

Agnieszka H. Hudzik, Joanna M. Moszczyńska,
Jorge Estrada and Patricia A. Gwozdz

Introduction

I From Geopolitical Negotiations to Elective Affinities in Literature

Once upon a time, the distant regions of Latin America and East-Central Europe – each attracted by the forces of neighboring empires and wrapped up in various geographical considerations – developed an alliance beyond transatlantic and political borders in spite of their relative isolation from each other. This transregional exchange might sound like a fairytale if we analyze cultural exchanges with a sole focus on the Western European discourses with which both regions are so deeply engaged. However, there are other, more subtle dots to connect if we are to discover more finely spun entanglements. For instance, looking back at the mass migration processes that took place in the 19th century,¹ we can identify early cultural exchanges that fostered new dynamics between far-apart countries, comingled deep-seated national identities, and renewed the past, paving the way for future family constellations and generations.² From discussions of private family matters to the development of political strategies, this wide range of social exchanges laid the groundwork for a network which was strengthened by transregional intellectuals, writers, artists, and journalists, and for reflections on a shared history as well as a transcultural movement connecting Eastern and Southern narratives.

Since then, a great deal of work has been done to make the history of these entanglements visible.³ Shortly after World War II, a transregional affinity between Central European and Latin American literatures was already being pointed out by Milan Kundera, who saw “a bridge – silvery, light, quivering, shimmering – formed like a rainbow over the centuries between my little Central Europe and the im-

1 See Blanca Sánchez-Alonso: The Age of Mass Migration in Latin America. In: *The Economic History Review* 72, 1 (2019), p. 3–31.

2 See Mihaela Robila: *Eastern Europe Immigrant Families*. New York: Taylor & Francis 2013.

3 For a critical discussion of the term, see Wolf Lepenies (ed.): *Entangled Histories and Negotiated Universals: Centers and Peripheries in a Changing World*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 2003, as well as Shalini Randeria: Geteilte Geschichte und verwobene Moderne. In: Norbert Jeggelka/Hanna Leitgeb/Jörn Rüsen (eds.): *Zukunftsentwürfe: Ideen für eine Kultur der Veränderung*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 1999, p. 87–96.

mense Latin America.”⁴ His understanding of Central Europe is based on the juxtaposition with Russia – a perspective which should also be viewed with critical caution – in the context of the debates on the reconstruction of the center of Europe in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵ Kundera draws his readers’ attention to the new novelistic style of the 20th century from Central Europe, brought forward by writers like Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch and Witold Gombrowicz. They were later joined by Latin American writers such as Juan Rulfo, Alejo Carpentier, Ernesto Sábato and Carlos Fuentes. These directions of aesthetic innovation from both hemispheres were connected by the “historical memory of the Baroque, which makes a writer hypersensitive to the seductions of the fantastical, magical, oneiric imagination.”⁶ Kundera, however, was not interested in any theory of influence or a history of the novel in a linear sense. According to him, literature arises from a network of complicated connections which cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional order of influence or a mere play of intertextuality.⁷

When reading Kundera’s essay on the tragedy of Central Europe, first published in November 1983 in the magazine *Le Débat*, and Gabriel García Márquez’s 1982 Nobel Prize speech in parallel, the similarities in the way they argue and assess the political situation are unmistakable. García Márquez also speaks of oppression, plundering and intellectual abandonment, meaning incomprehension on the part of Western Europe – of the “loneliness of Latin America,” which he made the

4 Milan Kundera: *The Curtain: Essays*. Transl. by Linda Asher. Faber & Faber 2020 (ebook).

5 Kundera is not alone in this endeavor; consider the writings of other Central European authors of the time, such as György Konrád, Václav Havel or Czesław Miłosz. External powers then divided Central Europe with the Iron Curtain, destroying the historically developed polycentric unity. As a result, Central Europe gradually disappeared from the map of the West and, according to Kundera’s bitter accusation, was forgotten, especially by Western European intellectuals. For more on Kundera’s concept of Central Europe, see Leonidas Donskis (ed.): *Yet Another Europe after 1984: Rethinking Milan Kundera and the Idea of Central Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi 2012.

6 Milan Kundera: *Encounter: Essays*. Transl. by Linda Asher. Faber & Faber 2020 (ebook).

7 Kundera’s artistic intuition to connect the two geopolitical and geo poetic spaces can be classified historically and is based on his personal contacts, see Jasper Vervaeke: Un puente plateado. Kundera, Fuentes, García Márquez y Cortázar en 1968. *Romaneske (Vlaamse Oud-Romanisten Kring; Vereniging van Leuvense Romanisten)* 1 (2018), p. 79–86. The thesis of literary connections between East-Central Europe and Latin America runs consistently through Kundera’s essays and also appears in the statements of his friend Carlos Fuentes. Although it is linked to political power relations during the Cold War, it is not only cultivated by the aforementioned writers. It can be understood not only as a political, but above all as an aesthetic manifesto that hints at a complex range of themes and opens up further perspectives on transcultural literary interdependencies. More about that in Agnieszka Hudzik: Mitteleuropäische und lateinamerikanische Literaturen: Brücken und Verflechtungen. In: *Philologie im Netz* 92 (2021), p. 70–73.

main theme of *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1967).⁸ For both writers, literature, especially the novel, becomes a refuge for the experiences of the individual beyond imposed political or national attributions, for their perception of themselves and the world; it becomes an “intensifying moment of contradictions,”⁹ a new home for the lonely, the forgotten, the misunderstood.

To revive the disrupted transatlantic dialogue between the regions thematized by Milan Kundera and Gabriel García Márquez, the volume *Elective Affinities. Rethinking Entanglements between Latin America and East-Central Europe* elaborates on the intellectual, cultural and literary links between the areas, ranging from the migrations of the 19th century and travel literature of the 20th century to contemporary global imaginaries. These links are always embedded in geopolitical discourses and factor into negotiations around key concepts such as “post-imperial,” “marginal,” or “peripheral,” all of which can receive a particularly critical examination in literature.¹⁰ This volume aims at mapping the intertextual and transcultural connections between East-Central Europe and Latin

⁸ Milan Kundera: The Tragedy of Central Europe (1984). In: Yoeri Albrecht/Mathieu Segers (eds.): *ReThinking Europe: Thinking Europe: Thoughts on Europe: Past, Present and Future*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2016, p. 191–214. Gabriel García Márquez: The Solitude of Latin America. Nobel Lecture, December 8, 1982. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1982/marquez/lecture/> [December 5, 2023]. García Márquez was familiar with the Eastern Bloc, see his travel reportages *De viaje por los países socialistas. 90 días en la ‘Cortina de Hierro’*. Cali: Ediciones Macondo 1978.

⁹ See Julio Prieto: *La escritura errante: ilegibilidad y políticas del estilo en Latinoamérica*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert 2016, p. 13–47.

¹⁰ Gesine Drews-Sylla: Slavistik. In: Dirk Götsche et al. (ed.): *Handbuch: Postkolonialismus und Literatur*. Stuttgart: Metzler 2017, p. 75–78. Gisela Febel/Paulo de Medeiros: Romanistik. In: Dirk Götsche et al. (ed.): *Handbuch: Postkolonialismus und Literatur*, p. 67–68. For a detailed analysis of Eastern European Literatures in this context, see also Anita Starosta: *Form and Instability: Eastern Europe, Literature, Postimperial Difference*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern UP 2015. While postcolonial theories in the context of Latin American Studies are very common (see Robin W. Fiddian: *Postcolonial Perspectives on the Cultures of Latin America and Lusophone Africa*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2000. Mabel Moraña et al. (eds.): *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Durham, London: Duke University Press 2008), in East European Studies they are still discussed very critically, see the chapter “A Controversial Paradigm: Postcolonialism in East-Central Europe” in Cristina Sandru: *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of Post-1945 East-Central European Culture*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2012, p. 14–169, as well as in the studies of Klavdia Smola/Dirk Uffelmann (eds.): *Postcolonial Slavic Literatures after Communism*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang 2016, and Alfred Sproede/Mirja Lecke: Der Weg der postcolonial studies nach und in Osteuropa: Polen, Litauen, Russland. In: Diehlind Hüchtker/Alfrun Kliems (eds.): *Überbringen – Überformen – Überblenden. Theorietransfer im 20. Jahrhundert*. Köln: Böhlau 2011, p. 27–67. See also Dirk Uffelmann’s chapter *Postcolonial Studies: Processes of Appropriation and Axiological Controversies* in the latest monumental volume

America, as well as identifying aesthetic and literary-historical lines of contact and movement between these two parts of the world. These elective affinities are a form of negotiation for recognition and of the way in which literary traditions position themselves within the universalized view of world literature.¹¹

II Interdisciplinary Approach: From Political Studies to Comparative Literature

The links between East-Central Europe and Latin America are less researched in terms of literature than in the fields of political science and international relations in German, or in art history, sociology,¹² philosophy and the history of ideas – mainly in English.¹³ In the literary field, studies pertaining to these regions are dominated by cases of German, Austrian or East-Central European writers in exile in Latin America,¹⁴ or, conversely, Latin American writers in Europe – and primarily in Western European countries.¹⁵ Other possible links such as the

Central and Eastern European Literary Theory and the West. Ed. by Michał Mrugalski/Schamma Schahadat/Irina Wutsdorff. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2023, p. 807–820.

11 For a critical discussion of the term “world literature” see Ottmar Ette: *Literatures of the World. Beyond World Literature*. Leiden: Brill 2021, as well as his work on global literary history and TransArea Studies, Ottmar Ette: *TransArea. A Literary History of Globalization*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2016. It should also be mentioned that the term “Weltliteratur” used by Goethe was already invented as a concept *avant la lettre* in early modern times. See the discussion in Patricia A. Gwoźdz, Markus Lenz: *Literaturen der Welt. Zugänge, Modelle, Analysen eines Konzepts im Übergang*. Heidelberg: Winter 2018. See also for a critique of mapping world literature as a kind of imperial cultural technique of European actors in early modern times Theo D’haen: *World Literature in an Age of Geopolitics*. Leiden, Boston: Brill 2021, p. 1–11.

12 Immanuel Wallerstein: The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis. In: *The Essential Wallerstein*. New York: The New Press 2000, p. 71–105.

13 Especially the works of Eugeniusz Górska should be mentioned here as an early, outstanding comparative study about the entangled history of concepts in philosophy in Latin America and Eastern Europe: Eugeniusz Górska: *Dependencia y originalidad de la filosofía en Latinoamérica y en la Europa del Este*. México: Univ. Nac. Autónoma de México 1994. Eugeniusz Górska (ed.): *Latin America and East Central Europe: studies in the history of ideas/America Latina y Europa Centro-Oriental*. Warszawa: CESLA 2001.

14 Wolfgang Kießling: *Exil in Lateinamerika*. Leipzig: Reclam 1984, and Eva Behring/Alfrun Kliems/Hans-Christian Trepte (eds.): *Grundbegriffe und Autoren ostmitteleuropäischer Exilliteraturen 1945–1989: ein Beitrag zur Systematisierung und Typologisierung*. Stuttgart: Steiner 2004, p. 126–131.

15 See Karl Kohut: *Die spanische und lateinamerikanische Literatur im französischen Exil*. München: Minerva-Publ 1984, and Susanne Klengel: *Die Rückeroberung der Kultur. Lateinamerikani-*

more broadly understood literary-aesthetic exchange are largely approached in theories of influence or reception history. Heavily reliant on the criterion of statehood, these contributions tend to reproduce political classifications¹⁶ and seldom offer a synopsis or overview of the complex connections between the two regions.¹⁷ We would like to broaden this view. Many treatises focusing on both East-Central Europe and Latin America separately often adopt postcolonial perspectives and test their applicability to the two post-imperial spaces in different ways, but rarely search for overlaps and commonalities between them. With this publication, we wish to take a first step towards addressing these gaps and steer away from the assumption that Western Europe and its categorizations always determine cultural exchange. To challenge this Eurocentric view, we propose reflecting on the networks that arise as a result of centrifugal mobilities and the construction of artistic and theoretical affinities. We aim to rethink the premises of literary studies by pointing out the entanglements between East-Central Europe and Latin America without the categories of periphery and center. Instead, we seek to unearth poly- or ex-centric dialogues, networks, and interweavings, and to approach literary studies with preconditions in mind that are diversely assembled, and not simply preordained.

This implies delving into the foundations of comparative studies. Thanks to the unique transareal comparative perspective, this publication illuminates underrepresented research perspectives. Many renovations remain to be undertaken throughout this discipline, which must adapt its approach to current phenomena such as globalization, migration, mobility, and digitalization. Comparative literature can no longer limit itself to thinking in terms of major regional philologies and its role as a mediator between them. The transareal comparison of literatures – including lesser-known languages and literatures of the Global South – and the focus on transcultural, non-Eurocentric interdependencies both correspond to the challenges of today's mediatized world and are necessary in order for the discipline to do justice to planetary tendencies. In this way, the discipline can prove its social relevance and promote a transareal approach, which expands the literary canon in Western Europe

sche Intellektuelle und das Europa der Nachkriegsjahre (1945–1952). Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2011.

¹⁶ For example, Mónika Szente-Varga (ed.): *Latin America and Hungary cultural ties/América Latina y Hungría contactos culturales*. Budapest: Dialóg Campus 2020.

¹⁷ In some contributions, the regions are brought together but considered separately, see Janett Reinstädler/Oleksandr Pronkevich (eds.): *(Audio-)Visual Arts and Trauma – from the East to the West*. Saarbrücken: universaar 2018.

to include other languages, regions, and their interrelationships so as to develop a new sensitivity for geopolitical diversity.¹⁸

On the one hand, our perspective is linked to a change of perspective in Eastern European research, “the move from transnational to transregional connections”¹⁹ and the investigation of the relationships between the postcolonial and the postsocialist.²⁰ On the other hand, we would like to reconstruct interconnections and intellectual networks that the research has thus far examined largely in a general and undifferentiated manner from the perspective of global history, e.g. with regard to the Soviet Union, but without taking into account the complex situation in the Eastern Bloc.²¹ Therefore, we speak of East-Central Europe to put Kundera’s view up for discussion and to try to reconfigure a geo-poetical region with a complex history that resonates to this day. Kundera describes this history as follows: “As a result, three fundamental situations developed in Europe after the war: that of Western Europe, that of Eastern Europe, and, most complicated, that of the part of Europe situated geographically in the center – culturally in the West and politically in the East.”²² Through this differentiation, we would like to sharpen the image of (colonial) dependencies within the European continent. This perspective is well known in the history of intellectual networks,²³ art his-

¹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press 2003.

¹⁹ Katja Castryck-Naumann: Introduction: Moving from Transnational to Transregional Connections? East-Central Europe in Global Contexts. *Transregional Connections in the History of East-Central Europe*. Hg. Katja Castryck-Naumann. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2021. Katja Castryck-Naumann/Torsten Loschke/Steffi Marung/Matthias Middell (eds.): *In Search of Other Worlds. Essays towards a Cross-Regional History of Area Studies*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag 2019. Chris Saunders/Helder Adegar Fonseca/Lena Dallywater (eds.): *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2023. Natalia Telepneva: *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 2022.

²⁰ Sharad Chari/Katherine Verdery: Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War. In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, 1 (2009), p. 6–34.

²¹ Tobias Rupprecht: *Soviet Internationalism After Stalin: Interaction and Exchange Between the USSR and Latin America During the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2015. Mirko Petersen: *Geopolitische Imaginarien. Diskursive Konstruktionen der Sowjetunion im peronistischen Argentinien (1943–1955)*. Bielefeld: Transcript 2018.

²² Milan Kundera: The Tragedy of Central Europe (1984), p. 192.

²³ The works by Michal Zourek are exemplary in this context. Michal Zourek: *Checoslovaquia y el Cono Sur, 1945–1989: Relaciones políticas, económicas y culturales durante la Guerra Fría*. Universidad Carolina de Praga: Editorial Karolinum 2014. Michal Zourek: *Československo očima latinskoamerických intelektuálů 1947–1959*. Praha: Runa 2018. See also an interview with Zourek for the online magazin *Global Voices* with archival photographs of Latin American and Central Euro-

tory,²⁴ and in the social sciences²⁵ – but not in the study of literary and cultural connections.²⁶ The case of Latin America, on the other hand, presents a complexity that has been recognized by its 19th- and 20th-century intellectuals, whose projects of inventing and reinventing the region are still the subject of debates among Latin American scholars both nationally and internationally. Often referred to as the laboratory of Modernity, José Martí's *Nuestra América* is a geopoetical region whose history is complex with entangled violence and transculturation, explorative economies and conviviality, all of which continue to resonate to this day.²⁷

With these general goals in mind, a comparative compilation of literatures from the 20th century provides an extensive field of research and a wide range of topics, including the direct cultural contact resulting from exile, migration and travel, as well as aesthetic-poetological commonalities. However, a burdensome obstacle to exploring the hybrid textual relationships and transcultural interdependencies between East-Central Europe and Latin America lies in the linguistic heterogeneity of the two regions. In turning to human geography, we can bypass the impossibility of defining space by looking to human practice. The geographer and social theorist David Harvey suggests that rather than searching in vain for a definition of space, it is more productive to explore how different human practices produce and harness different concepts of space.²⁸ This perspective can be

pean writers; Filip Noubel: During the Cold War, Latin American intellectuals found solace in communist Prague, <https://globalvoices.org/2020/11/21/the-story-of-how-latin-american-intellectuals-found-solace-in-communist-prague/> [December 5, 2023].

24 See the issue of the magazine *ARTMargins* with the title *Artists' Networks in Eastern Europe and Latin America* edited by Klara Kemp-Welch/Cristina Freire (2012, Vol. 1, No. 2–3).

25 Estela Schindel/Gabriel Gatti (eds.): *Social Disappearance: Explorations Between Latin America and Eastern Europe*. Berlin: Dossiers, Forum Transregionale Studien 2020. Accessible online: https://perspectivia.net/receive/pnet_mods_00003944 [December 5, 2023].

26 In this context, the project “Escritores latinoamericanos en los países socialistas europeos” (ELASOC), led by Emilio J. Gallardo Saborido, is worth mentioning. For more information see the website of the Spanish Agencia Estatal de Investigación <https://www.aei.gob.es/ayudas-concedidas/ayudas-destacadas/proyecto-idi-2020-generacion-conocimiento-escritores> [December 5, 2023], and Emilio J. Gallardo-Saborido/Ilinca Ilian: Cruzando el puente plateado: las relaciones culturales entre América Latina y el Bloque del Este. In: *Revista de Letras* 57, 2 (2017), p. 11–14.

27 See Ottmar Ette: *José Martí. Teil II: Denker der Globalisierung*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2023.

28 “[S]pace is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it. In other words, there are no philosophical answers to philosophical questions that arise over the nature of space – the answers lie in human practice. The question ‘what is space?’ is therefore replaced by the question ‘how is it that different human practices create and make use of different conceptualizations of space?’”

applied to the study of literary interdependencies between East-Central Europe and Latin America: Instead of defining these (cultural) spaces, it would be more appropriate to ask how and why literature participated in their conceptualization and how one should approach as well as conceptualize their entanglements.

One way of approaching their entanglements would be a two-step process. Firstly, to disentangle both regions from the imperial and Eurocentric binaries of East-West and North-South,²⁹ and secondly, to entangle them both in a kind of South-East epistemic “network of affinities,” to use Mbembe’s words³⁰ analogically, where each one of us can imagine and choose what they want those affinities to be and what story they want to tell. Being aware of the utopian task of this “disentanglement” and the fluid borders of the spaces studied in this book, we recognize the need for a new academic narrative that strives to decolonize the way we think about Latin America and East-Central Europe. Decolonization has been with us for quite a while, and although in some contexts it persists as a mere buzzword, we believe that the literature and the literary history of those two different geo-cultural areas provide an incredibly abundant assemblage of ideas, imaginaries, beings, and chronotopes that communicate with each other and among each other, and this communication is precisely what needs to be made visible.

In this sense, to decolonize what and how we study, know, and talk about these two regions is to recognize the troublesome category of being neither fully North nor fully South, but always somewhere in between, as well as to take on the epistemological challenge which the affinities between two such in-betweeners pose to comparative and transareal literary research. If we treat the idea of the (semi-)peripheral position of both the Latin American and East-Central European literary fields as historically given, we can strive for decolonization or, in other words, for a “decolonial border thinking” that is “[. . .] grounded in the experiences of the colonies and subaltern empires. Consequently, it provides the epistemology that was denied by imperial expansion. [. . .] It also moves

David Harvey: Space as a Keyword. In: Noel Castree/Derek Gregory (eds.): *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell 2006, p. 275.

29 Caroline Levander/Walter Mignolo: The Global South and World Dis/Order. In: *The Global South* 5, 1 (2011), p. 9. Martin Müller: In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South. In: *Geopolitics* 25, 3 (2020), p. 734–755. Tomasz Zarycki: Comments on Martin Müller’s “In Search of the Global East: Thinking Between North and South.” In: *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 38, 4 (2021), p. 191–201.

30 Achille Mbembe: African Modes of Self-Writing. Transl. by Steven Rendall. In: *Public Culture* 14, 1 (2002), p. 258.

away from the postcolonial toward the decolonial, shifting to the geo- and body politics of knowledge.”³¹

As we know, minor or peripheral literatures have been and always will be thriving in spite of imperialism, and their designation as peripheral changes over time (Would we call Polish literature, which has given us five Nobel Prizes in Literature, peripheral? Is Hispanic literary production, which created the Latin American Boom of novels, a minor field?). Nevertheless, a colonial or subaltern conscience remains profoundly present in “peripheral” literary expression. Therefore, the decolonial move of this book is to recognize this dynamic and remap the global literary order by pointing to assemblages, affinities, and entanglements that may be less obvious and more tangential, thus bringing them to the table where the politics of knowledge production takes place, but on different terms: the terms of colonial/post-colonial difference.

Border thinking emerges from anti-imperial epistemic responses to the colonial difference, that is, the difference that hegemonic discourse attributes to “other” people. This subaltern position can be an advantage, as it implies a “double-consciousness”³² free of the hegemonic voices who strive for sameness so intensely that they often erase their own difference – such as the USSR and the United States during the Cold War, when they struggled for military, political, and cultural domination³³ in Central-East Europe (or in this particular case, the Eastern Bloc) and Latin America respectively. In examining the Cold War constellations as an example, it can be productive, at least within comparative literary studies, to think of both regions in an overlapping way that relates postcolonialism (as a condition) to postsocialism.³⁴ We may ask, is the “post” in postimperial the same as the post in postcolonial?³⁵ or rather “Is the Post in Post-Soviet the Post in Postcolonial?”³⁶ Addressing the affinities between “posts” is, of course, only one possibility for thinking about both regions together.

This collection of papers is primarily concerned with assessing the difference between diverse posts. However, instead of relying on Soviet or North American hegemony, we propose focusing on the differential nucleus, which makes the dif-

³¹ Madina Tlostanova/Walter Mignolo: *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press 2012, p. 60.

³² See W.E.B. DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007.

³³ See Madina Tlostanova/Walter Mignolo: *Learning to Unlearn*, p. 68.

³⁴ See Anita Starosta: *Form and Instability: Eastern Europe, Literature, Postimperial Difference*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press 2015.

³⁵ It is a question inspired by Kwame Anthony Appiah: Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial? In: *Critical Inquiry* 17, 2 (1991), p. 336–357.

³⁶ David Chioni Moore: Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Post-colonial Critique. In: *PMLA* 116, 1 (2001), p. 111–128.

ferentiation of posts possible, as a means for approaching the cultural production of regions connected by their analogous positions in a power constellation. We are thus speaking of a potential turned into a power to subsume and command, but also a potential for change, for contesting forceful discourses, disarticulating them, and appropriating their fragments. Thinking in terms of an indeterminate core allows us, on the one hand, to discover diverse ways of arranging fragmented elements and seeing in any artifact a product of relational forces. On the other hand, this methodological approach avoids the dialectical fall-trap that forces us to adhere to mediation and its totalizing force as the only means of using either creation or recreation to fill a fundamental void which, ultimately, cannot be closed. So instead of wielding emptiness, we focus the potential for differentiation and consider any cultural artifact as both reassembling and already assembled, as an expression of the preconditions for possibility and the creation of such conditions. An apparent circularity underlies this approach, which is the price to pay for a thought that does not promise closure and that seeks to respond to a geography becoming multifarious.

After the project of globalization, which conflated social and economic liberalism into a cosmopolitan sense of well-being, we cannot but look suspiciously at any universal claim or at the shattered fragments of the globalist utopia, fragments that might well be the “posts” described above. Similar doubts are raised by Messling, who advances the term “minor universality” to highlight the different consciousnesses articulated beyond globalization’s centers and its dominant discourses.³⁷ Rethinking space in this manner has become topical, because, as Dipesh Chakrabarty explains, the earth that for Hobbes had to be cultivated, for Arendt became a map known to us down to the smallest detail as if it were the palm of our own hand, for Schmitt was land to appropriate and ground a *nomos*, and for Heidegger a place of dwelling³⁸. These worlds all share a reflective movement towards the global, towards ideal forms that may be contested but remain firm as a transcendental goal.³⁹ To steer away from this school of thought, Chakrabarty posits the planet as a malleable and sculptural category whose history cannot be fully told, a place that must be made “friendly” or habitable in the sense of tapping into its continuous processes.⁴⁰ The focus now lies on transformations and how to channel their becoming. As a consequence, space has become

³⁷ Markus Messling: *Universality after Universalism: On Francophone Literatures of the Present*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2023, p. 21.

³⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty: The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category. In: *Critical Inquiry* 46, 1 (2019), p. 6.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

unbounded, the earth is not shaped by a mediation between human and nature but by a “fabulist imagination” impinging on the realm of technologies and artifacts in order to foster habitability and to shape the earth.⁴¹ From the planet, we can thus only grasp a possible combination of their multitudes of interrelated processes to channel otherwise.

Against this backdrop, we can ask how cultural artifacts recreate their own space beyond ideal forms, that is, beyond a hegemonic, Eurocentric view, and follow alternative roads. For instance, a book on travel literature could be seen as constantly negotiating its own position and thus establishing a cultural pathway that can later be traveled again to cultivate an affinity between distant regions, and to reaffirm and enhance that path. As arbitrary as they might seem, such affinities are motivated by the effervescent force of planetarity, of a thought moving beyond the circumference of its own tradition and challenging the unitary globe with tangential assemblages.

To identify such amalgamating crossings, which feature emergent properties at odds with global oneworldedness,⁴² we must hark back to Spivak’s coinage of the term “planetarity” in 2003. Her conjectures about the cross-pollination of area studies and comparative literature have become gospel and yet, they are more than a method. At the core of her approach lies a will to renewal, a will to learn how to “dis-figure the undecidable figure into a responsible literality, again and again,”⁴³ always exercising philological skills and cultivating a “care for language and idioms.”⁴⁴ Philological undertakings can disentangle or entangle a cultural artifact in broader intertextualities; through repetition, they bypass a dialectical negation and thus bring to the surface an “underived alterity,”⁴⁵ that is, an alterity that does not arise from colonial difference, nor from the “annihilating” tendencies of a subject that must negate the other to experience itself as “limitless subjectivity.”⁴⁶ Repetitive variations and forced re-readings represent the humanist challenge to idealist foundations, because they render the globe uncanny and bring about a “reconstellation.”⁴⁷ Such an attempt to de-automatize worldviews and reflect on undecidable alterities is central in the comparative approach to the

⁴¹ Achille Mbembe: *The Earthly Community: Reflections on the Last Utopia*. Rotterdam: V2 2022, p. 13.

⁴² See Emily Apter: On Oneworldedness: Or Paranoia as World System. In: *American Literary History* 18, 2 (2006), p. 365–389.

⁴³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press 2023, p. 72.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁶ Achille Mbembe: *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2001, p. 118.

⁴⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Death of a Discipline*, p. 74, 91.

entanglements between Latin America and East-Central Europe. Our theoretical endeavor, however, would never aspire to rewrite a canon, nor can it cherry-pick works and authors for a *pléiade*. Universalism must be left behind in an atomized world where interrelations are liquid and affected by literatures that cannot be encompassed in a study, let alone systematized. This encourages collective endeavors and synergies between experts, but, more importantly, demands reflections on the latest discussions of world literature from a philological perspective focused on potential for change and re-assemblies.

“Literatures of the world”⁴⁸ and “world literature”⁴⁹ have a common ground – which is literature – but imply different understandings of the world’s regions and its networks beyond borders.⁵⁰ Any academic criticism of a nationally, linguistically, temporally or spatially restricted literary history, which has spoken of a singular world literature since Goethe, must be aware of the concomitant tendency to claim conventionality as an unavoidable echo in the genesis of the European literary field circa 1800. This genealogy is reflected in epistemological consequences that can no longer do justice to the current research on global literature. Although Erich Auerbach still used the singular in his article “Philology of World Literature,” referring to Goethe and praising his sense for the “image of the historical-perspectival sense,” he was no longer able to invoke such a monological, conceptual construction without thinking about alternative perspectives, so that he finally introduced the concept of the “literatures of the world” into the discussion.⁵¹ Although David Damrosch takes a critical look at Goethe’s conceptualization and cites Auerbach’s *Mimesis* as the most prominent example of a possible reading of world literature as “global literature,”⁵² he is forced to admit, based on the immense influx of recent research, that the global perspective on what philologists call literature is constantly shifting and reconstituting itself on the horizon of reception – and is thus linguistically and culturally mediated. “In this sense, literature can best be defined pragmatically as whatever texts a given

48 See Ottmar Ette: *Literatures of the World: Beyond World Literature*. Leiden: Brill 2021.

49 See David Damrosch: *What is World Literature?* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 2003.

50 See Patricia A. Gwozdz/Markus Lenz: Einleitung. In: Patricia A. Gwozdz/Markus Lenz: *Literaturen der Welt. Zugänge, Modelle, Analysen eines Konzepts im Übergang*. Heidelberg: Winter 2018, p. 9–19.

51 Erich Auerbach: Philologie der Weltliteratur. In: Erich Auerbach: *Philologie der Weltliteratur. Sechs Versuche über Stil und Wirklichkeitswahrnehmung*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1992, p. 84.

52 Damrosch: *Reading World Literature*, p. 25. In a very strict sense of the word, Damrosch defines “global literature” as literature that is read exclusively at airports, because as soon as the reader returns to his own cultural context, literature is inscribed in the local structure of reception and is therefore no longer global.

community of readers takes as literature,” Damrosch writes.⁵³ He does not, therefore, see world literature as an “immense body of material that must somehow, impossibly, be mastered,” but as a “mode of reading that can be experienced intensively with a few works just as effectively as it can be explored extensively.”⁵⁴ What Damrosch calls for in relation to the study of world literature is a collaboration on both sides of, as well as beyond, national contexts – a collaboration that connects the specialized knowledge of individual contributors, for example, with the publication of anthologies in which “specialists” (in “the source culture”) and “generalists” (“in its new cultural and theoretical context”) come together.⁵⁵

Pascale Casanova, on the other hand, a former student of Pierre Bourdieu, oriented her reflections towards a field theory transferred to the international level in order to examine diachronic and synchronic processes of the “international literary space.”⁵⁶ Similarly to Gisèle Sapiro’s questions, sociological premises dominate in Casanova’s *World Republic of Letters* when it comes to analyzing the social conditions of the circulation of literary works (political, economic, cultural).⁵⁷ However, we should also ask here to what extent the historically dense concept of the *république* calibrates a universalism that, while contextualized critically in terms of sociology and power, is nevertheless demanded pragmatically through the semantic centering of France – according to European, or rather Parisian, standards.

In his essay *The Four Genealogies of World Literature*, Jérôme David brings together the individual positions of Damrosch, Casanova and Moretti in a comparative style to underline four conceptual-historical distinctions: the philological genealogy from Goethe to Auerbach, which also introduces the second critical genealogy, in turn represented by scholars such as Damrosch and Casanova.⁵⁸ However, David emphasizes that at this point, a label is used normatively in order to create exclusive strategies without questioning one’s own choice of criteria. He also discovers a critical usage of the concept of world literature in Marxism, which has long served as a gauge of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat: the use of the term points to an increasing globalization of the bourgeoisie and its economic expansion in the cultural field. The third pedagogical genealogy is

⁵³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 299.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 287.

⁵⁶ Pascale Casanova: *World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge Massachusetts 2004, preface xii.

⁵⁷ Gisèle Sapiro: How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)? A Sociological Approach to World Literature. In: *Journal of World Literature* 1, 1 (2016), p. 81–96, here p. 82.

⁵⁸ See Jérôme David: The Four Genealogies of ‘World Literature’. In: Joachim Küpper (ed.): *Approaches to World Literature*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2013, p. 13–26.

generally concerned with the educational aspect of literature in bourgeois culture, while the methodological genealogy of the term, which has been reformulated since the 1950s, is now being renegotiated.

To rewrite the history of world literature from the perspective of “ultraminor world literatures,”⁵⁹ or the entangled histories of world literatures from the perspective of Eastern European literatures,⁶⁰ while also framing polylogical movements to and from Latin America in global contexts such as *EuropAmericas*,⁶¹ *ArabAmericas*,⁶² and *AfricAmericas*⁶³ is a challenging task. Aimed at creating new research areas within comparative literature, these endeavors use the “poetics of movement” brought forward by Ottmar Ette as a starting point: “the movements among movements indicate the interwoven nature of literature and living mobility as well as the central significance of retained, vectorized patterns of movement to an understanding of both literary and cultural processes.”⁶⁴

Hence, all publications on this topic show that there is no longer one center, but rather many centers. *One* world literature has already become a concept of *many literatures in many worlds* situated within polycentric dynamics of world-making through reading, translating, sharing, connecting and critiquing.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ See Bergur Rønne Moberg/David Damrosch: *Ultraminor World Literature*. Leiden: Brill 2022. From the perspective of Moberg and Damrosch, the term “ultraminor” in comparison to major, minor, and small can only be explained in scales of growth and decline by changing conditions of literary production and circulation over years or centuries. Although demographic size is one of its criteria, the term tries to challenge geographical criteria. Hence, the authors argue, referring to Franco Moretti: “Structure changes when size changes. The ultraminor size constantly generates a certain structure in terms of patterns of living, thinking, mapping, remembering, and speaking, all with consequences for both political and aesthetic developments. Methodologically, the connection between size and structure can turn into a way of reading not only ultraminor literature, but also minor and major literature.” (p. 2)

⁶⁰ See Annette Werberger: Überlegungen zu einer Literaturgeschichte als Verflechtungsgeschichte. In: Dorothee Kimmich, Schamma Schahadat (eds.): *Kulturen in Bewegung. Beiträge zur Theorie und Praxis der Transkulturalität*. Bielefeld: transcript 2012, p. 111–143.

⁶¹ See Ottmar Ette/Dieter Ingenschay/Günther Maihold (eds.): *EuropAmericas. Transatlantic Relations*. Frankfurt am Main, Madrid: Vervuert Iberoamericana 2008.

⁶² See Ottmar Ette/Friederike Pannewick (eds.): *ArabAmericas. Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab World*. Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2006.

⁶³ See Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger/Tiago de Oliveira Pinto (eds.): *AfricAmericas. Itineraries, Dialogues, and Sounds*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2008.

⁶⁴ Ette: *TransArea*, p. 36.

⁶⁵ The book series *Literatures as World Literatures*, published by Bloomsbury, dedicates each volume to different languages and regions of the world that enfold these dynamics in national and transnational contexts, e.g. in the case of *Polish Literature as World Literature* edited by Piotr Florczyk and K. A. Wisniewski (Bloomsbury 2024), *Bulgarian Literature as World Literature* edited by Mihaela P. Harper and Dimitar Kambourov (Bloomsbury 2022) or *Romanian Literature*

III Connecting the Disconnected: Multiple Pathways through Elective Affinities

Diving into one of these possible worlds, the present volume focuses on literary entanglements and the dynamics of transcultural exchange processes between Latin America and East-Central Europe. At the publication's center of interest are literary-historical connecting lines, theoretical similarities and poetological connections that go beyond national and regional stratifications. In seven different sections and an appendix of geopoetic literatures by Mexican writer Karen Villeda and Polish writer Dorota Masłowska, these papers aim to contribute to the transareal history of literatures and the varying conditions of their reception. They focus on significant actors in the exchange as well as their networks, and in this respect, do foundational work on the mobility of social imaginaries, their migrations and intersections.

The first section, entitled *Theory and History of Entanglements*, starts with a theoretical approach to history writing. For Guillermo Zermeño Padilla, thinking from a Latin American position about history and its future necessarily involves revisiting Europe, because the old counterpoint between Europe and America has lost its significance since the decolonization processes of the post-war era. For this reason, both Europe and America are in the midst of reconfiguring historical knowledge, a process with no clear or specific epicenter. In his paper, Zermeño provides a survey and a critical reassessment of historiography and its crises to argue for a new chronotope for history. He proposes a focus on transversal dynamics that bring together the contemporary with the not-contemporary; their simultaneity at times creating a multifaceted presence.

From the theory of writing history in geopolitical contexts and with a focus on Latin America, Ottmar Ette traces a network of the literatures of the world in a space of conviviality that challenges the monopoly of European concepts of world literature dominated by geographical centers like New York (Damrosch) and Paris (Casanova). Exchanges of literary theory beyond the hegemonic power of European colonialism are discussed from a polylogical view; writers of the Caribbean archipelago as well as the literatures of Brazil, Asia and Eastern Europe are considered. Literatures of the world enmeshed in a process of global acceleration can only be seen in the light of a history of its movement that goes beyond national borders, languages, and identities.

The second section, *Intellectual Networks and Literary Fields*, starts with José Luis Nogales Baena's paper about the founding of a pro-Soviet network in Mexico. During the first stage of the Latin American (Cultural) Cold War, the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange and its journal, *Cultura Soviética* (1944–1954), functioned as the central node of a vast network of local, national, and transnational relations, a place for the circulation and contact of people, ideas, and projects in favor of socialism in general and the Soviet Union in particular. This network was promoted and sustained by Moscow with obvious propagandistic purposes, but carried out with the enthusiastic collaboration of the pro-Soviet Latin American left.

Ana Davis González delves into the socio-literary panorama of Río de la Plata and discusses texts by intellectual creatives who visited socialist countries between 1932 and 1959. These *writer-intellectuals* are key historical figures with a dual social role: they participate in public discourse on ideological-political issues through creative works and, at the same time, intervene in the contemporary cultural field by expressing their positions in aesthetic terms, depending on the tensions or struggles that exist in their respective contemporary circles. By examining texts published in the cultural press, Ana Davis shows how ideas are put into circulation and how a transactional Soviet cultural framework was woven into the Río de la Plata. She further illuminates the writer-intellectual's participation in a negotiation between the ideological trend of communism, two cultural and geographic spaces – Eastern Europe and Río de la Plata – and two very distant political contexts, namely the evolution of the Soviet Union after Lenin until the Thaw era as opposed to the Urriburu dictatorship, *Peronism* and the *Revolución Libertadora* ("Liberating Revolution") that closed this period in Argentina.

Elisa Kriza's article examines concepts of freedom and authoritarianism in texts by Mexican writers José Revueltas and Octavio Paz, with a focus on Russia and Central Europe as symbolic places during the Cold War. The article demonstrates how these writers created an individual space beyond the polarizations of the Cold War. Their evolving notions of the meaning of individual and collective freedom as well as freedom of speech remain relevant today. Kriza's interpretation of the Mexican writers' concepts of freedom are contrasted with Revueltas' thoughts about the trial of Soviet writers Andrey Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel in 1966 as well as the texts by Revueltas and Paz on the Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the Soviet penal system (gulag). The article concludes with reflections on Paz' anti-imperialism during the Cold War and compares it with current debates surrounding Russia's war against Ukraine in the 21st century.

The following section, *Authors of Dis/connection*, is opened by Pablo Sánchez, who analyzes three texts by Latin American writers Pablo Neruda and Miguel Ángel Asturias, both Nobel Prize winners, who relate their experiences in Euro-

pean socialist countries during the Cold War. These curious texts have seldomly been studied and reveal both the political strategies of socialist governments for obtaining the support of the intelligentsia, as well as the needs and ideals of Latin American writers in times of political instability on the continent. In an analysis of selected texts from Neruda's *Viajes* (1955), Asturias' *Rumanía, su nueva imagen* (1964), and the co-authored *Comiendo en Hungría* (1969), Sánchez shows how the authors express optimistic visions of socialism, praise economic developments, and extol the virtues of Hungarian gastronomy in a humorous and entertaining work sponsored by the country's government to improve its international image after the events of 1956. These texts in verse and prose dispense with direct political pronouncements and become an original and unexpected defense of the socialist way of life.

Aleksandra Tobiasz's paper addresses Witold Gombrowicz's changeable contours of self-identification, which are reshaped both at a crossroads of different orders of time (historical, cultural, and diaristic), and in relation to the places of his exile – which stretch from Western Europe all the way to Argentina. Gombrowicz's diaristic practice (public Diary and private Kronos) foregrounds temporal displacement in the history of the twentieth century, oscillating between different understandings of time such as chronos and kairos, and is influenced by divergent *regimes of historicity* found in particular places. Just before World War II, Gombrowicz was persuaded to migrate to Latin America, which appeared to offer a safe distance from the European burden of history. However, upon his return to Europe in 1963, he found himself immersed in a historical unfolding once more, and in memories of the past. To the writer, exile in Argentina meant an open, spiral-shaped hermeneutic laboratory of self, but the return to Europe enclosed him once again in a circle of the historical absurd.

Javier Toscano discusses Vilém Flusser's philosophical writings through the lens of migration and discusses a nomadology of thinking beyond national borders. Born in Prague in 1920 and migrating to Brazil for more than three decades, Flusser turned the theme of exile into a central part of his work. Toscano's contribution focuses on the ways in which Flusser operationalized his reflections on living without a *homeland* to form the center of a dynamic form of thought. Looking into works of great theoretical value, interviews, and other texts, this article follows the construction of a *Nomadology*, a philosophy of migration that never acquired a definite form in Flusser's work, yet emerges through clearly defined themes and concepts based on his experiences of migration and intercultural exchange.

The fourth section integrates *Images and Imaginaries on the Move*, which widen the corpus of textual formations and aesthetic practices being compared from Hungary to Slovenia. Starting with Mónika Szente-Varga's essay on how *En-*

counters with the Rain God by László Passuth bridges distances between Hungary, Mexico, and Spain, we dive into the literary, intellectual, and personal trajectory of the Hungarian author – against the backdrop of a thrilling international constellation during the Cold War. The paper focuses mainly on Passuth's most acclaimed historical novel about the Conquest Period and the life of the conquistador Hernán Cortés. The novel, according to Szente-Varga, had a great impact on the Hungarian imaginary of Mexico.

Jaša Drnovšek's paper discusses travel writing by Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950). In 1919 she set out alone on a world tour from Celje/Cilli, a town in the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes; her main destination was Japan. But at the Genoa port, from where long-distance steamships sailed, she found that she could only buy a ticket to Mollendo, a port in the deep south of Peru. Karlin then stayed in Peru for more than four months. While research so far has focused primarily on Karlin's life, on language and style in her work, or on her writings referencing Japan, this essay is the first scholarly study to address her representation of Peru. Both Karlin's travel literature and her fiction are considered. Drnovšek shows that Karlin's account of Peru's history was strongly influenced by the Royal *Commentaries of the Incas* (1609, 1617) written by the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616).

In *Crossing Borders, Closing Gaps: Translation*, Claudio Soltmann and Monika Dąbrowska discuss the theory of translation as an important transcultural vehicle between authors as agents of network-making. Claudio Soltman studies the phenomenon of indirect translation in Chile as carried out by Manuel Antonio Matta and Guillermo Matta in poems and extracts of larger works by Adam Mickiewicz and Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859) published in 1850 in *Revista de Santiago*. These *indirect* translations had previously been translated from Polish into French by writers and translators such as Auguste Lacaussade (1815–1897), as well as Polish translators in France such as Krystyn Ostrowski (1811–1882). The translations were created against the vibrant backdrop of the revolutionary movement of 1848 in France. By focusing on the paratextual content (or translator's footnotes) of the translations, it is possible to deduct some of the Chilean translators' ideological leanings. Paratexts become a valuable medium which, in the case of indirect translations, make both translators visible. Soltman's case study presents insights into the agency of translators and the political aspirations they shared with the original authors to counter European imperialism during the first half of the 19th century.

In her contribution titled “Difundir la literatura polaca en México y la mexicana en Polonia. Sergio Pitol como agente transcultural,” Monika Dąbrowska addresses entanglements in the fields of translation and cultural mediation using the prominent example of Mexican author and translator Sergio Pitol's life and work. Pitol's enormous and passionate body of work has made him an outstand-

ing promoter of Polish literature in Mexico, Argentina and Spain. As a writer, translator, and editor, he fostered a mutual cultural and literary influence between Central-East Europe and Latin America based on the exchange of literary texts both in translation and the original languages. This intersection was highly productive, argues Dąbrowska, referencing the theoretical framing of the “agent of translation” and demonstrating the indispensable role of Pitol in the cultural relationship between Mexico and Poland.

The last section, *Migration and Entangled Memories*, completes the theoretical approaches with a further connection between Peru and Poland as well as Brazil and Jewish Eastern Europe. Anna Ratke-Majewska’s article, “Poles from the Peruvian Montaña: Recollections of Polish Emigration to Peru in the Early 20th Century,” examines the issue of narratives about Polish emigration to Peru that consist largely of orally transmitted memories and which have been told in social settings since the 1930s. The text focuses on validating the hypothesis that, concerning the subject of the colonization campaign in Peru, two primary directions of oral narratives can be discerned. The first direction depicts Polish emigrants as involuntary victims and martyrs entangled in circumstances beyond their control. The second direction portrays Polish settlers as indolent, avaricious troublemakers. The research presented in this article stems from an analysis of archival materials housed in the Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych) in Warsaw, Poland. These materials encompass official documents, contracts, letters, reports, press clippings, and brochures. The research process also entailed supplementing these materials with other texts, primarily from the 1930s, such as newspaper articles, excerpts from travel literature, and popular science publications.

The contribution of Robert Schade titled *Bom Fim, New Birobidzhan and centaurs* sheds light on the work of Jewish Brazilian author Moacyr Scliar. Schade focuses on the inter- and transcultural as well as the socio-economic situation of Jewish migrants in Brazil, and on the culinary aspects of this specific hybridity represented in Scliar’s novels. The subject of memory also plays an important role in this literature, as it often alludes to pogroms and the Holocaust.

IV Traveling with Female Voices

The last section is called *Contemporary Female Perspectives* and provides a literary coda for our volume featuring texts of contemporary female travel literature, in which glances are exchanged in both directions. In the micro-essays about Czechia, Hungary, and Poland by the Mexican writer and poet Karen Villeda (born 1985) and in a reportage from Cuba by Dorota Masłowska (born 1983), a Polish

writer and rapper, we find further interrelations and affinities to reassemble. Translated by Tara O'Sullivan, these two texts are being presented in English for the first time. Published in 2017, Karen Villeda's essay collection *Visegrado* was awarded the José Revueltas Literary Essay Fine Arts Award the same year.⁶⁶ Masłowska's reportages from Cuba were published in Polish in the online cultural magazine *Dwutygodnik.com*⁶⁷ and then reprinted as a book with other pieces from her regular column, "How to Take Control of The World without Leaving the House."⁶⁸

Today, we find our lives enmeshed in a globalized and closely linked world whose societies continuously push the circulation not only of goods but also of people, some of whom have the possibility of moving freely from one place or one country to another. But who is enjoying this freedom of movement? With what attitudes, perspectives and expectations do those travelers – often in the role of tourists – arrive in other countries? What impact do the narrations circling back to us through the lens of the traveler have on our perception of a foreign country and its residents?

We should ask ourselves if those narrations transport histories of encounter and how they are conditioned; where the limits of those encounters emerge, operate, and solidify. Villeda presents us with a certain estrangement in reference to the historical past in the form of language difficulties, or the proliferation of the touristic enterprise in the countries of Visegrád visited by her narrator. Her micro-essays circle around the question of how travel moves and changes our perception, the impacts it can have on our ways of writing, and the necessity of new literary forms – like micro-essays – to rethink historical and aesthetical relations between different places and culturally heterogenous areas.

Masłowska presents us with the experiences of a Polish narrator in Cuba, provocatively pushing the perspective of traveling Westerners to solipsistic extremes. We are confronted with a drastic text playing with the aesthetics of disgust and brutalism (as rap lyrics do) that forces violence upon its readers – a violence inherent to a language originating from a Eurocentric perspective and acting out the representation of the other, which is often to be found in fictional and non-fictional (travel) documents. That is where the reader finds herself at the limits of encoun-

⁶⁶ Karen Villeda: *Visegrado*. México: Almadía 2017.

⁶⁷ Dorota Masłowska: Kuba (1). In: *Dwutygodnik.com*, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/7506-jak-przejac-kontrole-nad-swiatem-nie-wychodzacz-domu-kuba-1.html>; Kuba (2), in: *Dwutygodnik.com*, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/7539-jak-przejac-kontrole-nad-swiatem-nie-wychodzacz-domu-kuba-2.html> [December 5, 2023].

⁶⁸ Dorota Masłowska: *Jak przejać kontrolę nad światem 2*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2020.

ter, or rather, at the negation of encounter. A text that is continuously performing white supremacy while at the same time breaking with it cynically and diving into the grotesque. It exposes stereotypes that run rampant in both regions, Latin America and East-Central Europe. From the short story about Cuba, we can learn about the aesthetic and socio-cultural sensitivity of a post-Soviet generation who experienced the transformation period, a generation that so much wants to be Western that it adopts the colonial gaze, and in this way, serves the Western stereotype of the *primitive* from the East who is racist, uneducated, and projects their own *primitive* reflection. Masłowska's text does not gloss over the inequality often fostered by Western travelers entering other, especially non-European countries. Exaggeration as literary strategy leads to an ironic rupture of prejudice, but at the same time it lays bare the discursive power solidifying conceptualizations and suppressing difference. The other, who is continuously sieved through certain headwords, phrases, and images, remains confined within the structures of prejudice, and reveals a journey to a non-existent place, that is, an imaginary tropical land where Westerners can only find themselves by negating the other.

Both authors, Masłowska and Villeda, confront us with the difficulty of how to report on, to speak and write about our encounters with other countries and other people. About the violence and, consequently, disparities that often spring from a certain use of language, which operates as a representative force in these texts.

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