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Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

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Jan Walsh Hokenson,
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Abstract: In her article "Comparative Literature and the Culture of the Context," Jan Walsh Hokenson poses a series of interrogatives around the question of what, as comparatists, we have learned about "literature in the context of the culture it represents" (Mario J. Valdés). She argues that in theoretical terms, culture has become the new vessel for the old wine of sources and influences, and that global intercultural contexts will change the analytical categories for comparatists in the coming millennium. In Hokenson's opinion, if comparative literature is to survive it must regain the panoptic view, and if it is to thrive as an academic discipline, it will have to realize its historical aim of embracing all literature, notably of the East as well as the West. And finally, Hokenson proposes that comparatists clarify the credentials of the discipline, as historically rooted in the analysis of cross-cultural contexts, so that the discipline may assume its logical and deserved role as premier mode of critical study in the coming era of an emergent global poetics.

Jan Walsh HOKENSON

Comparative Literature and the Culture of the Context

On the brink of the new millennium, as we look back over literary history and the recent past of comparative literature as an academic discipline, it seems timely to ask: What have we learned, in Mario Valdés's words, about "literature in the context of the culture it represents"? How will those lessons shape literary histories in the next millennium? Having recently, often nervously moved along the Great Divide between theory and text, most comparatists have struggled to keep the discipline's traditional emphasis on literary history at least visible on the horizon. Meanwhile, it often seemed that the figure of Theory loomed so large as to blot out mere text, and literary history -- not to mention aesthetics -- seemed lost to literature; then Culture shouldered Theory aside and emerged as equally immense, ahistorical, and aesthetically numb. Between text as Foucauldian, authorless discursive construct and text as Geertzian, authorless cultural artefact, literary history as a history seemed to splinter into discrete freeze-frames, sliced for theoretical consumption.

Some of the most brilliant work of recent years (by such diverse figures as Hayden White, Stephen Greenblatt, Richard Terdiman, Stephen Kern, Lydia Liu) seems like preparatory spadework, providing the tools for re-envisioning literary history rather than the thing itself. Just as early Structuralism had such difficulty getting beyond the paragraph, so perhaps we are in an early stage of historico-cultural work that cannot yet get beyond the delimited period or even generation, in order to attain the perspective of the overview of "literary history" that was once basic to comparative critical training and study. Now, as we scan the horizon, adjusting our many, many lenses for viewing local historicities, shall we be forever in the trenches? Can we, and indeed should we ever hope to regain the panoptic view? We do know that literary history is a dynamic and fluid sequence, spilling over centuries and over national borders and languages, presenting each young writer with a blueprint of the genre and the formal tradition in which he or she then invents. By way of approaching the burdens and challenges of literary history in the next millennium, I should like to focus for a moment on one particular kind of critical problem -- cross-cultural intertextuality -- that has always characterized comparative study and that suggests the sorts of problems and new directions that comparatists will face in the coming epoch of global life and art.

Cultural Intertexts

Many writers who have in part shaped Western literary history (Cervantes, Goethe, Balzac, for example, or Joyce, Proust, Mann) wrote texts intensely conscious of the full sweep of European literary history which they critiqued, synthesized, and redefined. Balzac drew upon the long history of French prose fiction since Rabelais but also relied heavily on Dante and Shakespeare -- Italian and English summas of their respective national literary traditions -- to reconfigure French literary history, and reflexively critique French culture of 1830-50; accordingly, Proust so used Balzac, plus Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, even as Joyce was invoking Homer to write the modernist national epic of Ireland and Mann was using the Bible to construe the German tradition since romanticism. At one time, to study such issues was to undertake "comparative authors" or "sources and influences," terms that became anathema in the postmodern, authorless decades. Now, still on our brink, how do we describe the literary-historical context of this cultural wedge -- Dante-in-Balzac, say, or Japanese Noh in Yeats or *négritude* in Modernism: Is there a critical category of analysis which, now moving beyond outworn forms of author-based studies, can embrace all that we have learned about discursive moments in time and cultural fields in social space? It is already clear that this sort of cross-cultural borrowing, which Earl Miner and others are beginning to theorize as comparative poetics, will become more frequent and more global in the coming era of globalization.

Concerning these few examples I have mentioned, how do we historically and culturally contextualize them? As a "history" of intertextualities? Surely not. They are intersections that, on

our brink, we cannot yet insert in "culture" or any satisfactory locus of comparative cultural "context."

When Wellek and Warren unfurled the banner of intrinsic criticism in the 1940s, such textual intersections of literary histories and cultures (nationalist internationalism, author-focused) was the core of comparatists' work. Such work was construed not as cross-cultural study (culture was considered the purview of anthropologists), and definitely not as literary history (rather a pseudo- or at best a smuggled history). History itself was largely still considered to be public events orchestrated by great white men. Now, in the wake of the epistemological revolutions in the Humanities disciplines, not least in historical and cultural studies, do we know what literary history is or should be? As we conjecture a future for literary history, we must draw upon recent lessons from theoretical and cultural studies to reconfigure old, still recurrent questions. It is clear that literary history in the next millennium must contextualize literature in the culture it represents. My question is: Are we sure we know which culture the text seeks to represent? Certainly, we know that Balzac represented a certain view of French national culture. But the Dante-in-Balzac problem indicates some of the difficulties of situating *La Comédie humaine* in a literary history which embraces both aesthetic innovation and historico-literary tradition. Exactly this type of critical comparative problem will become crucial in the next millennium. Wellek's students studied the state of 1830 French translations of Dante, in a return to original or primary texts. But now we recognize that in Balzac's literary-historical cultural context, comparatists are also well advised to study the history of reader-reception of Dante in France, the pan-European idea of the inferno, and the European cultural contexts of Realism (in painting, political theory, journalism, photography, etc.), all as mediated in Balzac's texts.

Millennial Contexts

Culture, having moved from margin to center of literary study, is in several respects the new vessel for the old wine of "comparative authors" and "sources and influences." Now recognizing that no culture is singular, that even within Europe national cultures implicate and replicate aspects of one another endlessly, and that African, Middle Eastern, and Asian cultures long ago threaded their way into the foundations of Europe, comparative study must come to grips with the need to pluralize its own methods of analyzing "culture" and "context," in order to construct literary histories. Three problems ensue. First, the next millennium will surely see an increasing globalization of culture. Already, the new European Union is taking steps toward the kind of pan-continental cultural continuities not seen since Latin Christendom. In the United States, comparative literature programs are offering courses in the literatures of the Americas, the Latina writer, Caribbean poetics, East-West aesthetics -- blurrings of national boundaries in favor of regional constants or parameters. It is clear that, slowly but surely, national cultures will no longer obtain. Cultural contexts for modern texts -- and, I suggest, retrospective accounts of erstwhile national conceptions of traditions and regional poetics -- will change, and with them the categories of analysis for "culture" and historico-literary "context."

Second, the electronic imperialism of the English language will surely vitiate foreign-language study -- and critical training in Greek and Latin, Hebrew, and Sanskrit -- in favor of translation studies. Even in comparative studies, the notion of primary text, and primary linguistic and cultural context, will change as we evolve lateral, relative modes of considering past single-language traditions and new artistic innovations. What does "in context" mean, in an increasingly univocal mode of writing and reading across global time-space? Third, the linchpin of the last millennium of literary study, indeed the very coherence of the term "literary," will also crumble, as *mimesis* loses coherence in an increasingly open and, I trust, fruitful exchange between the arts and literatures of the Eastern hemisphere with those of the Western part of the world. Already we speak easily of postmodernism's radical critique of the foundations of Western literature and thought, but we rarely stop to consider the meaning of "Western" in that project. (In fact, in most European languages "occidental" means "ce qui remonte à la Grèce," whereas in English, as Christopher Coker has shown in *Twilight of the West*, "Western" is a recent Anglo-American conception denoting the liberal, market-driven democracies as distinct from Russia and China.) It is not for long that, absent any real comparative context, we will use the term "Western" so blithely, without

an East in sight, utterly unaware of which East is being used to demarcate this West. Occident and Orient will perhaps recover contrastive value, as we explore the major Indian, Japanese, Chinese, and other alternatives to the long Western tradition of mimesis, with all its (still) unstated assumptions. Already the once stable metropolitan centers of national cultural traditions are diffusing, through mass migrations, outward from the old cultural capitals of Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro, into regional, continental, and even hemispheric radials. Tracing literary histories along those lines will entail new challenges.

The Tectonic Plates of Literary History

The question of the role of literary history itself, then, must be contextualized in global, millennial terms. A significant, even operative literary history will necessarily be comparative and the components will be hemispheric and then surely global. Already, comparatists are producing scholarly studies of Euro-Asian comparative poetics, United States literature in Spanish, "Overseas Chinese" literature, Japanese literature in Brazilian Portuguese. Such cultural intersections entail but greatly magnify our stodgy example of Dante-in-Balzac: Already we read South America-in-the-United-States or, conversely, Aristotelian mimesis in Caribbean poetics. These are small steps toward a new literary history of transcultural, global intertextuality, on the order of Dante-in-Balzac writ large. Writ global. As we begin to realize, here on our brink, how adopted languages, adopted cultures, adopted genres change radically under the pressures of modern migrations and at the hands of bi-cultural writers, we will begin to see continuities that we failed to notice in the hey-day of national literatures. In the creeping erasure of national, canonical, disciplinary, and other borders, we must re-vision the literary past of the last millenium in order to locate sites of cultural transfer in medieval, renaissance, augustan, romantic, modernist intertextuality, and thereby develop the analytical, comparative tools to accommodate literary history in the new millennium.

Recent trends in translations studies suggest the dimensions of the task. Twenty years ago (at the annual convention of the MLA: Modern Language Association of America in Chicago), Glyn Norton called for recognition of "the vital contribution of French Renaissance translators" to the development of Renaissance literary consciousness; he stressed translation as "an area frequently overlooked yet inseparable from" periodization and literary history (190). At that time, the primacy of translation was often acknowledged but rarely studied as one of the bases of literary history. Since then André Lefevere, Lawrence Venuti, Susan Bassnett, Anthony Pym, and Douglas Robinson have evolved categories of analysis for translation as cultural transfer between languages and culturo-poetic systems. Still, English poet Charles Tomlinson argues that the history of English poetry has never been taught (not even at Cambridge!) because the standard view still excludes the major poets' crucial apprenticeships as translators of French, Italian, Latin, Greek; so he calls for intercultural readings of Chaucer, Wyatt, Surrey, Marlowe, Pope, Dryden, Shelley, Arnold, Pound. For centuries, theories of nation and genius erased the intercultural origins of English poetic innovation. In another call to reinvigorate "source studies" within English literature, in 1985 Stephen Greenblatt made the scholarly turn back to "source study," which, he noted, had become "the elephants' graveyard of literary history" (97). Deconstructionist theory had provided essential tools for new work, he said, even though we now recognize that the autonomous text is itself a theoretical construct, and that actual literary practice entails localized strategies in particular historical encounters. He positioned his own study of Shakespeare in the critical method that he called "cultural poetics" (situating the text in the cultural contexts of late sixteenth-century English struggles to redefine the central values of society [e.g., the sacred], and requiring "a rethinking of the conceptual categories by which the ruling elites constructed their world" [100]). Thence Shakespeare's sources as English cultural contexts.

Whether one uses the Victorian notion of culture as the manners and morals of a nation, or the Postmodern notion of culture as a society's system for the organization of meaning and the production of ideology, it is clear that the "culture" of the context occupies a larger time-space than does individual "author." Cultural intertexts across languages occupy even larger spaces, indeed global reaches. It is from this global vantage that comparative study of the culture of the context will de facto require an increasingly panoptic view across national and canonical frontiers,

both past and present ones. The critical gaze over this sweep of terrain, which can be characterized as "intercultural poetics," to use Miner's terms (231), will entail new comparative methods and new categories of analysis. Perhaps, indeed, as we struggle to regain a panoptic view, it is "nation studies" (English, French, Japanese, American) that have become the millennial elephants' graveyard. For it is a new and quite different mode of source studies, exploring transcultural intertexts, that is opening a way toward future, global types of panoptic literary history.

At the moment our rhetorical consciousness is limited to two or three languages in comparative literature and to a few continental, at best hemispheric traditions. To think globally, around and across languages and contrastive poetics -- and then global cybersites of cultural transfer -- is very difficult (much more difficult than the recent challenge to become truly interdisciplinary). Truly global intercultural conceptions of literary history, diachronic and synchronic, still elude us. The millennial challenge requires at a minimum a) reconceptualizing the transcultural contexts of intertextuality and b) ultimately reconceiving the literary in terms of global amalgamations, i.e., in the global context of an emerging world poetics. In the kinds of planetary tectonic shifts in poetics that are bound to occur, the nature of comparative literature will change in ways we, on our brink, cannot imagine.

Magma of Method

The future of comparative literature as academic discipline was just as unimaginable to the founders -- to Goethe and Germaine de Staël, of course, but equally to the academicians Abel François Villemain or Philarète Chasles in the 1830s, amid the drumbeats of modern nationalisms. From the beginning, as Claudio Guillén has shown, critical focus on the transmissive connections between national literatures almost always occured within a vague but distinctly supra-national conception of "the Republic of Letters," a loose and baggy notion of literary universals. In the universities, during the academic institutionalization of literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the multinational blazon of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* was broken down into three components. Paul Van Tieghem, for instance, stipulated that an understanding of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* required appreciating three contexts or "domaines": The French novel of the eighteenth century, "comparative" literature or Richardson's influence on Rousseau, and "general" literature or the sentimental novel in Europe (175). This early notion of literary contexts seems today like a sequence of abstract categories of analysis arranged as concentric circles, ever widening out from Rousseau's text across national borders. In contrast to contemporary cultural studies, as rooted in the sociology of creativity and knowledge, the three contexts look like critical conceits, circling far above mere "culture." Like many pioneering comparative formulations of the critical enterprise, moreover, when pushed to extremes the project seemed to become tautological: In this case, it resulted in characterizing Rousseau's text by the "context" of the very genre that the text helped define.

René Wellek and other (often immigrant European) Americans, rejecting this distinction between "comparative" and "general" literature as specious and untenable, conflated them. One result in 1940-60 was the new binary of world literature, in translation for sophomores, and comparative literature, for scholars in multiple languages. Reading only in the original languages, comparatists studied the interrelations of multiple literatures, charting their relationships along the intellectual axis of the history of criticism, meaning the foundational poetics of Aristotle and subsequent developments in critical principles and criteria, period and genre characteristics, and European intellectual and literary history. If context broadened to include critical history, it deepened only by demarcating "extrinsic" elements (the facts of editions and manuscripts, biography and psychology, economic and social conditions of authorship) from the primary "intrinsic" or textual elements. Wellek and Warren's magisterial *Theory of Literature*, in several major editions after 1949, never used the word "context," as far as a quick re-reading reveals, and preferred instead "scheme of relationships between methods" of textual analysis (269), as buttressed by historico-critical research. Wellek's concept of comparative literature, which shaped American graduate curricula for two generations, was itself Euro-American, stressing close multilingual textual study within national frames of the history of criticism. Thus through 1975 the

ideal graduate course was a seminar on Conrad-Nietzsche-Gide or Flaubert-Dostoevsky-Eliot, within a Eurocentric optic trained on the great novels as constitutive elements of literary and intellectual history. Gide's homosexuality, Nietzsche's dementia, Dostoevsky's epilepsy, not to mention the writers' gender, social class, and often aberrant politics entered the course, if at all, chiefly as a lecturer's footnotes on gossip irrelevant to the aesthetics of the text and its place in critical history.

One of the unstated premises of nation-focused comparative study and, I think, these post-war decades of comparative literature in the United States in particular, was the primacy of originality. The ways in which local and even "folk" traditions wove their way into a text mattered chiefly as local color, as indicators of how the artist characteristically transubstantiated such raw material. The European, basically romantic notion of artistic originality has long been a mainstay of comparatists' conception of their work. In their *Qu'est-ce que la littérature comparée?* (1983), the French team of Pierre Brunel, Claude Pichois, André-Michel Rousseau have noted that in the beginning comparative literature was a scholarly means of appreciating the originality of each literature; it should have been called Comparative National Literatures, they said (16), since so many comparatists were in effect tracking the distinctive contributions of each national literature to Literature, or Goethe's hallowed notion of *Weltliteratur*, an amalgam of originalities in a play of contrasts. Inspirited with the liberal winds of anti-isolationism among Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, followed by the romantics and later nineteenth-century comparatists in philology and religion, the new literary discipline measured borrowings against national traditions and local originalities: German into French, medieval into modern, graphic into verbal, always general into particular.

However widely the net was cast, its center long remained the individual author's unique idiolect, within the national language in the text as local transformative production. At one point, Wellek and Warren justified their entire project as a defense of originality: Just as the principles of criticism are essential to the literary historian, so literary history is also highly important for literary criticism as soon as the latter goes beyond the most subjective pronouncement of likes and dislikes. A critic who is content to be ignorant of all historical relationships would constantly go astray in his/her judgments. He/she could not know which work is original and which derivative; and, through his/her ignorance of historical conditions, he/she would constantly blunder in his/her understanding of specific works of art. The common divorce between literary criticism and literary history has been detrimental to both (see Brunel et al. 44). In one respect, this is to state the obvious for young comparatists: The critic who does not know Aristotle and Shakespeare will misapprehend Brecht and, worse, will esteem Brecht's mere imitators. In another respect, however, one more crucial to the past and especially the future of the discipline, this is to restate the cardinal tenet of originality as the centerpiece of all critical evaluation.

Aside from the fact that "derivative" is pejorative only in the West, such pronouncements indicate how intricately the question of "influence" has bedeviled Eurocentric literary study and comparative literature in particular. If through the 1970s "influence" was worthy but "derivative" base, the conceptual entanglement was never sorted out. The reasons for consigning the issue to the graveyard included the fact that influence was notoriously difficult to prove, even by author-focused scholars, and the fact that postmodern writers were repositioning quotation and intertextuality as higher values than outworn ones of genius and originality. Similarly, the hierarchy of values in curricula changed, even reversed position in the American decades of "relevance," when "greats" tumbled, the pedestals of canon seemed for a while to be disintegrating, and recent French critical theory furnished analytical tools for exposing the ideological and authoritarian assumptions of the text, and the unwitting author. In comparative literature, as Clayton Koelb and Susan Noakes suggested, erstwhile assumptions about nation dispersed into scattered and often conflicting models of intertextuality (such as Freudian, feminist, deconstructionist). They also pointed out that "We have learned all too well that Wellek was correct in his caution and that literary studies in North America, as well as in most European universities, will continue to be conducted for the most part in departments organized according to the model generated by nineteenth-century German philology" (9). Comparative literature as a

discipline, and most comparatists as scholars, continued to be based within national frames. Always the bridge, never the bride, comparative literature served national academic departments as an avenue to critical theory, and, said Koelb and Noakes, thereby became less a set of critical practices, such as comparing texts in different languages or media, than "a shared perspective that sees literary activity as involved in a complex web of cultural relations" (11).

Wellek and Warren's "scheme of relationships" (a critical function of "methods") and "historical conditions" (a textual function of the history of the genre) had evolved by the end of the century into a complex "web" (non-specific but pointedly non-hierarchical) of "cultural relations." By 1990 indeed the text's cultural relations had become the sine qua non of literary study, the context that defined the text, by situating it in the sociology of its ideolect. The new discipline of cultural studies, in England and the United States, positioned comparative literature itself as a group of ancients being overtaken by media-savvy moderns more in tune with popular culture and thereby the roots of all creativity, literary included. It is at this point, in the fractious tensions of the 1990s between comparative literature and cultural studies, that the traditional aims and methods of comparative literature themselves seemed to splinter, crumbling under the weight of accusations that, as Susan Bassnett put it, "Today, comparative literature is in one sense is dead" (47), because even modern foreign-language study is too onerous, and because mass globalization of culture requires using translations, notably as a subset of cultural studies. In the British political and intellectual lineage of Raymond Williams, Bassnett dismissed comparatists' scholarly traditions as a Eurocentric body of knowledge and as an elitist enterprise. Bassnett's position is extreme, coming from the far end of the spectrum of critical discussion today: At the other end is perhaps Steven Tötösy's proposal to merge comparative literature and cultural studies into a "comparative cultural studies" (see Tötösy at <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss3/2/>). Yet it is a useful challenge. It spotlights the need to re-vision the past of comparative literature as a discipline in order to clarify its future. If comparative literature as literary study is to surmount such challenges, it must restore its cultural credentials. Which brings us back to Dante-in-Balzac, to nation, cultural context, translation, and originality.

Mapping

Some of the finest work comparatists have ever done identifies the meanings of different terms in different cultures, such as *sentimentalische* in comparison with *sentimentale*. What might seem today like critical conceits circling over culture is really a function of contemporary definitions of the term "culture" itself. Comparatists have always been deeply engaged in cross-cultural study; it is clearly impossible to read such analyses as Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Steiner's *After Babel* without understanding how, in the contemporary lexicon, local historicities and cultural fields served them as the very basis for their inquiry. In their day, national frontiers were organizing principles of cultural alterity. Within and across them, however, before Foucault, Auerbach examined *The History of the Franks* by Gregory of Tours in the context of Greek and Latin historiographers' and clerics' use of indirect discourse and intellectual paradigms, Curtius glossed texts as a function of the branches of learning and medieval sociologies of knowledge, Abrams constructed derivations of one nation's poetry from another's philosophy. In turn, we must now look back at their own use of a periodized scholarly lexicon, explain how it worked in the analysis of the cultures of the text, and champion their work as the historical bases of cultural studies. Similarly, concerning method, no comparatist to my knowledge has ever staked out a disciplinary claim to a delimited body of knowledge. On the contrary, infinity or the global reach has been (to appropriate T.S. Eliot's terms for India) both the horror and the glory of comparative literature. In my view, *pace* Bassnett, comparative literature has since Goethe always been a mode of inquiry, never a body of knowledge. Two centuries of comparatists have professionally championed cross-cultural study while always lamenting, on a personal note somewhere in the text, their own linguistic and cultural limitations, or foreshortened horizons, thus overtly recognizing that comparative literature should be global but can only be a function of individual comparatists' linguistic reach. At some point, almost all current textbook introductions to the field nod, at least, toward East-West studies as a significant aspect, often even the optimal goal of comparative work.

The "culture" of the context has always been, in various critical vocabularies and periods, a complex concept, whether it was subsumed under "history," "nation," "people," or "language." Perhaps, following Wellek's lead, we ought to be disentangling the history of this concept, as he did the history of criticism, from its multiple instantiations over the past two hundred years of comparative work -- in critical studies published in Asia and Latin America no less than in Euro-America. By specifying and defining the cultural bases of the discipline, one can see quite precisely how well it is suited to become the primary mode of critical inquiry in the global millennium. By contrast, to dismiss, like a rather offhanded Darwinian, all previous comparative scholarship because it failed to differentiate between elite and popular culture, is to mistake the premises of the discipline and, I think, to misread European literary history. It was, after all, Raymond Williams who furnished an important model for historical studies when he pointed out that, at any given time and place, the monad "culture" comprises three types of components: Residual, dominant, and emergent (121-27). As elements always in dynamic interplay in society and in varying emphases in the text, these rubrics are a useful way to relativize originality, and to examine influence more specifically as cultural intertexts -- in Shakspeare as in haiku. As the author of *Mythologies*, Barthes would be the first to point out that popular culture cannot be dissociated from elite culture, since a society's culture is their amalgam, and their shared (national) language produces a shared text, co-extensive with ideolect. Since Lukács and Bakhtin, if not Taine and Philarète Chasles, comparatists have long been examining such relationships between (national) social milieux and discourses. The discipline needs to clarify this plank of its own history.

Looking back from this brink over the past two centuries, one can see deeper patterns of continuity beneath the shifting surfaces and styles of comparative scholarship apropos of the text in its cultural relations. Even a cursory review of the discipline's history reveals the social axis of comparatists' work. The object of study remains continuous, i.e., the text as intersection of the foreign and the domestic, while the requisite critical faculty evolves from imaginative empathy to theorizing analysis. Thus in his founding documents Philarète Chasles in 1835 spoke of "this great work of sympathies" (qtd. in Brunel et al. 19; my translation), which Wellek and Warren were still explicitating in 1949 when they insisted that "this conception of [comparative] 'literary history' requires an effort of imagination, of 'empathy,' of deep congeniality with a past age or a vanished taste" (41). Critical readings are inseparable from historical reconstruction of "the general outlook on life, the attitudes, conceptions, prejudices, and underlying assumptions of many civilizations" (41), together illuminating the cultures of the context. In the age of waning romanticism, Chasles called for "sympathy" in the construction of a tableau of French and foreign literary interrelations, just as in the waning psychologies of modernism Wellek and Warren were still appealing to "empathy" in the construction of literary histories in order, in both cases, to appreciate what their successors call "intercultural" texts (Pichois and Rousseau 197). For comparatists, varying conceptions of social context have always been the Ariadne's thread through literary interrelations, of different types and extent.

Already sharpening the focus on social analysis in 1886, in the age of Taine's "man, milieu, and moment," Hutcheson Posnett in New Zealand adopted "the gradual expansion of social life, from clan to city, from city to nation, from both of these to cosmopolitan humanity, as the proper order of our studies in comparative literature" (qtd. in Clements 4). Concerning the ([inter] national) culture of the context, I doubt that any one of these scholars would have disagreed with Bakhtin's point that criticism errs when it locks stylistic phenomena "into the monologic context of a given self-sufficient and hermeneutic utterance, imprisoning it, as it were, in the dungeon of a single context" (669). Writing in the 1930s but postmodern *avant la lettre*, Bakhtin restates in a new lexicon the age-old relations of culture and context in European comparative literature: [The text is] "determined by its dialogic orientation, first, amid others' utterances inside a single language (the primordial dialogism of discourse), amid other 'social languages' within a single national language and finally amid different national languages within the same culture, that is, the same socio-ideological conceptual horizon" (669). This (still emergent) model of "dialogized heteroglossia" (Bakhtin 668) serves cross-cultural study both within as well as across the political frontiers of nation, region, and hemisphere, depending upon where one puts down the claim-stake

of conceptual horizon.

Radials

If the concept of national character seems to be foundering on modern multicultures and cybersites, the new field of translation studies is coming to grips with the opposite dilemma. It appears to Venuti and Pym, for instance, that (national) culture is that which cannot be translated. Venuti thus calls for "foreignizing" translations that highlight cultural alterity, through alienation techniques which make the text appear strange, foreign, other. More historically oriented, Pym calls for scholarly histories of the "points of resistance" between source texts and translations, by way of cultural differentiation. Translation studies is de facto becoming comparative cultural study.

In the kind of East-West work that seems to me the comparative terrain of the next millennium, Lydia Liu examines the advent into China of the Western notion of national character and culture, in *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity. China, 1900-1937*. She is interested in how Asian languages and literatures must create new spaces of meaning when receiving Western concepts. Her first step is to drop the inappropriate lexicon of source and target languages, and re-equilibrate them as "host language" and "guest language" in order to "stress the agency of the host language (modern Chinese in this case) in the meaning-making process of translation so that the guest language need not carry a signature of authenticity in order to make sense in the new context" (29). She finds that "serious methodological problems arise when a cross-cultural comparative theory is built upon the basis of an essentialist category, such as 'self' or 'individual,' whose linguistic identity transcends the history of translation and imposes its own discursive priority on a different culture" (8). In a millennial caution, she warns that Western comparatists must beware of conceptual horizons: "The knowledge obtained in this way cannot but be tautological" (9). More useful is the study of language reception, or how writers' translingual practice opens new conceptual fields in the language and the text: "The Chinese compound *guomin xing* ... is a Meiji neologism (*kokuminsei*), or one of several neologisms, that the Japanese used to translate the modern European notion of national character.... [It] was first used by late Qing intellectuals to develop their own theory of the modern nation-state ... identifying the cause of the evils responsible for the deplorable state of the Chinese *guomin* (citizen). ... The fact that Liang Qichao and Sun Yat-sen were the foremost critics of Western imperialism of their time and yet still had to subscribe to a discourse that European nations first used to stake their claims to racial superiority points to the central predicament of the Chinese intellectual. This predicament ... characterizes all subsequent attempts either to claim or to reject Chinese national identity" (48-49). Given the tumultuous decades of conflictual definitions of Chinese (national) identity, as a constructed amalgam of elite and popular culture, such West-to-East work is crucial in reading Chinese literature of the past century. At least for another century or so, clearly it is only bilingual comparative study that can elucidate the text's place in the East-West web of cross-cultural relations.

In my own work on a history of *japonisme* in French literature, as well as in another project on literary self-translation, I find that it is precisely this kind of new conceptual space that characterizes, say, Proust's use of Japanese art to critique European aesthetics, or the bilingual canons of Ungaretti and Beckett: Neither purely Irish nor purely French, Beckett's texts exist as "an interculture" in Pym's term, or a "translingual" space in Liu's. Whatever the vocabulary comparatists develop, these are the sorts of conceptual configurations that will become increasingly necessary in future comparative study, spanning languages and hemispheres with common methods of inquiry.

Circumferences

Hemispheres is of course a term already being outdated by the world wide web. Indeed all four of the terms originally introducing this essay have become conflictual sites of controversy in recent decades: Literature, context, culture, representation. Their geographies will similarly need re-mapping in the electronic millennium. Meanwhile the old maps, lessons from the discipline's past since 1800, suggest that comparatists have traditionally engaged the cultures of the context at rather more basic levels than they are usually credited for doing. As the next millennium proceeds, in the short term we shall have to continue setting the conceptual horizon ever further outward

from our local intellectual fields and regional intercultures toward global ones. Logically, the most appropriate methods of literary study will be increasingly -- or rather perhaps remain continuously -- comparative, in the sense of addressing texts in the widening contexts of a global intercultural poetics. To Euro-American, South American, Asian, and African comparatists, knowledge of at least two Western and Eastern languages will be essential, no longer merely desirable. The state of languages in the longer term, particularly as enmeshed in machine translations, remains conjectural.

On a more somber note, it may be that we in the United States are witnessing, for the first time in human history, the mass evaporation of culture. Certainly when a word is as intensely contested as the term "culture" is today, the concept is in crisis. Even as the historically palimpsestic structures of culture are disaggregating around the world into discrete language groups and ethnic assertions, including post-colonial canon formation, the electronic means of overarching all these cultural groups are being perfected. If it is in a metalanguage of the world wide web that the next millennium eventually writes its literary histories, then the local vanishes into the global, culture becomes a digital context, and ideolect warps into cybertext. Even so, only the comparatist will really know what happened.

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Author's Profile: Jan Walsh Hokenson works in French and comparative literature at Florida Atlantic University. Her research interests include modern French and European writers and intercultural contexts. She has co-edited *Forms of the Fantastic* and is currently preparing for publication *The Woodblocks of Modernism: A History of japonisme in French Literature, 1865-2000*. Her most recent articles on intercultural contexts include "Proust's *japonisme*: Contrastive Aesthetics" in *Modern Language Studies* 29.1 (1999) and "Intercultural Autobiography" in *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies* 10.1 (1995). Her essay on "Public Lives: Dominique Desanti and the French Autobiographical Tradition" is in the December 2000 issue of *Dalhousie French Studies*, and another essay reflecting her interest in the theory of comedy, entitled "Fool: The Learning of Laughter," appears in *The Iron Mountain Review* (2001). The present article on "The Culture of the Context" began as a paper, for the series of panels on "Literary History in the Next Millennium" at the 1999 MLA convention in Chicago, which she has amplified for this thematic issue issue of *CLCWeb*. E-mail: <hokenson@fau.edu>.