a miles de kilómetros buscando ignotas tierras prometidas por sus ilusiones.

8 Modelos de circulaciones

Circulación como obtención de recursos: caza y recolección.

Circulación como expansión: militar, misionero-eidética.

Circulación como conquista y colonización.

Circulación como prospección minera o de negocios.

Circulación como peregrinaje a alguna Meca: religiosa, intelectual, de *shopping*, de salud, entre otras.

Circulación como turismo.

Circulación como transporte: de personas o cosas.

Circulación como viaje intelectual, de conocimiento o estudio.

Circulación como aventura: mochileando o en tantas otras formas.

Circulación como vagabundaje: buscando trabajo y oportunidades.

Circulación como pillaje: bandolerismo, piratería, maloca, montonera y las formas de resistencia de los no integrados.

Circulación comercio: compra y venta.

Circulación como búsqueda de un destino: del territorio que mana leche y miel, de la isla feliz, de la fuente de la eterna, del Dorado.

Es obvio, que en muchas oportunidades los modelos se traslapan.

9 La “política” más allá de la polis es casi una contradicción en los términos

En español y en otras lenguas, política es el quehacer en la polis, pero es también sinónimo de acción, así, se dice política en la empresa y hasta política en la

familia. Hay quienes hablan de “política internacional” para decir la acción del Estado respecto otros Estados. Esto conduce en español a una confusión de términos, pues aparece la palabra política en una doble semia de traspaso, como si hubiera propiamente “política internacional” en sentido fuerte, de polis y no solo de acción, en situaciones donde no existe propiamente polis. De modo que puede hablarse de “política internacional” solo en un sentido, no en otro.

Existen culturas de la expresión pública muy diferentes y se van desarrollando otras nuevas. Digo “expresión pública” para no decir “política”, porque se trata de personas que se expresan en el espacio público pero no están haciendo política, porque no hubo propiamente polis. Existen espacios, alternativos al de Occidente, con sus mares, sus etnias, sus temas, sus culturas, sus hegemonías, su propia dinámica: familias, ambientes, clanes, nichos comerciales. Pero ya en 1900 ninguno de estos, si era suficientemente grande, podía quedar desconectado. Con imperios amplísimos, con etnias y con islas, sin comunicación fácil, sin derechos, con monarquías cerradas, encerradas y autoritarias no hay propiamente polis. El imperio chino hacia 1900 tiene similitudes grandes al mundo del 2000, en escala algo reducida. Cómo en el imperio chino proliferaban las sociedades-redes, proliferan hoy a nivel mundial, pues el mundo es un espacio reconocido pero no una polis y no lo será por décadas y en algunos sentidos no lo será probablemente nunca, a pesar de los sueños electrónicos de algunos, en que imaginan existiría una comunicación frecuente de todos con todos, como si no hubiera problemas de sentido y significado, de recursos y de medios, de complejidades incomprensibles. Las ligas, redes, bandas: lugares de ayuda mutua, en el extranjero, lugares de identidad-pertenencia-solidaridad-apoyo en tierra desconocida. Sociedades algo “tradicionales” en el sentido de no especializadas. Prefiero decir versátiles, pues pueden funcionar como sociedad de socorros mutuos, partido político, grupo de presión, banda y hasta mafia, y muchas veces, como en una sociedad “tradicional”, se definen sobre la base de cuestiones místicas. Pensar esto solo “políticamente” sería carecer de perspicacia, posiblemente una perspectiva “planética” permite pensar mejor esa heterogeneidad y esa inmensa escala.

Es muy interesante el caso de Charlie Soong amigo, socio y luego suegro de Sun Yat-sen y Chiang Kay-shek. Soong, sus amigos, sus yernos y sus relaciones, el quehacer es incomprensible sin las redes metodistas, sin la educación de USA y tantas otras cosas como lenguas nuevas, transportes, iglesias e instituciones. La expansión europea y usamericana hizo crecer y modificó algunas redes chinas fuera del *mainland*. Es decir, las redes chinas de 1900 no pueden concebirse al margen de esa expansión conquistando el Pacífico. El tráfico de coolies fue un fenómeno nuevo y potenció las redes, las obligó, pues estos migrantes semiesclavos no tenían otras opciones de expresión pública y de protección. Por cierto,

deben distinguirse las redes comerciales de las sociedades secretas, de los grupos religiosos o de etnias y culturas, de ideologías políticas. Ello no quiere decir que no se crucen unas o todas estas fronteras en ciertos casos: Charlie era de etnia hakka, de religión metodista, de dialecto cantonés, de mentalidad liberal, practicó en algunos momentos de su vida un *american way of life*, perteneció a la Banda Roja y posiblemente a la Tong Men Jui y al Kuomintang.

Hubo quienes supieron aprovechar estas nuevas realidades y cabalgar sobre ellas y hubo quienes no quisieron o no pudieron hacerlo, y se marginaron de ciertas dinámicas. La exogamia cultural e intelectual para algunos fue un hecho que los transformó, haciéndolos otras personas, los hizo aptos para prosperar en ese mundo tremendamente competitivo que se instalaba. Sun Yat-sen y Charlie Soong fueron de esta especie y lograron captar la manera como la expansión del Occidente había cambiado la realidad ancestral de China y de sus mares adyacentes. Supieron desenvolverse, verdaderamente, como peces en el agua. Ellos nos exhiben, desde el pasado, sus destrezas para circular en un espacio cambiante, globalizado de aventuras y aventureros, donde no hay Estado: destrezas con las lenguas, versatilidad de sus relaciones, rapidez para cambiar de emplazamiento, resistencia a anquilosarse.

Este nuevo tipo de acción y expresión pública se desarrolló con la presencia de la navegación y las comunicaciones traídas por las potencias occidentales, con el aumento de las migraciones chinas hacia las diversas colonias, factorías o puertos comerciales. Macao, Hawái, Singapur y Hong Kong fueron clave, pero ya existían colonias chinas mucho antes en lugares del Índico y del Pacífico, la mayor en Japón, notoriamente incrementada por la migración de estudiantes chinos y clave para las actividades políticas republicanas de los primeros años del siglo XX.

No sería correcto, sin embargo, creer que solo las redes-sociedades chinas tuvieron importancia para el republicanismo. En ciertos momentos, las sociedades japonesas, aunque con objetivos diferentes, en su táctica de alianzas debieron proteger, financiar y potenciar liderazgos que esperaban les serían útiles, más tarde. La del Dragón Negro es la que más ha sonado, pero ciertamente no la única. Tampoco deben olvidarse las redes de cristianos protestantes progresistas que circulaban entre Japón y China.

10 Sentido y alcance teórico del concepto

Pienso que el concepto *circulación* puede contribuir a mejorar el quehacer de las teorías que pretenden dar cuenta de aquello que Europa ha llamado la modernidad, como el dependentismo, la teoría del imperialismo e, incluso y con mayor razón, las versiones ingenuas de las teorías del buen vivir.

Imagino este concepto como un dispositivo eidético que más que suplantar viene a complementar. En otras palabras, este concepto puede asumirse como una suerte de dispositivo teórico, que puede implantarse o combinarse con diversos constructos teóricos (teorías, paradigmas). Por ejemplo, a la manera como lo ha hecho el concepto hegemonía con el marxismo: un dispositivo posterior a la elaboración de marxismo que ha venido a facilitar un conjunto de operaciones que antes se hacían muy difíciles de articular.

El dispositivo “circulación” oficia de mejorador, de catalítico, de convertidor de combustible en energía (haciendo una analogía, como un dispositivo que mejora el rendimiento de una máquina, aunque esto valga solo como analogía y no deba ser asumido literalmente). Ello porque permite revelar, entender mejor y generar mejores acciones en el marco de teorías realmente existentes, especialmente aquellas que han tenido mayor acogida por parte de intelectualidades de las regiones periféricas.

1. La noción circulación apunta a entender grandes espacios y procesos, y ello desde el punto de vista de las periferias, de los “circuladores” y los “circulados”, en relación a esto, pues permite articular fenómenos de diversas épocas históricas con la condición sapiens.
2. Permite asumir mejor una multidimensionalidad explicativa que no se afirma en un elemento monocausal, sino en un conjunto donde inciden cuestiones existenciales, genéticas, culturales, económicas y de información, en la medida que la circulación se afirma en nuestra condición humana.
3. La circulación es movimiento y en consecuencia debe tener en cuenta como clave la energía y el espacio-tiempo. La circulación necesita la energía, la aceleración de la circulación necesita mayor consumo de energía. Para ello debe obtenerse y moverse más energía, lo que requiere todavía de energía adicional.
4. Una teoría de la circulación debe ser capaz de discriminar una circulación dolorosa de otra compatible, por constructiva y reciclable, para el planeta y para la existencia personal.
5. La posibilidad de pensar la circulación debe considerar simultáneamente la elaboración de un lenguaje específico, de categorías, de redes, de canales, de institucionalidad y energizadores que permitan entender incluso la circulación de la propia teoría.

11 Una teoría o un dispositivo de la circulación

Circulación no es sinónimo de “periferia” y tampoco de “centro”, aunque es imposible concebir el centro y las periferias y su relación dialéctica si no existe

la circulación. El fenómeno circulacionista es el que constituye a las periferias en su relación con el centro, y si no hubiera circulación las nociones centro y periferia carecerían de sentido. Estas nociones solo tienen sentido geo-cultural (no geométrico) en los procesos de circulación, sean de traslación y rotación, del quehacer humano.

Para explicitar mejor el alcance de un corpus como el que cruzan las nociones circulación-navegación-sentido habrá que realizar al menos dos operaciones: desarrollar la crítica de algunas nociones prevalecientes (sea para mejorar su performance) como, sobre todo, elaborar alternativas que muestren sus posibilidades.

Mostrar alternativas significa reconocer una trayectoria en la cual incluso se encuentran elementos de lo que se está intentando superar-suplantar, negar, incluir, devorar y digerir. Algunos de los antecedentes con los cuales se ha ido conformando la teoría: tercermundismo, anti-colonialismo, dependentismo, cepalismo, decolonialidad, subalternismo, teoría del imperialismo, liberacionismo, indigenismo, negritud, tendencias de pensamiento que, por otra parte, se encuentran, se traslapan, se fusionan y hasta se confunden en múltiples puntos, como ocurre con los ingredientes lentamente cocinados en un caldero y de forma parecida a como ocurre con las pasiones.

12 Hacia el 2000

Lo que el centro ha llamado “la modernidad” es un proyecto de expansión en que una sociedad se propone conquistar el mundo conocido y por conocer, llevando un proyecto de conquista-civilización imaginado sobre la base de la tecnología circulacionista: transporte, comunicaciones, armamentos, ingeniería social. Para someter al resto de la humanidad y la naturaleza, ha tenido que soltarse de amarras que le impedían desplegarse y alcanzar ciertas destrezas.

Hacia el 2000 la circulación ha pasado a ser una condición patente para mucha gente, convocada por una cierta manía de internacionalización que obsesiona a ONGs, empresas, estados, universidades y asociaciones de alcohólicos anónimos. Esto ha permitido concebir la condición humana como una historia de migraciones y circulación, donde las personas migran acompañadas de memes culturales, de gérmenes patógenos y sus simbiosis, de instrumentos y otras cosas más.

La circulación ha sido voluntaria o forzada, y si es válida esta distinción, ha sido para unos, convocada por horizontes lejanos o por mitologías de imaginados paraísos lejanos y esperanzas de fáciles riquezas, para otros como el infierno

del trabajo y la humillación. Este fenómeno se ha visto acentuado en los hechos y en las conciencias por nuevas migraciones, viajes, exilios, turismo, comercio e investigación que son cuestiones cotidianas que vienen marcando nuestras sociedades más que en otras coyunturas, aunque ello desde siempre, desde los orígenes de la especie, mestizándonos en etnias y culturas incluso con homínidos de diferentes subespecies, como los neandertal entre otros cruzamientos más allá de lo humano, aprendiendo muchas veces de los animales, de sus capacidades y astucias.

Hacia el 2000, poco antes/después, la idea de modernidad por la que tanto han luchado los ideólogos europeos, ha mutado en “circulación universal y acelerada” de enfermedades, mensajes, personas, satélites, contenedores, predicadores, comidas, drogas y más. La circulación se ha hecho más rápida y masiva y estamos más atentos a ella, quizás más preparados. Los medios de comunicación y las cifras de organismos internacionales lo hacen cada vez patente y con extrema crudeza: campamentos inmensos sin agua, barcasas con gente moribunda. Ya no las ciudades sino los pueblos y los pueblos en tanto que etnias: tamiles, mapuches, kurdos, vascos, palestinos, y los judíos tantas veces. Pueblos arrinconados, de valientes desesperados. Ahora toca a unos y después toca a otros, las ocasiones se reiteran, las diásporas se multiplican, los migrantes hacen nuevas vidas.

13 Otra vuelta, para explicitar

Hemos realizado y acentuamos nuestra vocación peripatética ancestral. Conocemos más del allá, lo mitificamos y es más fácil lanzarse en una patera hacia otras costas. Más fácilmente de lo que se lanzarían los indonesios, los fiyianos o los maoríes, imaginando otras islas posibles, más allá de todo territorio, huyendo de sobrepoblación, de enemigos poderosos o de la mezquindad de sus minúsculos territorios y buscando un Eldorado o “Elnacarado” por la belleza y las dimensiones de sus conchas y sus caracolas o “Elcocado” porque habría bosques de cocoteros con frutos tan gigantes como sabrosos y con agua abundante y deliciosa en su interior, que suministrarían flotación, comida y bebida para mayores viajes.

Elaborar el concepto circulación es una manera de entender y explicar la necesidad creciente de conocer y descubrir y hacer, donde la búsqueda de realización personal en el marco de proyectos colectivos que comprenden una dinámica que se valida por ciertos patrones de éxito, donde la noción de “conquista” se ha ido reelaborando y pacificando, perdiendo el sentido bélico y territorial

para hacerse desafío y construcción, más que destrucción, por ello civil más que militar. Sentimiento cercano al de conquista, se trata en cierto modo de un apetito de conquista menor, en sentido blando, de conquistar mercados. No para apropiarse o subyugar, pero sí para copar espacios, sí para ganar presencia, sí para captar estudiantes, sí para colocar profesores, propuestas e ideas. Esta circulación se afirma en cuestiones existenciales, genéticas, culturales, económicas y de información, que son maneras de nombrar diferentes facetas de nuestra condición humana.

14 Mazrui ¿modernización como indigenización?⁴

El keniano Ali Mazrui (2001: 69), por su parte, se ha preguntado por el dilema de la modernización formulando el problema del siguiente modo. ¿Puede una sociedad no-occidental asumir la herencia de conocimiento y modernidad sin cometer suicidio cultural? ¿Estamos todavía hechizados por la pregunta sobre la manera en que una sociedad puede modernizarse sin occidentalizarse? ¿Es la tecnología moderna un arma de genocidio cultural en África y Asia?

Para avanzar hacia una respuesta, Mazrui se ha inspirado en los casos de Japón y Turquía. Los japoneses, argumenta, estaban persuadidos que era posible embarcarse en una modernización militar y económica sin asumir la occidentalización cultural. Por su parte, Kemal Atatürk estaba más inclinado a identificar modernización con occidentalización que los japoneses de la restauración Meiji, a partir de 1868. La pregunta es, entonces, ¿cuál de las dos opciones puede ser válida para África? (2001: 71). En muchas formas puede verse que en África se ha producido la occidentalización sin la modernización. Lo importante es ir a la clave de la modernización y no quedarse en aquellos elementos que la han acompañado en el caso occidental, como urbanización, industrialización o secularización, que serían elementos circunstanciales y no constitutivos.

Para realizar esta distinción más nítidamente, Mazrui definió modernización como “cambio de dirección compatible con el estado presente del conocimiento y que hace justicia a las potencialidades de la persona humana, tanto como un ser social cuanto como un ser innovador”. Esta definición la articula con tres

⁴ Para ver otras discusiones sobre el concepto modernización en algunas periferias, ver Devés 2014.

atributos de la modernización: la compatible con ciencia y *know how*; la expansión de los horizontes desde el clan hacia la aldea global; la aceptación de la innovación o de la búsqueda de lo mejor que las cosas pueden dar (2001: 74–75). En otras palabras, ha señalado Mazrui, para generar la modernización en África,

Un primer elemento no es la occidentalización sino por el contrario la indigenización, en el sentido de localizar recursos, personal y control efectivo; el segundo es el esfuerzo domesticador, haciendo lo extranjero más adecuado para las necesidades locales; lo tercero la diversificación cultural; el cuarto es la interpenetración horizontal entre las sociedades menos privilegiadas; la quinta estrategia es la contra penetración hacia el centro en defensa de los propios intereses. (2001: 79–81)

Al margen de lo interesante del planteamiento de Mazrui, constato el peso del concepto. Es sorprende qué Mazrui llame a este conjunto de operaciones “modernización”, que poco y nada tiene que ver con las propuestas de Kant, Weber o Rostow. ¿Por qué habla de modernización para decir lo contrario de lo que normalmente ha significado este concepto? ¿Su afán es provocar, o es incapaz de asumir que este concepto lo atrapa, o, siendo una figura tan crítica, se deja atrapar por el concepto y su glamur, o cree que le puede torcer el pescuezo al cisne europeo?

Modernización en las periferias ha sido eminentemente “ser como el centro”, porque es casi inimaginable una modernización que significara otra cosa. Se trata de ser como el centro en su “positividad”. Quienes se dan cuenta que esto es relativamente imposible o muy lento o simplemente no deseable buscan otras fórmulas; como Carlos Cousiño, “modernidad barroca”, Rosa María Rodríguez Magda, “transmodernidad”, Jesús Martín Barbero, “modernidad diferente”, José Bengoa, “modernidad-compulsiva”, Nicolás Bourriaud, “altermodernidad”, Beatriz Sarlo, “modernidad periférica”.

Por otra parte, no han faltado quienes, tratando de salvar el concepto, han argumentado que existen muchas “formas de modernidad”, pues, supuestamente, cada cultura o sociedad tiene su propia manera de apearse a la modernidad. Pero, ¿cuál es el alcance de esta frase? ¿Por qué llamaríamos “modernidad” o “modernidades” a cada una de esas maneras de mudar de las sociedades? ¿Cada una de ellas ha instalado su propia esclavitud? ¿Cada una la aniquilación de los pueblos indígenas? ¿Cada una ha practicado su propia expansión? ¿Cada modernidad ha establecido su propia colonialidad? Parece obvio que no. Esto podría decirse quizás para Japón, Sudáfrica o la Argentina de fines del siglo XIX y parte del XX, en algunos aspectos, pero no podría decirse para la India, las sociedades indígenas del Orinoco o para el mundo árabe, Paraguay o para el Asia Central. En la actualidad la expresión que quizás es más recurrente y elocuente es “el lado oscuro de la modernidad”.

15 Para terminar: planética, gentecracia y circulación

El tema de la circulación conecta al sapiens con la cuestión mundial, la cuestión de las internacionalizaciones, las migraciones, las diásporas, las comunicaciones y otros fenómenos que, aunque ancestrales, son cada vez más patentes, poniéndolos en conexión con asuntos como la dimensión *planética* y de necesaria *gentecracia*.

Entiendo por planética una perspectiva que se ocupa de pensar la cuestión global, como gestión global, diferenciándose de la politología, por un lado, y de los estudios internacionales, por otro. Esto quiere decir, en primer lugar, que el intento es pensar el mundo sin tener como referente único a los estados nación, y sus representantes oficiales sino también a los individuos y colectividades de todo tipo, no pensarlo en segundo lugar como un macro Estado. En otro sentido, asumir el mundo como conjunto de una inmensa cantidad de agentes de dimensiones y géneros muy diversos, que circulan o que hasta pululan, en el espacio global, sin gozar de algo así como la carta de ciudadanía que implica ser reconocido al interior de un “Estado-nación”. Digo “planética” como disciplina análoga a la ciencia política, pero que no se ocupa de una “polis”, sino de un conjunto complejo donde juegan miles y miles de agentes, de dimensiones muy heterogéneas, y donde casi no existen formas de regulación, donde no hay monopolio del poder armado, ni ciudadanía. Esta noción no pretende negar la necesidad de ciertos acuerdos globales, pues no hay vida colectiva sin la capacidad para enfrentar coordinadamente ciertos problemas globales.

Precisamente en este espacio mundial, más allá de los Estados, no contra estos, es necesario consolidar una opinión pública, como expresión pública en la esfera mundial y, en relación a esta, una gentecracia. La defino, por una parte, como la democracia más allá de las polis, en el ámbito no-político, por otra parte como diferente respecto de la democracia, pues no se identifica principalmente por los derechos, las garantías, la ciudadanía, la delegación del poder o el voto, sino, principalmente, por la expresión, por la capacidad para poner su palabra en la discusión mundial y hacerse parte en la discusión pública mundial: gentecracia como participación en la discusión mundial.

La circulación no es un ideal, tampoco lo es la aceleración de la circulación, que sin duda muestra pros y contras, desde el punto de vista de la existencia personal y del planeta. La circulación puede juzgarse mejor de acuerdo a la fluidez, según los equilibrios posibles, entre los círculos virtuosos y los que se han transformado en viciosos. La circulación de la información, y dentro de esta la de las ideas, debe entenderse también como demandante de energía, con sus

respectivas condiciones de saturación. Las redes intelectuales pueden juzgarse por su capacidad para circular información e ideas, como a la vez juzgarse por el derroche, la contaminación eidética y su propensión a sobrepasar el gasto de energía necesario y viable para los equilibrios.

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Ottmar Ette

TransArea Tangier: The city and the literatures of the world

The literatures of the world know no beginning, but multiply their beginnings unceasingly. They possess no origin, but point to numerous (and increasingly more numerous) origins. Thus do the literatures of the world move across the millennia and the languages, they run through extremely varied spaces and cultures, know of the great variety of systems of power, possession, and (colonial, sexual, cultural, or social) dependency. As the sensuous bearers of a discursive knowledge that specializes in not being specialized, they are, in their aesthetic presence, fragile and so very easily destructible, and yet they sometimes speak to us in languages that for a long while have no longer existed, they report on powers that have long since fallen into obscurity, they point to political or military structures whose names we often no longer know. As witnesses of human life, they create life. But above all, they form the future, and not last from out of that which no longer is, and yet cannot cease to be. Present within their presence is that which is not in the present tense. Their knowledge is archipelagic and relational.

The beating heart of the literatures of the world is their living intertextuality, and consequently, the future-building presence of past works in the present text. Homer's songs become productive in Alexandria, Buenos Aires, or Dublin; the Gilgamesh epic continues to be effective in the Bible, or in the songs of a Latin American poet; Aztlán or Quetzalcóatl generate new images of the world in Mexico City, New York, or Paris; the Shijing opens up new songs in China, Japan, Africa, or Germany. After centuries, the writings of the great world-traveler Ibn Battuta, like those of Leo Africanus, are still present in the memory of the literatures of the world, but there is more: again and again, they engender and produce new literary creations wherein current travels open out on other travels and current places open out on a series of earlier places.

On the recent occasion of a transareally-conceived conference in Cologne, I attempted to express an understanding of the city of New Orleans not only as a city in a very specific geocultural space, but as a movement-space that merges a great variety of areas and, ultimately, as a global archipelago in the (carnivalised) city-space (see Ette 2017). In the following series of considerations on the city of Tangier, the opposite path will be taken. It will again be a matter of a city and its surrounding region that are associated with a great number of

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myths. This time, however, the focus lies – put simply – less upon centripetal motions (which of course cannot be absent) but much more upon centrifugal dynamics that connect Tangier to Africa and Europe, and at the same time, to the farthest reaches of China or to the American continents. In the following, Tangier will be understood, not spatio-historically but movement-historically, less as a place than as a transit, less as a city than as a mobility, in order thus to put to the test new possibilities of imagination and thought beyond all territorialization.

Tangier in China

[A]nd so I entered the city, which is ringed by four walls. Between the first and second live the Sultan's servants, who guard the city. Between the second and third one finds the mounted troops and the commander who governs the city. Within the third wall live the Muslims. It was here that I lodged at the house of their Sheik, Zahir ad-Din. Within the fourth wall live the Chinese, who make up the majority of the inhabitants of the city. One day I experienced something astounding. I was a guest at a celebration they held for me, when one of the Muslims' great doctors of the Law entered. They said to him "Welcome, oh Sheik Qiwan ad-Din". During the conversation, something about him aroused my interest, so I took a closer look at him. He then said "Why do you look at me so? Can it be that you know me?" I asked him where he came from, and he replied that he came from Ceuta. "And I come from Tangier", I cried, at which he greeted me anew, and wept. I asked him "Did you also visit India?" And he replied "Yes; I was in the capital, Delhi". I remembered him and said "You are al-Baschiri". (Ibn Battuta 2015: 158)¹

Presented in a literarily complex manner, this scene of a dawning recognition, of a tearful *anagnorisis* in a foreign land, shows two Muslims who come together, each having spent the greater portion of their lives traveling. They both hail from the same region of the Arabic world, not far from the Strait of Gibraltar; they first met, briefly, in India and now get to know one another personally at the eastern end, as it were, of the immense realm of Islamic influence. We find ourselves far away from Maghreb, far from the West, in the great and beautiful city of Qanjanfu, that the first-person narrator, by invitation of the local ruler, has reached after a boat ride on the river. The city, laid out on a plain and surrounded by fertile gardens, is indeed equal to "the oasis of the city of Damascus", but we are in China, in a city that can be identified with the modern city of Jianshan in the

¹ The English translations here follow the German excerpts, which differ in various points from the widely-known English translation by Gibb 1969.

Zhejiang Province (Ibn Battuta 2015: 158)². The traveler, who is received here as a guest by all of the city's top dignitaries even before reaching the gates of the city, is none other than Ibn Battuta, who even today is possibly the most famous Arab traveler of all time.

Ibn Battuta spent long stretches of his life on a journey, the scope and significance of which can probably best be compared to that of the Venetian Marco Polo. In both cases, we are looking at journeys *before* the historical progression of those phases of acceleration that, in their totality, form the long-enduring process of globalization³. But for the first phase of accelerated globalization particularly, the journeys of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta were vitally important to the state of knowledge regarding what would later be called the "Old World": in ways both direct and indirect, Christopher Columbus was to gather much of his information and impressions from these reports as seen in his annotated edition of Marco Polo's journal (Gil 1987). A life of travel, but also a life constantly in search of the most current information possible: according to some accounts, Ibn Battuta, the man from Tangier, had departed from his home city in 1325, not to finally return to the region around modern Morocco until 1353 (Ibn Battuta 2015: 7). This son of Tangier advanced to become the veritable embodiment of the Arab explorer.

Two years later, in 1355, his travel account (which was not only famous in the Orient, but would soon be in the Occident as well), as stated by Ralf Elger, the current editor of his work, was "completed by an Andalusian man of letters named Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi, at the behest of the Moroccan Sultan Abu Inan (d. 1358), according to the oral travel accounts of Ibn Battuta" (Ibn Battuta 2015: 7). There began a long reception history of this written and repeatedly edited travel account (a history that cannot be examined in the context of the line of inquiry followed here) in which the traveler, a native of Tangier, was to emerge as the (not uncontested) source and authority of Arab knowledge regarding Asia, Africa, and broad stretches of the southern Mediterranean.

Ibn Battuta, who died in 1368 (or possibly not until 1377, according to some sources), much like his "predecessor" Marco Polo, had presented his account in oral form – though not from inside Genoese prisons – whereupon these narratives were immediately written down and thus preserved for posterity. And like the Venetian traveler, Ibn Battuta also found himself exposed from the start to the tremendous accusation of having simply invented his extensive travels, of never having carried out any of them. But the mistrust leveled at the explorer by those who have remained home is as old as the history of human travel itself. Unlike

² For a chronology of Ibn Battuta's travels see Hrbek 1962.

³ On the different phases of accelerated globalization, see the opening chapter of Ette 2016.

the German saying *Lügen haben kurze Beine* (“Lies have short legs”), the French proverb regarding this mistrust of “travel liars” opens up gates and doors: *A beau mentir qui vient de loin* (“It’s a beautiful lie that comes from afar”, or “long ways, long lies”). But how important is the question of whether Ibn Battuta actually had seen, with his own eyes, everything that he described?

While more or less justified doubts regarding the actual completion of certain parts of the journey, or even of the journey in its entirety – doubts that are supported by a fundamentally improved state of the source material – have presented themselves vigorously time and again, all the way to the present day (Ibn Battuta 2015: 216–240; see also Euben 2006: 63–89), it is still important to consider that we are dealing here (even if it is the case that Ibn Battuta never reached the end of China) with a traveler who depicts, with the greatest vibrancy and clarity, a world with which the Arab region of the 14th century of our reckoning was certainly acquainted, if not familiar. We should by no means apply to this Arabian travel account literary forms and norms of understanding that have their origin in an early-modern tradition of the West and cannot simply be transferred over to non-European literatures. The understanding of “author”, “authorship”, and “authority” is neither transhistorical nor transcultural.

Without a doubt, the journey of Ibn Battuta presents to us the knowledge of an entire epoch regarding the world as it was known to Arab scholars of the day, and at the same time demonstrates for us a world consciousness that, as a consciousness of the great variety of aspects of life throughout the world, is extraordinary for the period, no matter how anchored it may be in the knowledge and reference texts of the time. No one else in the Arab world of the 14th century succeeded like Ibn Battuta, no one else was able to structure and develop the knowledge of his time regarding the political, social, religious, economic, or cultural aspects of the great variety of empires as was the man from Tangier.

It is important to note that the scene he sets for the knowledge of his time is in the form of a journey, of a complex itinerary, for the spaces whose story/-ies he tells can only be delineated and developed from a state of movement. As with Marco Polo, it is thus only of secondary importance whether the traveler has seen with his own eyes everything that his writings report, and whether or not some of the things that – with no less conviction (or persuasiveness) – made it into his travel account might “merely” have reached his ears. The differing epistemological valuation of eye and ear is even historically erratic in the annals of the Occident (Ette 2001: 119–192). We should certainly not indiscriminately apply these neither transhistorical nor transcultural standards to Ibn Battuta’s account, nor should we stylize it into a modern subject in the occidental sense.

But how is the text that carried his name structured in a way that is travel-literary and, accordingly, vectorial? The enormous circular structure that lies at

the basis of the movement-figure of the entire Arab-Asian travel account opens and closes at Tangier; afterwards, it opens again upon the smaller circular figure of the Andalusian journey; then it eventually opens upon the geographically larger circle of the African journey, which closes the journey(s) altogether. As is stated at the beginning of the travel-literary chronicles, transcribed in the 14th century, edited in the 17th century by Muhammad ibn Fath Allah al-Bailuni, and newly translated into German by Ralf Elger in the 21st century:

I left my native city of Tangier in the month of June of the year 1325 to undertake the pilgrimage to the *Protected House of God* and to visit its city, *blessings and peace be upon it*. I had no companion to accompany me, and I attached myself to no caravan. I was driven by a powerful impulse. The longing for those exalted places lay deep within me. I was at that time twenty-two years old. (Ibn Battuta 2015: 16)

Life and journey are brought together here in an intensive, even intimate and mutually involved interrelation. At the same time, this report of the most extraordinary fourteenth-century journey ever to have had an account handed down to us begins very much in the classic manner: with the holy pilgrimage to the sacred places of Islam, with the hajj, whereby the entire journey is opened (while at the end, through another pilgrimage to Mecca, it is once again closed). It is not without reason that the entire journey is thus placed under the protection of Allah and his Prophet Mohammad, a godly transcendence that is repeatedly brought up and called to memory in the travel account. In this sense, it is all about a holy, even God-ordained journey.

Tangier thus becomes the point of departure for a journey that, through desire and longing, is taken far beyond Mecca and Medina. Tangier stands simultaneously as a beginning and as an origin, which throughout the journey – as we have seen – are kept always in the consciousness of the reader. The longer the (life-) journey of the twenty-two year old at the beginning of the account lasts, the more Tangier becomes the myth of both an origin and of a future that will (certainly not only in the economic sense) open up upon his return. For the travel report itself is directed to the local sovereign in hopes of garnering possible support for the author, support that might bestow upon the traveler returning to his homeland, and insure to him in his old age – Ibn Battuta is, by this point, over fifty years old – a life free from care. Had not the traveler and scholar accomplished great things for the overall state of knowledge in the Islamic world of his time?

Already apparent in the description of entering the city of Qanjanfu, the modern Jianshan, is the precise descriptive technique of Ibn Battuta, who consistently integrates the maximum amount of regional, cultural, economic, or sociopolitical information into the traveler's movements, couched in the form of the travel account. The fact that these details and this information by no means

rely solely on, or can only be traced back to, what has been seen, but also to what has been heard or read, has been worked out in many instances, given that Ibn Battuta was clearly a well-schooled reader of not only Arabic sources, but of European-Christian ones as well, which include, among others, the great travel account of Marco Polo.

For this devout Muslim, whose judgments of all other confessions and faiths run from pejorative to deprecating, and not infrequently even to hostile, the question of convivence, of the forms and norms for living together amid different religions or even different denominations within Islam plays a decisive role. Certainly in China, but also in India and other countries on his travel itinerary, he deals time and again and in great detail with the living and working conditions of his brothers in faith in their interactions with other religious communities.

It is thus not surprising that in Qanjanfu, he precisely observes where the Muslims reside, who their political and religious representatives are, and what importance the Islamic communities have acquired in any given city or region. He thus provides us with the basic data of a convivence of cultures that – as the many travel experiences and interwoven narratives show – are always perceived to be precarious. Without a specific *ZusammenLebensWissen* (“knowledge for living together”) (Ette 2010) a coexistence in peace and diversity can hardly be organized – and this is especially apparent in the islamocentric depictive forms of Ibn Battuta. The travel account of the learned Arab certainly contributed richly to such a knowledge for coexistence.

At this point, let us return again to the city of Qanjanfu. After the traveler has provided information on the fortifications and the number of guards, and has spent the night in the house of the commander in the first district of the city, there follows information that is crucial to coexistence with regard to the structure of this city divided into six parts:

In the second district of the city live the Jews, the Christians, and the sun-worshipping Turks, of whom great numbers live here. Their governor is Chinese. I slept for one night in his house.

In the third district of the city, the most beautiful of all, live the Muslims. The markets there are set up in the Muslim fashion. There are many merchants who possess great fortunes. I stayed in the house of the family of Uthman ibn Affan al-Misri, an important merchant who has settled there, as the city was pleasing to him. (Ibn Battuta 2015: 159)

Again and again it is the military, political, religious, or business elites with whom Ibn Battuta seeks the closest contact: they impart to him a specific knowledge for dominance and a great deal of concrete information that make their way in one form or another into the travel account. Even if it is a world-view centered in the

Arab world and oriented toward Muslim forms and especially Muslim norms of living that is to be read in the travel account, it is still apparent how complex are the societies of the time that are visited by the scholar from Tangier, and, insofar as his explorations go, from what diverse population groups they are composed.

All the while – as we see but a few pages before the visit to the great Chinese city – he continually invokes the assistance of heavenly powers which signal for him, as an orthodox Muslim, the help of Allah in all of his undertakings, even, among other things, in the person of a sheik who is supposedly over two hundred years old (Ibn Battuta 2015: 156). From this perspective, the life's journey of Ibn Battuta proves to be an endlessly expanded pilgrimage, the goal of which is not only the holy places, but the whole world of a generous God who protects the traveler, even as far as the (Islamic) ends of China. Convivence in this world is therefore developed, in a manner pleasing to God, from the perspective of a transcendence anchored in Islam. It is also from here that the writer's strictness of belief and custom that is so frequently emphasized in the text arises, and the writer appears not infrequently as one who offers the exhortation to return to the true teachings of the Prophet. From the outermost West to the outermost East and back again, Ibn Battuta traverses the knowledge of his time in not only the spatial sense.

The return journey of Ibn Battuta, after completing a second pilgrimage to the holy places of Islam by way of Alexandria and the island of Djerba, leads back to his homeland, a movement figure of circular construction to which is connected the traveler's hypertrophic praise of his sovereign, who possesses all at once for Ibn Battuta all of the virtues and qualities of the rulers whose regions he has visited, and who (as through a magnifying lens) vastly surpasses all other kings, caliphs, and emperors in greatness and significance. In direct connection to this is the praise of the homeland, which is said to be so beautiful that – as Ibn Battuta puts it, employing the verse of the poet Uthman ibn Darwish – even the celestial bodies begin and end their journeys here: “The sun wanders thereto, and the half-moons depart thence upon their journey” (Ibn Battuta 2015: 168). Tangier is a place of movement. In this lyrically-based projection of his earthly travel movements into heavenly ones, the traveler pays homage, with the help of poetry, to his Maghreb, that is, to that West in which the sun over the Arab world shines the longest before sinking into the sea. Thus does the widely-traveled man of Tangier, who embodies the knowledge of his time, bow at the end of his journey before his sovereign, his origins, and his homeland all at once.

But with the return from Fez, “where I [laid down] my walking-staff”, to Tangier, where the first-person narrator visits the “grave of my father”, the circle of the journey – as already indicated – opens up a second time (Ibn Battuta 2015: 168). For the traveler moves farther on to Ceuta – which certainly was woven into his contemplations with reflection on the eastern end of the world – in order, as a good

Muslim, to take part in the jihad, the “Holy War” against the infidels, the Christians (Ibn Battuta 2015: 168). Tangier and Ceuta had long since become cities directly behind the front.

And thus does Ibn Battuta, before the backdrop of the “Holy War”, display the landscape of his region of origin on both sides of the strait. From one of the Pillars of Hercules, the other becomes visible, the “Jabel Tariq”, in whose name are celebrated the glorious conquest of the year 711 by the military leader Tariq and the subsequent Arab expansion over the entire Iberian Peninsula (Ibn Battuta 2015: 168). Over and over in the presence of Ibn Battuta, “the accursed enemy” must be combated and forced to scatter (Ibn Battuta 2015). Still standing is the Kingdom of Granada, capital of al-Andalus, whose beauty, with its fortifications and palaces as well as its gardens and environs, is said to be “unmatched” and is lyrically sung in the words of many poets (Ibn Battuta 2015: 168). Along with the city of Tangier, Ceuta and Gibraltar stand for that world that we can address as the home region of Ibn Battuta: a home region that, for him, was clearly unimaginable without the Maghreb’s opposite coast to the north, without the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada.

The path he took after the end of his participation in the “Holy War” against the Christians and which led back across the Strait of Gibraltar does not signal Ibn Battuta’s final return home, as there now opens before the traveler the great caravan track across the Sahara in Sub-Saharan Africa that crosses Mali and reaches the road from Timbuktu, to be left once again on a route lying farther to the east. There follows a long stay in these far reaches of Africa which are, however, traditionally well-connected to the northern part of the continent. Finally, Ibn Battuta is called to the court by his sovereign in 1353, so that he must immediately depart, via the “land of Hoggar”, to Fez, “the residential city of the ruler of the faithful”, in order to reach the court, by the shortest route, within the year (Ibn Battuta 2015: 178). The great journey of the man from Tangier thus comes to its end.

During his decades-long journey, which is time and again interrupted by various tasks and offices for a number of different rulers, the traveler by no means only collected information that he wished in the end to present to his local sovereign and, in written form, to a later reading public. Much more, the trade in information is already of greatest importance to the learned Arab during the journey, since he has at his disposal valuable knowledge for which he allows himself to be well paid. As it says, for instance, on the way to the “Far East” at the end of his trip through the land of the “Golden Horde”, after a visit to Byzantium, Ibn Battuta specifically sought out, as he traveled on, a sultan in his residential city: “When I arrived, the sultan asked me about my trip to Constantinople and about its ruler. I gave him the desired information, and he compensated me, as was the custom, for the travel costs” (Ibn Battuta 2015: 70).

In this way, the travel route establishes connections between different regions, different cultures, and sometimes between kingdoms that are occasionally friendly but most often hostile to one another, for whom the traveler becomes a trader in information and thus a procurer of knowledge who is to be well paid. These important detours become “mini-routes”, *routines*, as it were, that are important to Ibn Battuta’s survival, if in this way he can, time and again, secure new funding and ensure his further travels. The man from Tangier thus becomes a traveling salesman in pieces of information, which are constantly exchanged over the entire course of the itinerary. Should some rulers, as in Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, attempt to not pay him for his information, he makes concrete demands on them and depicts them negatively in his account. Knowledge is power, but also good money.

Of great importance especially to distant journeying is the use of preexisting travel connections. Often, the routes in Asia and in Africa, much like the pilgrims’ routes to Mecca and Medina, are predetermined. Travelers there follow those routes and paths that so many others have traveled before them. It is thus no real surprise that in China, in a big city in which are settled representatives of the greatest possible variety of faiths, a man from Tangier and a man from Ceuta should meet, thereby creating a connection between the Silk Road and the Strait of Gibraltar. Anyone from Tangier or Ceuta knows of the great value of the information that circulates along the paths of communication, the routes on land or water. For by the time of Ibn Battuta, the Strait of Gibraltar had been bundling together for millennia all of those streams of knowledge that connected the East to the West and the South to the North. Tangier and Ceuta, which had always lain at the intersection of these routes, were and are in this sense centered on transit. In this multiconnectivity since times long past lies a good portion of their mythical capital. Only that which provokes wide discussion can grow into myth.

Thus Tangier, above all else, is this: a city at the point of intersection of streams of knowledge that transform the city at the entrance to the Mediterranean into a movement-space of a great variety of dynamics. In this sense, Tangier is less a city than a transit-space for the interchange of not only goods and merchandise, of travelers and refugees, but also of those forms and norms of a knowledge for living that has for long centuries and millennia developed and conjoined here in a very particular way. It is no coincidence that the most famous traveler and travel writer of the Arab world, who knew well the value of knowledge and who forged his way to the outermost borders of the world that was at that time known to the Orient, should come from Tangier. For Tangier, more than virtually any other city, stands at the points of intersection of transcontinental movements old and new, and indeed, stands for movement itself, for the transit of knowledge and its vectoricity. In its history and its myth, Tangier is not territorial, but vectorial: Tangier is transit.

Tangier between Africa and Europe

Tingis, or Tangier, founded by Carthaginians on the western entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar in the fifth century before our current reckoning, has three-quarters of a million inhabitants today. In Greek mythology, it is connected to the place where Hercules split the Earth and where, according to Pindar, the so-called “Pillars of Heracles” (in geographical terms, the promontories of Calpe and Abila – today known as Gibraltar and Djebel Musa) signaled the end of the habitable world: *Non plus ultra*. The eventful history of this city on the edge of the habitable world is a history of continual changes of power, of which but a few, judging from subsequent observations, are ever brought to mind. Possessed by the Arabs since the year 702, that is, a short decade before the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, the city repeatedly changed possessors during the *Reconquista*, coming to the Portuguese in 1471, to the Spanish in 1580, and to the British in 1661, before it fell once again to the Alawites in 1684⁴. Proceeding from Tangier, one could easily write a history of transmediterranean relations⁵.

Another writer who undoubtedly belongs in this transmediterranean tension field is the author of a history of Africa that, since its publication in Italian in the middle of the 16th century, stood as the Europeans’ most important source of knowledge about Africa up to the time of Mungo Park. Its writer was none other than the man who went down in the history books and encyclopedias of the world as Giovan Leone Affricano or Leo Africanus, who was born in Granada as al-Hassan ben Mohammed ben Ahmed al-Wazzan al-Gharnati al-Fassi, probably between December of 1494 and August of 1495, that is, shortly after the conquest of the capital city of the Nasrid Kingdom in Moorish Granada in 1492⁶. His full Arabic name contains not only the recognizable references to different places where the Granadian lived, it is also supplemented with the Christian baptismal name that was bestowed upon the later-to-be author of the *Descrittione dell’ Africa* by Pope Leo X on the sixth of January, 1520 – that is, on the anniversary of the taking of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs. No wonder then, that the man with many names would early on be described as a wanderer between worlds or as a nomad between

⁴ Regarding the history of the city of Tangier, see, among others, Elbl 2007/2013, Brini 1996, and Rickmeyer 2009.

⁵ See Hofmann/Messling 2015.

⁶ It should also be noted that al-Wazzan’s French editor and translator Alexis Epaulard proceeds from a possible birth date of 1489. See Rauchenberger 1999: 11, 35; and Redouane 1999: 78.

cultures (Davis 2006), and would take his place among the most fascinating figures of the early 16th century.

Al-Hassan al-Wazzan's description of the city of Cairo, which he knew from extended stays there, is at once tailored to at least a double readership, both occidental and oriental, and begins – as is so often the case with this author – with elaborations on the linguistic origins of the name, and eloquently depicts the splendor of its layout and the abundance of the wares and luxury items amassed within its walls. Leo Africanus saw with his own eyes the splendor of the city on the Nile, but he also saw the downfall of Cairo when it was conquered by the Turkish troops of Sultan Selim. In his account of the rich markets of the great city and all of its products gathered from distant lands, the abundance of a world of transcontinental trade once more arises whose sometimes millennia-old trade routes crossed one another in hubs like Cairo, Fez, or Constantinople, but certainly also in Tangier, a place with which Leo Africanus was certainly very familiar. With a highly systematic approach and an impressive wealth of details, the Granadian writer sketches the world-consciousness of an Old World at a point in time when the new seaways and sea powers in the West had for some time been creating new rules of play and new poles of power. The world that Giovan Leone describes is a world that soon would no longer exist in its present form – and not only because of the ever more oppressive Turkish hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean.

With his knowledgeable depiction of Cairo, by means of the goods and their places of origin in the realm of the intersection of the Orient and Occident, of Africa, Asia, and Europe, a space is conjured in which the different peoples and cultures seem to associate peacefully – and thus, multiculturally and interculturally – by and with one another. Within this Old World diegesis, drawn up in the fashion of travel literature, a world is evoked whose violence the author, having been driven out of Granada with his family, undoubtedly knew well, but which he traversed many times, not only in the transmediterranean realm within the tension-field between the Orient and the Occident, but also in the far-flung regions in the African interior. More than perhaps any other Arab traveler, he was familiar with every inner space of the African continent, of which the Portuguese and the Spanish, as well as the entirety of Christian Europe, possessed only the dimmest notions. Setting aside all of the seafarers, monks, bureaucrats, bishops, soldiers and merchants who reached the New World during this time, there can be but very few travelers of the early 16th century who achieved the level of experience and knowledge of the cosmopolitan Johannes Leo Africanus. But what do we know of this man and the genesis of his writings?

If one follows the history of the editions of *Descrittione dell' Africa*⁷ the current state of research indicates convincingly that al-Wazzan's text, made famous by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, was written and completed between 1524 and 1526. Not only the context of the publication in Ramusio's esteemed collection in the 1550s, but also the context of the first appearance of the *Description of Africa* a quarter-century earlier places the immediate context of the journeys and the writings of Joannes Leo Africanus close to the first phase of accelerated globalization. Still more: his account is also a component of the wave of westward expansion, to the power and diffusion of which he bore direct or indirect witness.

Since 1986, the publication year of the highly accomplished and successful first novel *Léon l'Africain* by the Lebanese-born writer Amin Maalouf, a much more comprehensive and penetrating discussion of the Moorish Andalusia has been possible (Ette 2010: Chapter 3). Perhaps the best examples to mention here would be the 1991 work of the Moroccan Oumelbanine Zhiri (Zhiri 1991/1995), which examines the centuries-long effect of the printed works of al-Wazzan on the European image of Africa; the book *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* by Princeton researcher Natalie Zemon Davis (Davis 2006) which is culture-theoretically interesting, though compromised by some technical errors; and above all, the comprehensive biographical and editorial examination by the career officer and diplomat Dietrich Rauchenberger (1999).

Rauchenberger's research particularly has provided us a much more precise familiarity with al-Hassan al-Wazzan's travels into the African interior. Put forth here is not only a look into an imaginary map of how Joannes Leo Africanus would have imagined the continent of Africa and its outlines at the time of the writing of the *Descriptions* (Rauchenberger 1999: 195). In a general itinerary map, the long-familiar or directly deducible routes of the far-reaching journeys in the Sahara region are brought together such that it becomes recognizable just what enormous areas of the continent were covered by the multilingual writer, on foot or on the back of a camel, starting out from an area that lies, as it were, around Tangier and Fez and between Africa and Europe.

Admittedly, the first of his extended journeys took al-Hassan in 1507 and 1508 to Constantinople, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Persia, and Tartary (Schubarth-Engelschall 1984: 7–18). He then undertook his second journey around 1510 in the company of his uncle, across the Sahara to Timbuktu, where his relative had been sent on a diplomatic mission for the Moroccan sultan. The third journey, probably between 1512 and 1514, first brought him (again on a trans-Sahara route)

7 Regarding translations and the body of research, long influenced by French scholars, see, for example, Rauchenberger 1999: 153–155; Massignon 1906; and Epaulard 1956.

to Timbuktu, but then proceeded through the Hausa states and the area around Lake Chad, then farther east to Egypt. The fourth and last of his great journeys finally led al-Hassan al-Wazzan once again, at the age of no more than twenty-five, into the north of Africa, to that region that we today, from a Eurocentric perspective, like to call the Near East.

From Egypt, the devout Muslim joined a pilgrimage to Mecca and then started home again. But he was never to reach Fez again. Assumedly during a side-trip to the Mediterranean island of Djerba, he was captured by Christian corsairs under the leadership of Pedro de Bobadilla and abducted as a slave to Italy. There he was made a living present (a custom by no means unusual at the time) to Pope Leo X, who is known for holding court in a manner that was both extravagant and supportive of the arts. This was the point at which the Granadian was turned into the African and again integrated the area around Fez and Tangier into a transmediterranean network of knowledge.

It was the same Leo X who came forth as a friend and patron of the sciences and the arts and who, as the great Renaissance Pope, imposed the sentence of anathema on Martin Luther and launched the famous heresy trial. But this Medici Pope very openly met the Muslim al-Hassan al-Wazzan: he recognized in him a young scholar, learned in matters both worldly and religious, to whom he happily allowed all possibilities for further education in his noble prison, the Castel Sant'Angelo, such that Leo might, if possible, be assured of his knowledge and convert him to Christianity. The interests in the matter were clear. We know from several diplomatic and other records that the "conversion" of al-Hassan al-Wazzan, follower of the prophet Mohammed, and his baptism at the Holy See to Giovan Leone was an international event, much-discussed in many parts of Christendom, an event that stood very much at the center of the high-tension power-struggle between the Orient and the Occident.

In this variation of the East-West conflict, an enduring interest in (the knowledge of) the other was very much in play. Thus the young man from Granada, who found himself once again on the north side of the Mediterranean, very quickly moved into the position of facilitator and translator between the occidental and oriental worlds. In 1524, Joannes Leo Africanus, who stood under the personal protection of "his" Pope, wrote as a contributor, among other things, an Arabic/Hebrew/Latin/Spanish vocabulary list, and in connection with this, wrote his *Description of Africa* in Italian, which earned him, as an informed source of a knowledge of the nearby yet largely unknown continent, the sobriquet "Africanus". For good reason, he wrote and dictated his *Descrizione dell' Affrica e delle cose notabili che quivi sono* not in his mother-tongue, but in that idiom in which he had been instructed from the beginning in Rome: the transcultural dimension of his life's path connects in the most natural way with the translingual

composition of his major work. And this major work, still full of life for a modern reading public, has given rise to a rich literary succession.

As a Muslim born in Granada, al-Hassan al-Wazzan was no doubt in variously close contact with Arabic and its variants, with Berber, with Spanish, and with the wide variety of mixed forms that have grown up between all of these languages. On his extended journeys, he had become familiar with a multitude of African languages before he came to be instructed in Latin and Italian at Castel Sant'Angelo in Papal Rome, and began to read books and writings in these "occidental" languages. As a polyglot scholar and reader, he was thus highly sensitized to all forms of inter- and translingual language phenomena, to asymmetric language contacts and the wide variety of translational problematics alike. It seems quickly to have become clear to him that his opportunity lay in this equally translingual and transcultural competency.

Consequently, continual reflections on language run through his entire body of work. In his *Descrizione* therefore, it is not only about the geographical and topographical frontiers of Africa, its climate and land, vegetation and crops, its great rivers and the animals characteristic of the continent, or the different peoples and their trade goods. It is also about differentiated cultural characteristics that are, above all, noted and examined from a linguistic perspective. Thus it is that in "all African landscapes extending from the Mediterranean to the Atlas Mountains [...] a corrupted Arabic is spoken", whereas only "in the Kingdom of Morocco and in Numidia [...] Berber is more widespread" (Leo Africanus in Schubarth-Engelschall 1984: 72). "The Arab historians", Giovan Leone continues, maintain "emphatically that the Africans have had no other script than the one with Latin characters"; they had indeed spoken other languages, but they "had used Latin letters, as do the Germans in Europe" (Leo Africanus in Schubarth-Engelschall 1984: 72). And he remarks, in a manner thoroughly critical of the source, that without exception, all "of the history books about the Africans that the Arabs possess" are translations from the Latin, "old works written in the times of the Arians, some still earlier" (Leo Africanus in Schubarth-Engelschall 1984: 72).

The degree to which Joannes Leo Africanus had to deal with the effects of globalization from a transmediterranean point of view that oscillated between Africa and Europe is shown by his depictions of the pandemic spread of the syphilis that had been brought back from America. In the forms of reporting and in the (mostly transitory) norms of coexistence brought on by spread of the epidemic, there is much in his case that can be connected to the forms and norms that arose in reaction to epidemics and pandemics as fundamental symptoms and fears of globalization in the second, third, and fourth phases of accelerated globalization. To this extent, the *Description of Africa* delivers not only a fascinating contemporary view into the problematics of a globalization that in the Old World – we need

only think of the quickly occurring biopolitics of the transport of Black slaves to the New World – certainly did not come to a halt at the African continent. At the same time, this work from the middle of the 1520s illustrates for us by literary means how forms and norms of living in a great variety of areas began to change in association with the first phase of accelerated globalization. While on one end of the world the advancing Turks would soon manage to control all terrestrial trade connections between Asia and Europe, the Iberian powers on the other end of the world also established their dominance, especially over the countries of the spice trade. Within a few decades, it was a different world.

Far beyond his time during the first phase of accelerated globalization, a fact that still fascinates about the figure of Léon l'Africain is that, in his translingual activity as a writer between Europe, Africa, and Asia, he was able to develop a form of *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben*, of “Writing-Between-Worlds” that we, from the perspective of the currently waning fourth phase of accelerated globalization and thanks to the reconstruction of specific historical contexts, are indeed able to grasp more precisely and sensitively than in other, less *bewegte* (“moving/turbulent”), less *velociferische* (“devilishly-fast”) times. From the necessity of being able to exchange continents and languages, cultures and religions in order to survive, al-Hassan al-Wazzan, alias Joannes Leo Africanus, developed the transcultural virtue of producing, between the South and the North, between the East and the West, a work of translation that criss-crossed different cultures and forms of expression, a work that makes of him one of the most dazzling and seminal figures of the first phase of accelerated globalization. For his *Descrizione dell' Affrica* is far more than a mere description of Africa: it models, by the means of literature and from a transareal perspective between Granada and Fez, Rom and Tangier, the complexity of the Old in the light of a dawning New World.

Paris in Tangier

As a primarily symbolic bone of contention between the colonialistically oriented European powers at the turn of the 20th century, Tangier was declared in 1923 an “international zone” and collectively governed by France, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, the Soviet Union, and (from 1928) Italy. Thus Tangier, as a highly internationalized city, took up its oldest traditions as a place of transit, but also as a city on a wide variety of (geographical, cultural, political) borders. During the Second World War, Tangier became, primarily in conjunction with the international port of Casa Blanca, the intersection of a number of streams of refugees seeking transatlantic escape routes. The foundations of the elevation of Tangier to a much-desired destination of writers, mostly European and US American, in the

1940s and 50s, and then again in the 60s and 70s depended upon all of these conditions; in association with freedom and liberties, Tangier had long since become (and not only for the West) a literary myth and a myth of literature.

But we are not occupied here with that oft-depicted Tangier of Paul and Jane Bowles, of Jack Kerouac or Tennessee Williams, of Truman Capote or William S. Burroughs⁸. In the following, instead of an expansive analysis of the literature associated with Tangier, an illustrative effort will be made, by means of two further instances, to understand the history and the myth of Tangier in the sense of a vectoricity such as can very well be extrapolated from Ibn Battuta on. It is, consequently, a matter of Tangier Transit – and with it, a matter of the question that asks in which vectorial paths and passages an archaic place, a mythical place, a literary place can be conceived of in motion from motion, and as motion – thereby also impressively showing us how we might, in the place of an ever-territorializing spatial history, set a motion-history that allows us to develop not only logics of the mobile, but also mobile, multilogical logics that are not bound to static frames of reference.

Our second example then, begins in a bar, and thus, a place of passage where constant coming and going reigns. If we were to attempt to describe a bar only with a spatial orientation, architectonically, as it were, then we would understand nothing about this specific bar, or anything of the life around a bar. Let us imagine, then, a man who sits on a barstool and closes his eyes:

One evening, half asleep on a banquette in a bar, just for fun I tried to enumerate all the languages within earshot: music, conversations, the sounds of chairs, glasses, a whole stereophony of which a square in Tangiers (as described by Severo Sarduy) is the exemplary site. That too spoke within me, and this so-called “interior” speech was very like the noise of the square, like that amassing of minor voices coming to me from the outside: I myself was a public square, a *sook*; through me passed words, tiny syntagms, bits of formulae, and *no sentence formed*, as though that were the law of such a language. This speech, at once very cultural and very savage, was above all lexical, sporadic; it set up in me, through its apparent flow, a definitive discontinuity. (Barthes 1975: 49)⁹

⁸ See the overview in Courty/Lacey 2009.

⁹ “Un soir, à moitié endormi sur une banquette de bar, j’essayais par jeu de dénombrer tous les langages qui entraient dans mon écoute: musiques, conversations, bruits de chaises, de verres, toute une stéréophonie dont une place de Tanger (décrite par Severo Sarduy) est le lieu exemplaire. En moi aussi cela parlait (c’est bien connu), et cette parole dite ‘intérieure’ ressemblait beaucoup au bruit de la place; à cet échelonnement de petites voix qui me venaient de l’extérieur: j’étais moi-même un lieu public, un *sook*; en moi passaient les mots, les menus syntagmes, les bouts de formules, et aucune phrase ne se formait, comme si c’eût été la loi de ce langage-là. Cette parole à la fois très culturelle et très sauvage était surtout lexicale, sporadique; elle constituait en moi, à travers son flux apparent, un discontinu définitif” (Barthes 2002 : 249).

Which “definitive discontinuity” is being discussed here? At first glance, this opening passage is dealing with Figure 33 (“Phrase”) of *Le Plaisir du texte* (*The Pleasure of the Text*, 1973), regarding a thoroughly mundane scene, indeed, a scene of boredom, of *ennui*, that becomes the starting point of a game that the first-person narrator plays with himself. And yet, in this now famous text by the French semiotician, writer, and philosopher Roland Barthes, as he closes his eyes and concentrates on his ears, there emerges, playfully as it were, a landscape, or more exactly, a soundscape in which a wide variety of languages, sounds, or snatches of music come together in the auditory sense – and thus (as we could say along with Jean-Luc Nancy) in an “inside” and an “outside” simultaneously¹⁰. The contingency of this soundscape is intended: it is not a matter here of a scientific examination by the French semiotician and semiologist, but rather a reflection on the search, both culture-theoretical and life-science-related, for the formulation of an aesthetics of pleasure.

In the inner-sight of the first person narrator, an outer-sight of the then already famous Parisian intellectual becomes both visible and audible. Nevertheless, we should not mistake this “I” for the text-external travel writer Roland Barthes. In this first of the three microtexts that form the figure “Phrase” or “Sentence”, an anecdote from Tangier is related, a biographeme that refers to Barthes’ frequent trips to Morocco – often in the company of other intellectuals and writers such as Michel Foucault, François Wahl, or Severo Sarduy – and specifically to Tangier.

The experimental protocol that this “I” carries out is similar to that of the “echo chamber” that Barthes would describe so impressively under the title “La Chambre d’échos” in his experimental autobiography *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* two years later (Barthes 1993–1994: 151). In the ears of the first-person narrator, a stereophonic soundscape emerges such as Barthes will again take up in an eroticizing manner in the last figure of *The Pleasure of the Text*, and which he will relate within the concept of stereophony to an aesthetics of pleasure to be created later.

But the added reference in parentheses to a text by Barthes’ friend, the Cuban writer Severo Sarduy, makes it clear that Barthes’ short text is superimposed, as it were, over a text by Sarduy that had been published in 1971, in a special edition dedicated to Barthes, in the magazine *Tel Quel* under the simple title “Tanger”. But in this text, originally composed in Spanish and translated

10 On this tension, in a work heavily influenced by Roland Barthes, see Nancy (2010): 20–31.

by Philippe Sollers and Severo Sarduy into French, we collide, in an intertextual game of hide-and-seek, with the very term named by Barthes:

STEREOPHONY: The ground is steep; the square in the act of hearing (*à l'écoute*) about two cities: voices that cancel one another out – ever-present, the voice of Oum Kalsoum. Leather slippers over the smooth stones. Soprano voices of the Quran school. The little spoon against the green leaves, in the tea-glass. The “other” languages, spoken in a harsh voice by an Andalusian mountain dweller, “mouth” for “ear”, “nose” for “mouth”. *Stéréographie*: on the tattered signs – remnants of Latin typography – Arabic characters, dripping down, drawn in tar, the night. *Stripes*: wide: Djellabas of linen; moving. (Sarduy 1971: 87)¹¹

In a few lines, in a compressed manner that frees itself from the sentence as organizing principle, a cityscape of Tangier is built from sounds that now reach us, in fact, in a stereophony: from the text by Sarduy and the text by Barthes alike which, one might say, present themselves to be heard alternately in an intertextual *stereography* that puts forth Tangier as a city of different cultures, different languages, different forms of living to be heard and seen. It is the attempt at a radically vocal openness of writing: even a short text by François Wahl posthumously joins in, written in association with death, a text that appends itself intertextually to Sarduy from off-stage as it were, as it refers to the glass of tea in Tangier in a backward glance that in 1993 bears witness to the long-ago deaths of friends (Wahl 1993: 32). The sound of a little spoon hitting the green leaves in the tea-glass: it ties together the search for lost time in the texts of Barthes, Sarduy, and Wahl as a sensuous sign, like the Madeleine dunked in tea in Marcel Proust's *Recherche* that had become, for Roland Barthes particularly, the obsession of a literary *écriture* of his own.

An additional stereophony thus arises, on a different, intertextual level: one text calls to another, one text answers the other, and all meet in a public square in Tangier that, in *The Pleasure of the Text* is transferred into a bar and, at the same time, transforms the inner space of the first-person narrator into an echo chamber. Is it a coincidence that the name Barthes starts with the same letters? A coincidence, that in the lexeme “bar”, an echo of the name can be heard? The inner speech of the “I” is similar to the sounds; it forms a “rustling of language”, as Barthes described it in 1975 in his text of the same title, *Le bruissement de la*

11 “Le sol est incliné ; la place à l'écoute des deux villes : voix qui s'annulent – toujours présente, celle d'Oum Kalsoum. Babouches sur les pierres lisses. Sopranos de l'école coranique. La petite cuillère contre les feuilles vertes, dans le verre de thé. Les langues ‘autres’, parlées d'une voix rauque, de montagnard andalou ; ‘bouche’ pour ‘oreille’, ‘nez’ pour ‘bouche’. Stéréographie : sur les affiches lacérées – restes de typographie latine –, des caractères arabes dégoulinants, tracés au goudron, la nuit. Raies : larges : djellabas de lin ; mouvantes”. A strongly divergent Spanish version of this text can be found in Sarduy 1992.

langue. “The rustling” it says, “is the sound of that which runs well” (Barthes 1993–1994: 274). Parisian intellectuals in a public square, in a café, in a bar in Tangier: Tangier appears in the rustling of *languages*, in which the echo of distant stereophonies, distant stereographies becomes audible and present.

From the very first line, Sarduy’s text opens upon a dialog between the many languages that shall remain untranslated here: “El Zoco Chico, le Petit Socco, place de la Medina, à Tanger; Roland Barthes y a reconnu le ‘lieu de l’écriture’. / Tracer ses coordonnées. Relever sa topologie symbolique” (Sarduy 1971: 86). Naturally, in the intertextual play of symbolic topologies, Sarduy cannot leave out a reference to *Tangier* by William S. Burroughs. It is a world of mutual references and reverences, deeply submerged in that baroque and rococo that in Sarduy’s neo-baroque style pours forth ever-new circles, ellipses, and volutes – not without the Cuban’s usual brilliant mockery: “Mihrab of Bakelite: Mozarabic kitsch” (Sarduy 1971: 86–87).

That Barthes seeks in *Le Plaisir du texte*, much like Sarduy in “Tanger”, not only to do away with the sentence as the foundation for linguists but also as the basis of all narrative, cannot be pursued and explicated any further here¹². Of much greater importance to our present considerations is the fact that in the figure called “Phrase”, the voices from outside and the voices from within form a public square, such that the “I”, in a manner of speaking, becomes a public place, a “souk”¹³ just like the one in Tangier, and thereby becomes a place of passage himself. But the shreds, splinters, and fragments do not build a sentence; they refuse – as in Sarduy’s stereophonic passage – to bend to the law of sentence structure; they recognize a different law that renounces the sentence and forms a *fractal* writing. The sporadic and thus insular character of this language gives rise to a discontinuity such as Barthes time and again microtextually inserts in this figure (and in many other figures); Tangier itself becomes a “place of writing” (*lieu de l’écriture*) and transforms itself in these short texts into a fractal: in the *modèle réduit* of a whole world that, through the ear, reaches the echo chamber of the “I” and finds there its many-voiced, multilingual resonance.

Thus, just as Severo Sarduy let it be heard with a look to Roland Barthes at the beginning of “Tanger”, everything becomes a souk, a marketplace of languages, of the relentless circulation of the sensuous, the senses, and the sense – at least, when this sense (*Sens in French*) is thought of as sense and direction in the plural. And so are Sarduy’s “Tanger” and Barthes’ *The Pleasure of the Text* joined by a travel-literary volume that Barthes withheld until his death in 1980, and in which Tangier becomes the actual point of reference. It is not surprising that everything

12 C.f. (extensively) commentary in Barthes, Roland/Ette, Ottmar 2010: 325–333.

13 For a view from another perspective, see Landmann 2003: 129–132.

begins with the (sound-)figure of a barman who lovingly places a red geranium bloom into a water-glass in a grimy railroad station pub (Barthes 1987: 23).

Not published until after his death, Barthes' *Incidents*, according to the book's first editor François Wahl, contains "things seen and heard in Morocco" – all of that which was recorded "primarily in Tangier and Rabat, and subsequently in the South" in the years 1968 and 1969 (Barthes 1987: 8). As was already the case with Severo Sarduy, many of the scenes with Barthes are set in the area around the Petit Socco, where those mostly foreign writers who turned Tangier into a myth of the West once lived. But there, where the Roman forum of Tingis was once located, everything had long been dilapidated, though certainly without having forgotten the great days of Tangier, as is again and again carefully recorded and preserved in these Moroccan *Incidents*.

And yet the short and ultra-short texts based here give witness to a fascination that the place must have exerted upon the narrator, but certainly also on Barthes. This mythical place in the history of Tangier is thus, from the first page on, the setting for that which is not conceivable with simple logic:

In the square in front of the Socco, his blue shirttails flying, an emblem of Disorder, a furious boy (which in this country means a boy with all the features of madness) gesticulates and rails at a European (Go home!). Then vanishes. A few seconds later, the sound of chanting indicates the approach of a funeral; the procession appears. Among the bearers (in relays) of the coffin, the same boy, temporarily subdued. (Barthes 1992: 13)¹⁴

The minor incident in the square refers first of all to the tensions between "Native" and "European", but at the same time draws attention to the functioning of an at least double logic. But this is not so much a mere matter of the construction of an immediately referentializable extralingual reality, but rather, of a textuality that, very much in the sense of the text-theory of Tel Quel, is directed toward the liberation of the significant from the pressure of Mimesis, and perhaps even more, in the sense of *The Pleasure of the Text*, is directed toward undermining the all-regulating *sentence*. Tangier is again and again explicitly named in the microtexts and micronarratives, yet this Tangier functions like an experimental protocol, like a laboratory in which ever-new *Incidents*, occurrences, are textually produced. The pleasure in the text lies in this constant New and this constant Other, but

¹⁴ "Sur la place du petit Socco, chemise bleue au vent, figure de Désordre, un garçon en colère (c'est-à-dire ici ayant tous les traits de la folie) gesticule et invective un Européen (Go home!). Il disparaît. Quelques secondes plus tard, un chant annonce l'approche d'un enterrement; le cortège paraît. Parmi les porteurs (à relais) du cercueil, le même garçon, provisoirement assagi" (Barthes 2002: 955).

also in the irreducibility to a single, all-dominating logic. This volume thus forms, with its succession of definitively discontinuous microtexts and micronarratives, a robust piece of experimental travel literature¹⁵. Everything is filled with movements, yet denies any sort of attempt to reconstruct the travel-movements of a traveler. The “Disorder” is not carried over to “Order”.

Tangier and its Petit Socco stand for a world that is experienced for all of its senses and sensuousness, a world that is populated by Moroccans and Europeans, by the poor, the rich, and the dropouts. Frequently, the micronarratives recount border-crossings of many sorts, as presented in these two micronarratives printed in immediate succession:

On the beach at Tangiers (families, fags, boys), some old workmen, like very slow, very ancient insects, rake the sand.

*

Selam, a veteran from Tangiers, bursts out laughing because he has met three Italians who were of no use to him: “They thought I was feminine!” (Barthes 1992: 19)¹⁶

Borders between races, between animals and people, between languages and cultures, between social and political affiliations, between logics, orthodoxies, and ideologies are stepped across constantly and challenge sense in favor of the senses. Movements by car or plane, by train or taxi blend together, as in the traversing of a city, travel movements that do not wish to be arranged into a *single* travel movement. The micronarratives refuse to give themselves to the *single* sense, the *single* travel movement, the *single* logic: from the beginning, Tangier becomes a polylogical place to which a stringent occidental logic of identity and identification is applied ad absurdum.

Thus Tangier becomes a microcosm of textual pleasure that also always provides a look at (homo)sexual pleasure. At the same time, the body-logics refuse to be reconciled to body-politics, to Moroccan politics, and to the hanging of possibly innocent victims by a dependent judicial system:

Abdellatif – a voluptuous boy – peremptorily justifies the Baghdad hangings. The guilt of the accused is obvious, since the trial went so fast: the case was clear. Contradiction

¹⁵ C.f. Ette 2013: 105.

¹⁶ “Sur la plage de Tanger (familles, tantes, garçons), de vieux ouvriers, comme des insectes très anciens et très lents, déblayent le sable”. * “Selam, vétéran de Tanger, s’esclaffe parce qu’il a rencontré trois Italiens qui lui ont fait perdre son temps : ‘Ils croyaient que j’étais féminine !’” (Barthes 2002: 959–960).

between the brutality of this nonsense and the fresh warmth of his body, the availability of his hands, which I continue, somewhat dazed, to hold and to caress while he pours out his vengeful catechism. (Barthes 1992: 23)¹⁷

In the head, the short trial that was held for the accused. In the body, however, the desire for pleasure – and the pleasure of the text: “The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do” (Barthes 1992: 17)¹⁸. The Moroccan *Incidents* exist on greatly varying levels in an intensive exchange with *Le Plaisir du texte*. Barthes’ *Incidents* goes back to trips to Morocco in the years 1965¹⁹, 1968, and 1969, but above all to an extended stay in Rabat, where Barthes, deeply disappointed in the events of May, 1968 in Paris, began a guest lectureship in September 1969, a position that definitely ended just one year later. Like Japan, Morocco in the 60s offered the French intellectual the opportunity to newly organize the atopian²⁰, utopian, and above all heterotopian horizons of his thought, proceeding from certain islands of concentrated meaning as polylogical life-landscapes. The microcosm of Tangier and within it, above all, the world around the Petit Socco form radically open structures that allow Tangier to become the fractal of a philosophy that rebels against the dominant rationality of the West: for a *dépossession de l’Occident* pursued and propagated by Barthes, a fundamental “disappropriation of the Occident” at the level of the sentence, of reason, of an all-pervasive logic (Barthes 1979: 47; see also Ette 2007: 23).

As in his early text *En Grèce* (“In Greece”), that in a certain way contains his program of writing for an *écriture courte* every bit as much *in nuce* as do the movement-forms of his archipelagic thinking, Tangier, and Rabat and Marrakesh too, emerge as island cities, as insular cityscapes (Barthes 2002: 54–59). Yet they remain in an idiosyncratically unfocused discontinuity that extracts these cities, like islands, from a continent that is literarily staged in the form of a shattered fractality: Morocco as archipelago, subject to no continuous, continental logic. And like Japan, Tangier, with its beaches, its public squares, and its people, is an island.

17 “Abdellatif – si voluptueux – justifie péremptoirement les pendants de Bagdad. La culpabilité des accusés est évidente puisque le procès a été très rapide : c’est donc que le cas était clair. Contradiction entre la brutalité de cette bêtise et la tiédeur fraîche de son corps, la disponibilité de ses mains, que je continue, assez hébété, à tenir et à caresser pendant qu’il débite son catéchisme vengeur” (Barthes 2002: 962).

18 “Le Plaisir du texte, c’est ce moment où mon corps va suivre ses propres idées – car mon corps n’a pas les mêmes idées que moi” (Barthes 2002: 228).

19 In his annual report for the EPHE, Barthes makes note of a guest seminar in November, 1965 at the *Faculté des Lettres* in Rabat (OC II 111).

20 C.f. Oster 2006.

In Tangier, different worlds occasionally collide with sudden force: fault lines between Europe and the Maghreb, but also between North America and North Africa can be experienced up-close. Tangier is also a transatlantic migratory space. In the microtexts, the different worlds collide abruptly and violently – and from just this shock, this collision, arises that which we may designate as the once again archipelagic transareal²¹ landscape of theory that is this time no longer only Mediterranean, but instead connects different continents to one another. Tangier, with its Petit Socco, is a fractal of the transareal variety: here, the fault lines between different worlds can be experienced bodily. The “disappropriation of the Occident” sketched out by Barthes affects not last Western societies’ “dropouts”, who quite literally take possession of the city:

At the Socco, in July, the terrace is full of people. A group of hippies takes a table, one couple among them; the husband is a plump blond fellow wearing nothing under his overalls; the wife is in a long Wagnerian nightgown; she holds the hand of a tiny limp white girl whom she encourages to shit on the sidewalk, between the legs of her companions who do not react. (Barthes 1992: 18)²²

Roland Barthes, who probably completed his *Incidents* in 1969, had also sketched out this microcosm of contrasts in that same year in an essay for the Parisian magazine *Communications*, though he indicates there, under the title “A Case of Cultural Criticism”, the aporias of a western civilization that reveals itself in its counter-movements to be dominant and hegemonic (Barthes 2002: 544–546). Would it not be possible to relate this to other movements that level criticism at the West and at the same time exert or even multiply the West’s dominance? As in the ultra-short texts of his *Incidents*, Barthes attempted in his article to cast light on the hippie movement, specifically in terms of the contradictions in its cultural criticism, from a point of view that he would never have taken in this piece without the experiential knowledge and knowledge for living gained from his trips to Morocco. Barthes’ attempt at a deliberate disappropriation of the Occident does not stop short of criticizing western critics of the western lifestyle. Thus Barthes shows in his *Incidents* a Tangier in which the hippies have pursued the myth of the city, taken possession of it,

²¹ On the concept of the transareal, see Ette 2012.

²² “Au petit Socco, en juillet, la terrasse est pleine de monde. Vient s’asseoir un groupe de hippies, dont un couple; le mari est un gros blondasse nu sous une salopette d’ouvrier, la femme est en longue chemise de nuit wagnérienne; elle tient par la main une petite fille blanche et molle; elle la fait chier sur le trottoir; entre les jambes de ses compagnons que ne s’en émeuvent pas” (Barthes 2002: 959).

for a time at least, uninhibitedly living out their form of life as though it were the norm of life. The hippies appear here as aggressive western occupiers: as do the Moroccans – it is critical to add – the Parisian intellectuals are far from alone here.

The *écriture courte* in the Moroccan *Incidents*, more radically executed than in other travel-literature texts, leaves the reading public with enormous empty spaces for creative completion, and these empty spaces were quickly “filled” autobiographically – not only with an eye to the usually homosexual²³ and at the same time heterocultural love affairs that appear repeatedly on the surface of the text. It is certain: one may well formulate that for Barthes, Tangier was not the place of his “Noli me tangere”. But the reduction of the city of Tangier and of Tangier’s significance to Barthes to the level of homosexual lust and love is far more than problematic²⁴. For in light of Barthes’ aesthetic of pleasure, we must guard against all-too-easy biographizing identifications, if we are dealing with a multilogical text-landscape that cannot be understood to be centered on a single point of view or to be pursuant to a single logic. As it is in Severo Sarduy’s work, the Petit Socco, the Zoco Chico, is a textual laboratory that seeks to undermine the central perspective of occidental sentence structure, occidental first-person constructions, occidental logic. In this textual sense, Tangier is a laboratory, but also a fractal of a Parisian theory that sensually textualizes Tangier.

The complexity and radicality of this travel-literary text turn the focus away from the movements of the traveler (as classically presented, so to speak, in the itinerary of an Ibn Battuta) to the movements of the readers who, beyond Barthes’ early speech on “The Death of the Author”, first published in 1967, are moving through their own textual landscapes of theory (Barthes 2002: 491–495; see also Ette 2013: 80–88). Here there is no longer a center of meaning or sense, nor a center of the senses. As in Sarduy’s dense text “Tanger”, that is not without reason dedicated to Barthes, the myth is stored away through intertextual references and reverences, translated into a landscape of theory that allows Tangier to become transit in a very different way than in the work of Ibn Battuta.

As a text-island, Tangier is an I(s)land world in itself, with its own complex world; but as an I(s)land world, Tangier is also part of a globe-spanning Island World that is of an archipelagic sort and which projects this polylogical landscape that rests upon discontinuities into the Petit Socco itself. Everything here is audible, visible, available to be lived and experienced sensuously. Tangier

²³ Early on, an autobiographical reading of these passages caught on that, in connection with other texts by Barthes, were read as “confessions”, as it were. See for instance Knight 1993.

²⁴ See, among others, Hargreaves 2005: 55–64; and Algalarrondo 2010: 37, 170, et al.

becomes an island-fractal of a world that must be read from continually changed perspectives, as in the microtextual travel-text itself. The North Moroccan harbor city is not fixed as an alterity, as a stable Other, but is transformed into a *Mobile* that can be not only heard, but instead, as a soundscape, can be experienced and relived. That which may be expected with the name of Tangier is not erased, but adopted: the routes of the traveler do not become routines. The city at the entrance to and the exit from the Mediterranean advances, in a far more experimental sense than in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Rome, to become a *città aperta*, an open city in not only a transmediterranean but also in a transatlantic sense.

Tangier transit

In the following, a jump will be made to Latin American literature which, within the periphery of texts dedicated to Tangier, played and plays a role that is at best marginal, mostly unperceived, and thus invisible. Nevertheless, in the midst of the plentiful Tangier-literature, it is the novel of an outstanding Central American author that delineates that image of the city as transit, as we have already encountered with Ibn Battuta and Roland Barthes. The following section will thus examine the novel (published in 1999 in Spain) *La orilla africana* ("The African Shore"), by Guatemalan Rodrigo Rey Rosa²⁵.

Tangier appears here from the beginning as a movement-space, where at first, not the actual city, but a strip of coastline in the immediate vicinity of Tangier is placed in the foreground, thus steering the view to the specific topographical and geographical situation of the harbor city. In this way, a tension-field of contrasts between sea, land, and city arises at both the entrance to and the exit from the Strait of Gibraltar. For it is a raw, hard coast that offers no ideal grazing land for sheep: exposed just as much to the winds as to the ocean surf, with rocks that loom up against the onslaught of the forces of nature, and with people and animals who constantly seek to find shelter here. It is a world exposed to the currents of wind and water alike, placed at the utmost end of Africa and directly across from those lights that mark the southwestern tip of Europe. Even in the title, there is a certain reversal of the usual western perspective and expression. For Tangier looks upon history from the shore of Africa.

It is a raw, truly archaic land in which the first thing to appear is the figure of a young native shepherd rather than the so very international city of Tangier,

²⁵ A further connection between Tangier and Latin American literature is pointed out by Ingenschay 2014.

which we come to know only later on in the course of the novel. The figure of the shepherd comes to us as though from another time, from an early history, from the beginnings of a literature that in Mesopotamia created the figure, at first living among the beasts, of that shepherd Enkidu in the *Gilgamesh* epic who was to play such an important role in the process of civilization and in the relationship between city and countryside (see Maul 2005: 9–42).

The shepherd Hamsa, however, does not guard his flock in the Land Between the Rivers, but in that two-continent world in which Africa and Europe, Morocco and Spain lie opposite one another and represent the two Pillars of Hercules, the Spanish Ceuta and the British Gibraltar, the last remnants of the formerly powerful Spanish and British colonial empires. Again and again, even in just the first chapter, the remains of old colonial possessions of European powers show up and provide a view to a history of colonialism that admittedly, in the figure of the shepherd, gains a completely different historical (essentially pre- and early-historical) depth of field. We find ourselves at a positively archaic place of natural forces, but also an archaic place in terms of literature, of narrative: that of the shepherd and the flock.

The shepherd Hamsa presents without a doubt the most puzzling figure of this novel that – if we look at the foreword by Catalanian Pere Gimferrer – unfolds within the tension-field between clarity and puzzlement (Rey Rosa 1999: 9). Even in the very incipit of this text, the author, born in Guatemala in 1958, introduces us to the world of the shepherd, shaped by irrational, animistic imaginings, by sacrificial rites and amulets:

It was still dark when Hamsa got up, and the wind out of the east was whistling over the cliff face, rattling the branches and leaves like a thousand maracas. He could hear the waves crashing violently on the rocks at the foot of the cliff. (Rey Rosa 2013: 5)²⁶

Right at the start of the first of the total 55 short chapters, the force and constant motion on this coast – still in the night of the stories and of history, as it were – are present and have become the present. In the darkness before the gray of morning, nothing is visible at first: everything settles upon a landscape that can at first be recognized “only” as a soundscape, but which from the start is shaped by the force of the wind and the waves of the sea on the African shore of the *Estrecho*.

26 “Hamsa se levantó cuando todavía estaba oscuro y el viento del Este soplabla con fuerza para hacer sonar el follaje de los árboles como mil maracas y silbar entre las peñas del acantilado, al pie del cual se estrellaban violentamente las olas del mar” (Rey Rosa 1999: 17).

While the Strait of Gibraltar may be one of the most-traveled waterways in the world, the plot of the novel is not set in the lively atmosphere of the city of Tangier, populated by people from all different regions of the world, but rather, in an impassable place in nature where quite nearby, the rattle of Latin American maracas brings in a quasi-transareal world of sound. This Latin American soundscape not only prepares us for the Latin American protagonist who will only later be introduced, and not only provides us with important clues regarding the figure of the narrator of the text, it also points out to us that the landscape, at first emerging in darkness, depicts a landscape of theory (Ette 2013: 49–60) in which we can already recognize the key to all movements in the novel. In the sound of this landscape, if we go back to Jean-Luc Nancy's reflections on hearing, everything becomes presence and present, outside and inside all at once (Nancy 2010: 20–31). Tangier is thus, as already seen in Ibn Battuta, less a city-space than a movement-space that can neither be thought of nor understood without the entire coastal landscape and without its intercontinental setting.

A lamb from the shepherd's flock went missing the previous evening, and Hamsa sets out to search, whereby he must first clear a path through the brush and then past the ruins of the former "Spanish boating club" before he discovers the frightened, quaking animal at the foot of a cliff, "cornered between two boulders, splashed intermittently by the waves" (Rey Rosa 2013: 6)²⁷. It is the image of a life driven into a tight spot, a helpless creature in need of protection that can find no way out and plummets desperately into the sea. Hamsa succeeds just in time in pulling the lamb from the water and carrying the weakened animal back to the flock. The connections between human being and animal play a crucial role in the novel: in this relationship, living, surviving, and coexisting are (re)presented from a set of perspectives that are at once alienating and compressive²⁸.

The ocean, however, does not only stand for the natural forces that dominate this strip of coastline, at the same time, they also form the basis for those cultural forces that have transformed the ocean currents at the geographical dividing line between Africa and Europe into a mainline of those streams of traffic that connect this region both transoceanically and transcontinentally to the entire world. This does not mean that the harbor of Tangier – that is currently undergoing large-scale, modernized development between Tangier and Ceuta – could have access to all of these ship movements, but that these old movements, perpetuated in the

²⁷ In the original the "club náutico español" and "arrinconado entre dos peñas salpicadas intermitentemente por el reventar de las olas" (Rey Rosa 1999: 18).

²⁸ On the relevance of Animal Studies, see Meyer-Krentler 2013.

present and future, have created a complex vectorial landscape that cannot be understood as a static space.

Just as Europe's land is visible during the day and its lights at night, so too by day and night can the great ships be discerned on their way through the strait. Europe is ever-present – and also in those movements that have established themselves running across the ones already named. For under the cover of night come the smugglers, like Hamsa's uncle who brings from the opposite coast not only the knock-off Nike athletic shoes for the young shepherd (with which Hamsa can hardly bear to part), but also the dreams of a life of wealth, a life with big cars and beautiful blonde women: dreams that are, of course, also dreamed on the African side of the Strait of Gibraltar and which have lost none of their attraction in the 21st century.

The African coast is unthinkable without its European opposite coast – and vice versa: in their tension-field, transmediterranean and transatlantic movements merge with one another. Spanish-occupied Ceuta, like British-occupied Gibraltar, bears witness to the still-high geostrategic importance of all of these positions and movements that lie in the power calculations of the great (former) European colonial powers. Time and again, this landscape of theory is worked into the novel, as “from a distance, the Djebel Musa, the pale Pillar of Hercules, dashed upon the African shore” becomes as visible as the white ships “that move off in the direction of Gibraltar, leaving a long, cream-colored wake behind them” (Rey Rosa 2013: 64)²⁹. As it is on the charts of the strait, the surface of the sea is densely criss-crossed with the routes of ships.

The Guatemalan author who, during his flight from the violence in his homeland and in other wide regions of Central America, had found refuge in Morocco and occupied himself intensively with the country's history, constructs from the 55 short, discontinuous chapters of his novel a story that overlays the various phases of the history of this border region between the oceans, between the continents, and between the empires, in a manner both subtle and subversive. In the vision of Tangier and its raw, rugged surroundings, the novel introduces, from the first mention of the “Spanish boating club”, the expansion of Spanish, Portuguese, French, or British colonialism; it points to the old Roman roads on which the lions captured in North Africa were transported by thousands to the arenas of the empire; it mentions the ships upon which thousands of Moroccans, thousands of Africans try their luck at getting to the Promised Land of the European coast on the other side. These are not yet the floods of refugees of our 21st century, and yet these blend in almost seamlessly with the image of migrations sketched out in *La orilla africana* in 1999, except for the fact that it is long since not just

29 “desde donde podía verse, en la lejanía, el Djebel Musa, la pálida columna de Hércules derumbada sobre la orilla africana” (Rey Rosa 1999: 61).

the coast of Northern Morocco, but the “African coast” in general from which the migrants and refugees are setting out in the direction of the North.

The novel follows all of these movements, creating a complex and sometimes confusing image of movement which cannot leave out the tourists, nomads, migrants, and refugees from Europe, the USA, or Latin America. We are looking at a highly vectorized space here where beneath current movements, earlier movements can be seen and sensed now, but are also stored away for the future. From the beginning, the space of Tangier is staged from a wide variety of perspectives as a transareal motion-landscape of languages and cultures, of forms of life and norms of life, of spaces and of dreams (Ortiz Wallner 2008: 247). Tangier becomes a place in which the transareal may be localized, as it were, between worlds.

This transareality by no mean restricts itself to the north-south relationship between Africa and Europe. The country on the Strait is not only connected to the whole world by sea, but also, thanks to the technology of flight, by air. It is thus not surprising that it is not a citizen of the United States but a South American that the Central American author leads to Tangier, indeed having him become virtually addicted to this place of movement. Along with the Moroccan Hamsa and the young Frenchwoman Julie, who lives with the wealthy Madame Choiseul in an idyllic neighborhood where Hamsa’s grandparents must provide for themselves in their old age, this Colombian traveler who has supposedly lost his passport is the third central figure, completing the triangular configuration, not only of love that is hoped for or longed for, but also that of North Africa, South America, and Western Europe. For all of them but Hamsa, Tangier is transit. A configuration by chance, certainly, but not by chance transareal.

The coming together of these three figures is just as transitory as the hotels and flophouses in which the Colombian spends his time, having lost not only his passport, but his previous life and life’s goal too. His experiences with Moroccan prostitutes, for whose services he possessed enough money at first, form an important component of that “Trans(it)Area”³⁰ in which the protagonists meet before they become lost once more to one another’s arms, eyes, and minds: Tangier is transit.

So the time in this movement-space is also always deferred time: a time that is shaped by motions that bring things together, but then again, by motions that pull things apart, a time that knows no simple, continuous, all-connecting time-reckoning. At the end of a dialog with Julie about the presence of antiquity and its transmediterranean connections, the Colombian turns around and looks down from above toward the West, the *Occidente*: “where the sea opened”³¹ and he

³⁰ See Ette/Mackenbach/Müller/Ortiz Wallner 2011.

³¹ In the original: “donde se abría el mar” (Rey Rosa 1999: 124).

becomes certain of the fact that he could be enjoying this view across the sea and across times for the last time (Rey Rosa 2013: 103). The sea is the movement-surface that is capable of establishing all transareal connections, but of separating them again as well. Only the transit lasts.

Consequently, the affair that connects the young Frenchwoman to the South American – in whose hands she first sees that injured owl by which she is fascinated from that point on – is only of short duration: barely longer than their shared use of soft drugs in the Colombian's seedy hotel room. The idyll that (from the European perspective) makes reference to the mythical time of Tangier as well as to the histories of both Tangier and Colombia in connection with the drug trade is quickly over. As in the case of Severo Sarduy, soft drugs and soft seductions, *drogue* and *drague* combine with one another in a "DR(A/O)GUE" (Sarduy 1992: 87). Tangier offers no perspectives on the future to this dissimilar couple whom chance has led to one another for a short time, for in this atmosphere more than perhaps anywhere else, it is opportunity that creates love. Rodrigo Rey Rosa's novel knows about myth, brings it up, but then parts from it again – none of the protagonists of *La orilla africana* finds great freedom therein.

As a Trans(it)Area, Tangier is the space of the traveler – and at the same time, the space of fictions. *A beau mentir qui vient de loin*. In a space in which stories swirl about, in which the British occupy a rock that still bears the name of its Arab conqueror while the return of this rock is demanded by those Spanish who, for their part, continue to occupy the other Pillar of Hercules on the African shore, lasting borders are neither stable nor static. The same holds true with the borders between fact and fiction, between creative writing and truth, between reading and living. How could they be? These are facts in transit, temporary truths, life from what has been read. The books that lie ignored all about the floor in the Colombian's hotel room seem not to have been without a diffuse effect upon him. For fictions and autofictions have long since taken possession of his imaginary world:

He didn't like to lie but sometimes the truth about himself seemed so unacceptable that he let himself, always thinking he'd change things later so the fiction would match the reality. He *could* have been single, though in the eyes of the law he was married – since he had lived several years with his girlfriend – just as he could have been something other than an ordinary tourist with a mislaid passport. (Rey Rosa 2013: 80)³²

32 "No le gustaba mentir pero a veces la verdad acerca de sí mismo le parecía inaceptable y entonces se lo permitía, siempre con la intención de cambiar las cosas para que sus ficciones llegaran a coincidir con la realidad. Podía no estar casado, como lo estaba de hecho, ni ser un simple turista con el pasaporte extraviado" (Rey Rosa 1999: 100).

The truth of the lies and the lied-about truths that become lies for life, life-lies, form an inextricable textuality. Life in Tangier cannot be aligned with life elsewhere, with his former work, for instance, or with his current wife in Colombia. Facts and fictions can no longer be kept neatly separate: in Tangier, everything is in transit. Even the glance in the mirror, which has helped many characters in novels before him to become aware of themselves, brings no clarity, but only reflection. Reflected in the face of the living there is a skull of death, just as Death ceaselessly grins at life.

Fictions had long since took possession of his life; bad fictions certainly, which he does not know how to use to his benefit, and which bring no sort of clarity to his life. Tangier has obviously thrown him out of his old life, but without hurling him into a new one: nothing to be expected, no promise for the future becomes apparent. Even when the old lies begin to blur on the western horizon: Tangier is only a progression of ever-worsening hotel rooms, and thus transit-spaces that open out only upon new transit-spaces.

And yet, where no firm point of orientation can be established in the realm between persons, an important significance finally comes to the human-animal relationship, which was introduced from the beginning between shepherd and flock. Only to the captured and inexpensively purchased owl does the Colombian seem to be faithful, to care for lovingly – even when he is thrown out of the hotel because of the bird. The owl has long since become that object of human desire, the pursuit of which connects Hamsa, Julie, and the Colombian to one another, but at the same time separates them. For the owl has powers by which everyone seeks to profit, though in very different ways. The Moroccan novel diegesis with its North African-South American-Western European relationality forms not only a transit-area, but also a TransArea in which the paths of the protagonists, but also their languages and cultures, their habits and convictions and religious beliefs incessantly intersect and cross(out). Around every street name, every street in Tangier, other streets, other names, other languages, and other cultures emerge. The urban space of Tangier proves to be a multilingual and multicultural mobile that is not only in constant motion, but must be viewed from mobile, moving perspectives.

The multilogical openness of Tangier includes not only the greatly varying European or American origins, but also constantly brings Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religious beliefs and imaginings into uninterrupted communication. Every object, every habit, every history may be viewed from the greatest variety of perspectives, differently in every instance, without ever transforming into a logic to which everything is beholden. The archaic and the animistic are just as present here as are agnosticism and orthodoxy. The city thus becomes a whole world, *urbi et orbi*, and allows the transit to become a fractal, as it were, a *modèle réduit* of a world that not only assembles itself here, but also comes

apart. Convivence rests here upon contingency. Consequently, the figures of the novel turn into configurations whose coexistence always remains precarious and discontinuous. In this way, the novel develops a transitory convivence that in its discontinuous structure of 55 short chapters submits to no single logic. At the same time, as in Roland Barthes' *Incidents* everything runs up against the limits of that which one can best call constellations of violence. This violence, which runs through the novel from the beginning, shapes the convivence that nonetheless allows the many logics to exist side by side. The convivence thus remains precarious, resting on a deferred time about which no one can say how long its reckoning of time might still exist – until new powers, and with them, new forms of violence appear on the horizon. Tangier lies on the African side of occidental history, in the western region of the Orient, on the Atlantic side of the Mediterranean: the city obliges us to distance ourselves from, and take leave of, any sort of central perspective.

Rodrigo Rey Rosa's novel stresses again and again temporary, transitory movements: not only the hotel rooms, but every type of accessway, every type of passage of a temporary nature, such as the taxi-rides that offer mobile transit-spaces in which new but temporally and spatially limited encounters time and again take place and can be experienced. Tangier Taxi: the short Chapter XXXVII, limited to a scant page, linguistically records such a trip, one of those encounters that obviously begins in Arabic. There, the taxi driver asks his new customer:

Tú, ¿eres marroquí? / —No. / —Tunecino? / —no. / —Egipcio? / —No. / —¿De dónde eres? / —De Colombia. / —¿Pero hablan árabe en Colombia? / —No. Español. / —Aquí también hablamos español —dijo el taxista en español tangerino—. ¿Cómo es la vida en tu país? / —Más o menos como aquí. / —Horrible, entonces. / —Es verdad. (Rey Rosa 1999: 109)³³

It is a short, staccato-like dialog in which national affiliations and national languages no longer establish identities, but at best indicate possible origins. The taxi driver does not succeed in guessing the origin of his customer. Does the Latin American protagonist come from that important and influential group of immigrants that, primarily since the end of the 19th century, fled from the civil wars in the Near East and above all from Lebanon to the safety of Colombia's Caribbean coast, but also to Central America and Chile? The Arab-American connections³⁴ evoked in this passage, that have a long tradition and are introduced only

³³ I will refrain here from including a translation of the failed attempts of the taxi driver to guess the nationality of his customer.

³⁴ C.f. Ette/Pannekewick 2008.

in passing, clearly indicate living conditions under which a life in Morocco or in Colombia appears equally terrible. Tangier is staged as a transareal city, but is no longer presented as a myth; instead, it is demythologized. Tangier Transit: the myth of Tangier seems here to have come to an end: “Horrible, entonces” – as terrible as anywhere else.

The novel therefore does not end in Tangier, but returns to the rocky coastal region at the exit of the Strait of Gibraltar. The three protagonists are connected, as mentioned above, by an animal to which are attributed magical powers and thus vital forces: the large owl, fascinating to all, which as a captive creature is constantly changing owners and therefore, as a trapped animal like the desperate lamb, finds itself in a state of profound dependence upon human beings. After Hamsa’s ultimately failed attempt to sleep with the Frenchwoman Julie, who demands the release of the owl Hamsa has stolen as the price for sleeping with him, it will be the flight of the now-healed owl into freedom that brings the Guatemalan author’s novel to an end that is equally impressive and ambiguous. This fascinating narrative text that began before the break of dawn thus comes to the end of the final chapter after sundown, with the flight of the nameless owl over that very same rugged area where the action of the novel had begun:

The owl launched itself into the emptiness and flew with the wind toward the light, dying now where the earth ended and there was only sea. It retraced its flight past the shepherd’s hut, and, from on high, it could see the woman, who had put on her slippers and was walking hurriedly along the strip of grass bordering the asphalt road between the walls. The owl flew up as far as the summit and saw, in the distance, the glassy lights that lit up the hills, covered in a mantle of white houses fading into the folds of the parched and fissured countryside. It dipped down then, flying over the treetops toward a large abandoned house in the middle of a thick grove. It flew in through a window, greeted by the cries of the birds nesting there. It crossed through the house, flying from room to room through the hallways until it found an attic, with some roof tiles missing, the floorboards broken or completely rotten and a convenient cleft in the rough, dark wall. (Rey Rosa 2013: 135)³⁵

35 “Se lanzó al vacío y voló con el viento hacia la luz que moría donde terminaba la tierra y sólo estaba el mar. Remontó el vuelo al pasar sobre el cobertizo del pastor, y, desde lo alto, alcanzó a ver a la mujer, que ya se había calzado y andaba de prisa por el filete de hierba que bordeaba el camino asfaltado entre los muros. Se elevó hasta la cumbre del monte y vio, en la distancia, las luces vidriosas que iluminaban las colinas cubiertas por un manto de casa blancas que se perdían entre los pliegues del campo sediento y agrietado. Bajó para volar sobre las copas de los árboles hacia una casona abandonada en medio de un bosque tupido. Entró por una ventana y fue recibida por los gritos de los pájaros que ya anidaban allí. Recurrió la casona volando de cuarto en cuarto por los pasillos hasta que encontró una hendidura conveniente en la pared áspera y oscura de un desván, donde faltaban algunas tejas y las tablas del piso estaban rotas o completamente podridas” (Rey Rosa 1999: 157).

The flight of the bird again creates, *from movement*, that is, from no fixed perspective, that space where the protagonists of *La orilla africana* came together, found one another, then lost one another again. In the closing section of the novel, the omnipresence of a nature that is ill-treated but unimpressed by humanity makes Tangier disappear on the horizon once more. As at the beginning, the ruins of human buildings, of human coexistence, are also recognizable at the end of the narrative, but are now becoming the homes of animals that populate a dilapidated human past.

To this degree, it is the movements of animals that set the beginning and end points of the novel. But it is hardly likely that the owl will allow himself to be captured a second time by human hands. From the air, it sees for the last time the quickly departing Julie, who was ready to have sex with Hamsa the shepherd, had not the dimensions of his circumcised member (the preparation he was using seems to have been effective) and a purulent spot on his testicles (which was zoomed in on, as in the earlier instance with the young woman's inverted nipples) induced her to take flight herself (Rey Rosa 1999: 21, 103). The owl, for whose freedom she was going to give herself over, is free again; the humans are as little capable of living in peace with it as they are with one another. The Colombian, the Moroccan, and finally the Frenchwoman disappear from the novel's sightline. The story after the story might well begin.

Even if the masculine potency of the shepherd may remind us of Enkidu from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and might be a late legacy of old and archaic history/-ies, what is crucial is that it never comes to a union of the young woman with Hamsa or to his integration into an urban civilization, even if the young Moroccan is thoroughly enthusiastic about his imitation Nikes and dreams of blonde women in his own sports car. Unlike the ancient mythic figure Enkidu, who is literally pulled into the bed of an urban civilization by the beautiful prostitute Shamhat (Maul 2005: 52), Hamsa does not move into the city, but stays outside of its gates. And unlike the protagonists of the novel, who due to their inner turmoil finally end up as beings with no fixed abode and lose themselves, as it were, in the transit-space of their paths, it is only the bird, the owl, who is able to find a house and make for itself a home within a community of birds of many kinds.

In the figure of the owl, that wisdom that in the West has been attached since ancient times to its nightly flight appears once again in Rodrigo Rey Rosa's novel. While the attempts of all of the protagonists to develop some knowledge regarding the possibilities of coexistence meet with failure, and while the various woman characters, again differently from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, do not succeed in freeing the men and themselves by the wit of deception from the weight of their emotional baggage and leading them to the wonders of desire, at the end of this novel of short chapters, a world comes together in the flight of the owl; a world that in its transareal fragmentary character remains – as Clifford Geertz put it a few years beforehand – a “world in pieces” (Geertz 1998: 91–117).

In a long tradition carried on by Rodrigo Rey Rosa, the world thus continues to be held together by the movements of a bird, much in the way that a parrot in Alexander von Humboldt's travel work is the last speaker of the language of the extinct Atures, (see Humboldt 1986: 192, 210) in the way that Mário de Andrade elevates this Humboldtian parrot to a truly continental greatness at the end of *Macunaíma* (Andrade 1998), in the way Max Aub can only view the world of the *univers concentrationnaire* from the perspective of a raven in his *Manuscrito Cuervo* (Aub 1999), or in the way that, in Cécile Waijsbrot's *Mémorial* (Waijsbrot 2005), a cold and frozen world may still be captured in the silhouette, the minimal movements, and the gaze of a snowy owl. That which has been destroyed and that which has gone missing is packed into the gaze of a bird; for in most cases, the great efforts of human beings to bring about a nonviolent coexistence between people of different heritages, of different cultures, and of different faiths do not avail them in the aforementioned works. Only from the bird's eye view does everything terrestrially disjointed fit together from out of movement.

With his novel *The African Shore*, the Guatemalan writer has nonetheless not given up on the attempt to grasp a still complete world, with all of its contrasts, its conflicts, and its fractures, within a narrative rhythm that in his short chapters of mostly one to five pages manages to bundle fractally a totality of origins and diversities. The diegesis of his TransArea Morocco, where the Guatemalan author himself spent several years in self-imposed "exile", and the transareal structuring that includes differing geographical and cultural areas give rise in this text to an experimental space in which the limits of *ZusammenLebensWissen*, of knowledge for living together, are examined and tested as if in an experimental set-up. The myth of Tangier is meanwhile discreetly present, but distinctly disappears at the end behind the horizon of history.

It is in any case no coincidence that Rodrigo Rey Rosa, the author from Central America, chose for his experimental-protocol-as-diegesis not the Americas' narrow neck of land, but the narrow ocean strait between Africa and Europe – perhaps a late reflex to the fact that in the earliest maps of the Caribbean and Central America, the middle of the continent is sometimes depicted as an isthmus, but also occasionally as a strait. The alternating cartographic representations are probably due to the fact that the Spanish term "estrecho" can stand for either. But where might this "breakthrough" be set today? With his literature without a fixed abode, Rey Rosa succeeds in penetrating the frequent captivity in Central American literature with an American diegesis "of its own", in order to create anew a supposedly "foreign" spatiotemporality with the help of transareal movements. From the first sentence to the last, movements form a highly vectorized space in which the old movements that have crossed North Africa for millennia can still be found in the movements of the protagonists – for not without a reason is the young Julie a student of archaeology and therefore educated in finding the

streets of yesterday beneath the streets of today, in detecting the urban designs of yesterday under the city structures of today. And yet the flight of the owl points to a dimension that transcends the time of the human being and also leaves the history of Tangier, perpendicular to the times, perpendicular to the power structures, as still easily visible ruins behind it.

Consequently, the desire of the novel to create a totality of things that are learned about, invented, and experienced (the German *das Erfahrene*, *das Erfundene*, and *das Erlebte*) remains open in a radical way in the flight of the owl. In an old house, and thus in just that region that humans built up as a home and as the place of their coexistence, the owl – who does not inhabit the day, like the humans, but the night – finds its new residence. After all of the centuries of plundering, raids, and both colonial and post-colonial exploitation, the novel, which began with the fear of a lost animal, gives the wisdom and vital force of the owl the final word. For it seems to succeed in peacefully coexisting under one roof with birds of other sizes, other colors, and other origins. Is this a new Tangier – a Tangier of the animals? Or does this announce a new time-reckoning that begins *after* Tangier? Captive and bound, the owl had connected the lives of the three protagonists to one another. When its shackles were loosed and it took its flight to freedom, the bonds that connected these people in transit also fell away. From this point on, nothing connects the directions of these people's lives – except a nomadic existence in a transareal transit that finds in the Strait of Gibraltar its mobile *mise en abyme*. Tangier is transit, and thus its mythos, however much it might linger, is also transitory. In the awareness of this transit, however, there also appears that challenge that Tangier represents, from Ibn Battuta to Roland Barthes and Severo Sarduy, and on to Rodrigo Rey Rosa: the challenge to write in the literatures of the world, beyond the still-dominant spatial history, a movement-history that successfully brings about a new, mobile world-consciousness based on movements and migrations.

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