


Transcultural Literature and Contemporary World Literature(s)

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Abstract: In her article "Transcultural Literature and Contemporary World Literature(s)" Arianna Dagnino argues that within the emerging field of transcultural literary studies and despite the inevitable issues raised by categorization, we may classify transcultural literature within the wider domain of world literature(s). Dagnino presents a brief overview of the growing importance of a transcultural perspective in the fields of (comparative) cultural studies and literary studies and proceeds by outlining the main contours of transcultural literary theory and its main differences in respect to (im)migrant and postcolonial literary theories. Further, Dagnino analyzes the contemporary understanding of the field of world literature(s) and shows to what extent the growing constellation of transcultural literature contributes to the field as a truly planetary dimension.

Arianna DAGNINO

Transcultural Literature and Contemporary World Literature(s)

With the denationalizing wave of globalization, even national literatures are under pressure to find new arrangements of form and content to adapt to a changed cultural and social paradigm (see Thomsen, *Mapping*). In other words, a mutation is under way within the global ecumene of letters where new notions of belonging, as well as definitions of selfhood and identity are externalized through new creative artistic and literary processes. Within this emerging social, cultural, and literary scenario, scholars feel the urge to identify new relevant literary paradigms, especially when dealing with the so-called "New Literatures in English" represented by the works of, say, Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi, Kamila Shamsie, Michael Ondaatje, Maxine Hong Kingston, or Joy Nozomi Kogawa. This is why transcultural and transnational theorizations conducted in the past two decades in cultural anthropology, philosophy, and (comparative) cultural studies are introduced in literary studies gaining scholarly currency (see, e.g., Helff; Tötösy de Zepetnek, "From Comparative" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1041>>, "The New"; see also Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári).

In Germany in particular, a group of literary scholars (Frank Schulze-Engler, Sissy Helff, Sabrina Brancato, and others) have initiated the field of transcultural English Studies, while in northern Europe another group of scholars have given birth to The Nordic Network for Literary Transculturation Studies, drawing on Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation. Here is Schulze-Engler's definition of transcultural English studies: "Transcultural English Studies ... stands for a genuinely transnational and transcultural perspective that is capable of encompassing both the literary practice of writers who can no longer be related to one particular 'national literary space' and the complex articulations that link individual works of literature not only to local or regional modernities with their specific social, linguistic, and cultural constellations, but also to the world-wide field of English-language literatures and specific forms of communicative interaction and political conflict engendered by it" ("Introduction" xvi). Although both these groups focus mainly on the study of Anglophone literatures and in particular "New Literatures in English," the same approach can be adopted for the study of any work of literature in any other language whose nature can be defined as intrinsically "transcultural."

On a more general level, since its inception in 2006 the Centre for Transcultural Writing and Research at the University of Lancaster has created a transnational environment for scholars interested in "writing across cultures" and in "studying the work of writers from a wide range of social and cultural contexts" (Centre <http://www.transculturalwriting.com/?page_id=184>). Something similar is being offered also at the Institut d'Etudes Transtextuelles and Transculturelles at the University Jean Moulin in Lyon. The Institute is also among the founding partners of the International Institute for Diasporic and Transcultural Studies, a transnational organization incorporating, among other academic institutions, Liverpool Hope University, the University of Cyprus, and Sun Yat-sen University (P.R. of China). Through transcultural and historicized approaches, the Institute promotes studies on the specificities and changes of socio-cultures and localities in a globalized world, as well as on questions of textual and cultural representations — but also self-representations — of diasporic, migrant, and transnational communities (on this, see also Tötösy de Zepetnek and Wang; Tötösy de Zepetnek, Wang, and Sun). Active since 2007 at the University of Heidelberg is the cluster of excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context: The Dynamics of Transculturality," whose objective is the study and discussion of cultural interactions between and within Asia and Europe through the development of interdisciplinary and transcultural research. As Monica Juneja states in her interview with Christian Kravagna, "Our research aims to investigate the multiple ways in which difference is negotiated within contacts and encounters, through selective appropriation, mediation, translation, re-historicising and re-reading of signs, alternatively through non-communication, rejection or resistance — or a succession/co-existence of any of these" (2).

Across the Atlantic, as early as the mid-1980s The Center for Transcultural Studies at Pennsylvania State University heralded "new forms of cultural understanding for a rapidly internationalizing world" (<<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/transcult/whoware.html>>). In Canada, transcultural studies applied to literary works were initiated in the mid-1990s by Janice Kulyk Keefer. Confronted with the problematics of multiculturalism resulting in ghettoization with its ethnic,

immigrant, and marginalized literary productions, Keefer suggested to revisit the notion of multiculturalism through a transcultural lens and a transcultural form of writing that can cross the borders of different ethnic and cultural groups ("Writing"; see also Maver, "Canadian"). Eva Darias Beautell posits that Keefer's way of writing — in conjunction with the writing of other Canadians who do not belong to the dominant culture — "seems to undermine traditional concepts of (ethnic) identity as something unitary and fixed ... Together they defy a concept of identity in terms of nation and/or national language" (31-32). Keefer's transcultural approach resonates with the one proposed at around the same time by Fulvio Caccia, an Italian-Canadian poet and writer, co-founder of the transcultural Québécois magazine *ViceVersa*, who, in Sneja Gunew's words, "like a number of us ... identifies 'transculturalism' as the latest term in a continuum to which multiculturalism belongs; a continuing quest to capture the hybrid realities of diaspora and globalization" (*Haunted* 127; see also Caccia; Caccia, Ramirez, Tassinari). But what exactly is transcultural literature? Different scholars have come up with different definitions. For example, according to As'ad Khairallah it consists of works which are either "(a) 'intentionally' transcultural in vision and scope (e.g., 'The Waste Land'), regardless of [their] ability to reach or impact other cultures than [their] own, or (b) originally not transcultural by intention, vision or scope, but acquire ... this characteristic through [their] ability to cross cultures and to play an active part in their literary worlds, e.g. *The Iliad*" (233). Other scholars have argued that transcultural literature investigates "the formation of identities in a process of cross-cultural communication and immersion in modern diasporas" (Haberkorn 243), "explores [the] cultural complexity [emerging from a network of multiple modernities], engages in a renegotiation of cultural norms and values" (Schulze-Engler, "Theoretical" 29), and/or is made of "those cultural products of a multicultural society which assert, explore, or allude to their creators' liminal position between two or more different countries, communities, cultures" (Keefer, "Writing" 193).

I posit that transcultural literary works engage with and express the confluent nature of cultures overcoming the different dichotomies between North and South, the West and the Rest, the colonizer and the colonized, the dominator and the dominated, the native and the (im)migrant, the national and the ethnic. Transcultural literature records the re-shaping of national collective imaginaries in an effort to adjust to the cosmopolitan vision in a new age of transnational and supra-national economic, political, social, and cultural processes (on this, see, e.g., Cuccioletta). I am well aware that a work's visibility can be undermined by the "dominant discourses and their control over the circuits of communication" (Khairallah 242), as well as by the market forces behind any decision to publish or not to publish, to translate or not to translate, to distribute globally or not to do so. Having said that, there is no doubt that at the forefront of the change of paradigm under discussion are those artists, writers, and sometimes scholars who have already experienced in the flesh and in their creative minds the effects of global mobility, transnational patterns, neomadic lifestyles, and that in their creative (or critical) works have already captured and expressed an emerging transcultural mood (see Sturm-Trigonakis, *Comparative Cultural*). Hence, we witness the increasing significance of a transcultural literature that, in its broader characteristics, tends to cross cultures and acknowledges the mutually transforming power of cultures. For this reason, the genesis of transcultural literature lies as much in the ever increasing globalizing forces which are reshaping our cultural, economic, and social landscapes as in the literary discourse related to mobility at large, including its migrant, diasporic, postcolonial, and transnational variants (see Ascari and Corrado). It is not by chance that (im)migrant literature has recently started to be addressed under a transcultural perspective:

Migrant literature considers, and urges readers to consider, people, places, histories, languages and especially poetics ... dynamically, in continuous relation to each other, rather than as mutually exclusive absolutes. This — its "in progress" quality — is what, more than any other aspect, seems to characterize migrant fiction, in whatever languages it may be written. Attention is focused on the recognition ... of porous borders, on the construction of zigzagging trajectories, and on the reconsideration of the complexity of cultural systems traditionally codified as univocal and uncontaminated ... Yet, what makes migrant writing specific, as I intend it in this work, are its contemporary trans-cultural ... aspects ... and its consequent resistance to being exclusively appropriated by traditional national canons. (Di Maio 1-2; on the importance of differentiation between "migrant" and "immigrant" literature, see, e.g., Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Migration")

If, on the one hand, we can infer that to some extent the modes of narration of transcultural writing are a direct expression of their creators' transcultural realities and sensibilities, on the other

hand, what makes this kind of writing different is first and foremost its resistance to appropriations by one single national canon or cultural tradition. Talking in particular about the "New Literatures in English," Schulze-Engler claims that "the idea of 'locating' culture and literature exclusively in the context of ethnicities or nations is rapidly losing plausibility throughout an 'English-speaking world' that has long since been multi- rather than monolingual ... New Literatures in English themselves have long since become a transcultural field with blurred boundaries" ("Introduction" x, xvi). This same assumption can no doubt refer to any of those literary expressions in any other language whose features may fit the transcultural paradigm. This is why transcultural literature may be considered as the youngest representative of the "Literatures of Mobility." These literatures include those works of fiction which are particularly affected and shaped by migratory flows, wanderlust, and travel experiences, diasporic-exile-postcolonial conditions, expatriate statuses, and, more recently, the multiple trajectories of transnational and neonomatic movements (see Dagnino; D'Andrea). In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha observes that "Where, once, the transmission of national traditions was the major theme of a world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees—these border and frontier conditions—may be the terrains of world literature" (12). This view is shared by Ottmar Ette, who in his analysis of travel literature argues that "the point of departure for examining a bordercrossing literature on the move" envisions that "the literatures of the 21st century will be literatures without a fixed abode, literatures that evade attempts at clear territorialization" (9; see also Sturm-Trigonakis, *Comparative Cultural* 3-6, "World Literatures" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2369>>). More importantly, the transcultural perspective marks an attempt to overcome the limits that growing numbers of scholars find in postcolonial and multicultural approaches. Once cultures are no longer seen as monolithic entities or as mutually exclusive absolutes, but are perceived as hybridizing organisms in constant dialogue with each other, then it is easier to de-link literatures from their national-territorial-ethnic loci and at the same time to offer "an alternative to the dichotomic paradigm of postcolonialism" (Brancato 44).

Postcolonial approaches in particular tend to understand cultural dynamics "in terms of classical dichotomies such as colonizer vs. colonized or centres vs. peripheries" (Schulze-Engler xi) and remain "obsessively ... tied to notions of difference," dissidence, subalternity, alterity, opposition, marginality, which invariably imply subversive stances (Helff 78). Paradoxically, in this respect even the "loose use of the term 'postcolonial' ... has had the bizarre effect of contributing to a Western tradition of othering the Rest" (Ong 34). While maintaining the influential role in particular of postcolonialism in devising a "language to describe the diversity of cultures and the intersecting global range of cultural production ... The challenge for post-colonial theorists is to avoid the temptation to view 'post-colonialism' as a master-discourse" (Ashcroft, Mendis, McGonegal, Mukherjee, "Introduction" xvi, xvii). Similarly, Ernst Grabovszki acknowledges that in the postcolonial discourse "we have the implicit and explicit differentiation between a 'home' culture and a culture of the 'Other'" (<<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1040>>). We should not forget, however, that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued for the importance, or validity, when needed and judiciously applied, of a "strategic use of positivist essentialism," that is, the advantage for those in subaltern positions to essentialize themselves, bring forward their group identity, and provide a perspective from below in order to subvert hegemonic narratives or to reveal how truths are being produced. At the same time, Spivak criticized the misuse scholars have done with her concept ("Subaltern" 13).

The postcolonial outlook seems less and less appropriate in a world where the perceived "monocultural" Western imperialism — as we know, Western imperialism is hardly monocultural, since we have different countries involved: England, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, etc. — is being replaced by a plurality of centers of techno-economic power, cultural creativity, and extended knowledge. As Schulze-Engler stresses, not only do "many postcolonial debates today seem increasingly irrelevant to literary studies" but, even more importantly, "some of the chief tenets of postcolonial theory developed in the last two decades now seem hard to reconcile with the literary and cultural dynamics of a rapidly globalising world" ("Theoretical" 20). In the same vein, Sandra Ponzanesi posits that "the pressing reality of new global dynamics challenges postcolonial intellectuals to think beyond the premises of their original quest" (xiii). Indeed, more than one scholar has noticed that even Spivak, one of the pioneers and main theorists of the postcolonial paradigm,

"clearly distances herself from mainstream postcolonial literary theory" (Maver, "Post-colonial" 27), proposing instead a move towards a model of planetary cultural studies. Spivak's call for the "death" of traditional ways of addressing literary comparativism through a canonical (and to a certain extent exhausted) postcolonial lens leaves no space for doubt: "The old postcolonial model — very much 'India' plus the Sartrian 'Fanon' — will not serve now as the master model for transnational to global cultural studies on the way to planetarity" (*Death* 85).

By highlighting cultural "permeation" and "blending," the new transcultural paradigm in literary studies appears more suitable for describing and analyzing the creative transcultural literature of transforming societies in an increasingly globalized world made of "multiple modernities" (see Eisenstadt; Welsch). For Bernd Peter Lange and Dirk Wiemann "transculturality ... does not have to be minoritarian, diasporic, or dissident, but rather is a constitutive feature of the culture at large" (6). Obviously, this does not mean forgetting about the ever present issues of mutual exploitation and subalternity, the machinations of power, and renewed prejudices fostered by the enforced globalized proximity to which postcolonial critical thinking has contributed. The issue here, however, is that "we are urged to think instead across and beyond the tidy, holistic entities of nations and cultures—transnationally, transculturally — if we hope to capture and critique the conditions of our contemporaneity" (McLeod

<http://dSPACE.flinders.edu.au/jspui/bitstream/2328/25473/1/Sounding_Silence.pdf>). A similar critique might be extended to the literary criticism of (im)migrant-diasporic literature seen from the perspective of multiculturalism (see Gunew, *Framing*). As it has already been argued, multiculturalism has been an important step in the development of a consciousness and sensibility of difference. But by overstressing the value of difference as well as of territorial nostalgia for lost geographies and broken identities (with the negative disruption of "displacement" seen as a main trope), it seems unable to foster togetherness and solidarity beyond ethnic-religious-national-cultural borders and to envision alternative modes of belonging for a new kind of derooted and denationalized generation of citizens. Hence, it can be better viewed as a step in the movement towards the complexity and multiplicity of cultures that might eventually lead to a transcultural mode of being, writing, reading, and critiquing.

My point here is that in these fluid, neomodernist protoglobal times there exists a possibility of a transcultural literature and a critical perspective that can be better attuned to the changes in contemporary cultural horizons (see Thomsen, "Migrant") and can convey the increased sensibility towards new forms of cultural pluralism and "diversity" triggered by a growingly heterogeneous social composition and more variegated migratory flows (see Faist; Vertovec). In other words, owing to a number of globalizing, trans-postnational phenomena which characterize the present, transcultural literature and scholarship can offer a profound and responsible approach to cultural encounters and their inevitable tensions or even clashes. Seen in this light, transcultural literature corresponds to some extent to the third moment of the (im)migrant-ethnic-multicultural writing process of imaginative transformation as proposed by Manfred Jurgensen. This process — which starts from the perspective of the primary-native culture (first moment) and the need for mediation in regard to the host culture (second moment) — leads to the development of "a language of creative cultural transformation" (Hopfer 27) or to what Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley call cross-cultural experimentation through the forging of new languages and new representations (third moment). This leads to a literature and to its adjoined literary scholarship which are more aligned to the sensibilities not only of a new breed of writers but also of a physically and mentally growing dislocated readership and scholarship. Commenting on Mark Stein's writing about the emergence of a transcultural imagination, Schulze-Engler notes that "the 'location of transculture' is not only to be found in realities outside texts or in the texts themselves, but also in audiences that make sense of them according to 'new regimes of reference, norm, and value' drawing upon several cultural backgrounds; the transcultural potential of texts thus lies in their impact on the reader as well as in the modes of representation required to approximate the cultural complexity they engage with" ("Introduction" xiv).

So where does transcultural literature stand in relation to postcolonial and multicultural literature? I argue that to a certain extent it delineates itself from the previous domains while still being permeated by them. In other words, it marks a further literary "wave" in the cultural and geographical dislocation of narratives from the center towards the periphery — or better still, it signals the nullification of the dichotomy between centers and peripheries (Moretti 66-68). Potentially, every

periphery can now become the center and vice-versa, in a constant game of construction and deconstruction where it is no longer possible to identify a single, permanent, and hegemonic center. According to Margareta Petersson, "the concept of transculturation, with its denial of centre-periphery binarism, is seen as a way of overcoming difficulties of linearities, or postcolonial reversed linearities" (156). However, this is not to deny that in ways similar to the economic system of globalization within the framework of liberal capitalism, the "planetary system" of literature, that is, the "one world literary system (of inter-related literatures)," is "profoundly unequal" (Moretti 54, 56).

Hence, we can say that transcultural literature is overcoming the (im)migrant-exile-diasporic-ethnic forms of writing conceived within the context of postcolonialism and multiculturalism — the two dominant paradigms of the last three or four decades — to inscribe itself in the emerging theoretical context of transculturality. Transcultural literature, despite sharing a common constellation of theoretical languages and modes of reasoning, is pursuing a literary discourse that is branching away from the tradition of (im)migrant and postcolonial literatures as the mainstream paradigms in the Literatures of Mobility. Transcultural literature often does have its roots in (im)migration, as well as in postcolonial-diasporic conditions and in the identity *depaiement* that ensues from them, but it manages to detach itself from them in a process of transformation. Nonetheless, this more or less "imagined" and still roughly theorized process does not imply that these different modes of writing are opposed to each other nor that they are subject to a linear, temporal pattern of development with uncomfortable and unwanted evolutionary, unilinear, or teleological undertones; instead, it conceives of these specific modes of writing as coexisting, interacting, and often overlapping.

Transcultural literature is more in tune with the perspective referred to by Bill Ashcroft, Ranjini Mendis, Julie McGonegal, and Arun Mukherjee in their discussion of the cultural and hence the literary multipolar and decentered system of the "transnation," where the local and the global, the national and the transnational, are inextricably intermeshed and engaged with each other through new, though often unequal or disjunctive, configurations and heterogeneous temporalities: "If we think of the 'transnation' extending beyond the geographical, political, administrative and even imaginative boundaries of the state, both within and beyond the boundaries of the nation, we discover it as a space in which those boundaries are disrupted, in which natural and cultural affiliations are superseded, in which binaries of center/periphery and national self/other are dissolved. This is because, most noticeably in the case of China and India, the nation is already a migratory and even diasporic aggregation of flows and convergences, both within and without state boundaries" ("Transnation" 73). In other words, if the balances of economic power are rapidly changing, the same is happening to cultural and literary production. As Paul Jay puts it, "The stress ... ought to be on the multidirectionality of cultural flows, on the appropriation and transformation of globalized cultural forms wherever they settle in, with close attention to how those forms are reshaped and sent off again to undergo further transformations elsewhere" (42). Despite the inevitable issues raised by categorization and the desire of most, if not all, writers to escape unwanted definitions, we may thus classify transcultural literature in the context of the other subfamilies of the Literatures of Mobility — that is, (im)migrant, exile, expatriate, ethnic, refugee, diasporic, and postcolonial literatures — within the wider domain of world literature(s).

The concept and context of *Weltliteratur* has undergone a steady revision since it was first theorized by Goethe in 1827. In the nineteenth century and for most part of the twentieth century it was mainly attached to the notion of a strongly Eurocentric canon of literary works belonging to different national landscapes (see, e.g., Beecroft <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2334>>; Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári; Wang <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2336>>). Since the 1970s, poststructuralism, postcolonial approaches, and cultural studies have contributed significantly to the easing of the Eurocentric grip and to the expansion of the canon to a wider international, possibly truly planetary dimension. In its broad generalization, world literature encompasses literary texts which are coming from different cultural and linguistic traditions and are able to cross national and cultural borders. David Damrosch views world literature as constituted by "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (*What Is* 4). From the viewpoint proposed by Debjani Ganguly, this also means thinking of world literature as a literary territory "where the journeys are multi-linear and where literary capital can be found in works that are locally inflected and have both regional and global purchase" (26). In this light, the terrain of

world literature has grown to include progressively a greater number of those works which are able to go beyond their country of origin and thus challenge a way of studying literatures grounded in national traditions.

The latest theorizations, however, induce us to take a further, or lateral, step. They prompt us to see world literature as "a mode of circulation and of reading" applicable to "established classics and new discoveries alike," taking into account the complexity of the present cultural and economic globalization, with its distinctive traits and its narrations of transnational interactions (Damrosch, *What Is 5*). My article is meant to contribute to this more expanded and open-ended vision of world literature — better defined as "world literatures" in the plural — seconding, for example Maurizio Ascari's remark that "what we need today are tools rather than lists" (7) and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen's claim that "the future of world literature is ... the idea of a change in the way that literature will be taught and criticized" ("Migrant" 246). If scholars acknowledge that today there are books which seem to "ask to be read across several national and political scenes" (Walkowitz 223), accordingly, then, there seem to be readers who tend increasingly to read across several cultural and territorial landscapes, in the original or — even when English is not their native tongue — in English translations. Talking in this particular case about a prominently European readership, Tim Parks, an English writer living in Italy, contributed the following comment to the blog of the *New York Review of Books*: "There appears to be a tension, or perhaps necessary balance, between evasion and realism in fiction, between a desire to read seriously about real things — to feel I am not wasting my time, but engaging intelligently with the world — and simultaneously a desire to escape the confines of one's immediate community, move into the territory of the imagination, and perhaps fantasize about far away places" (<<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2012/jun/11/literary-globalization-europe-translation/>>). Kanaka Bashyam Sankaran widens Parks's European perspective further to incorporate the rest of the world, arguing that "modernization and globalization have brought about enormous social and economic changes in postcolonial societies, producing a new Third-World generation of cosmopolitan readers and learners" (412). Not only has the readership changed in the West as well as in the Rest, but owing to the growing influence of global mobility on people's lifestyles it has also started to transcend the national borders and has become more and more international, if not transcultural.

It is specifically with this global readership in mind that, for example, Kazuo Ishiguro, who was born in Japan but was since the age of five raised in England by his Japanese parents, has felt the necessity to focus on "shape, structure, and vision," or "architecture," rather than on "sentences" and "phrases" (Ishiguro qtd. in Walkowitz 219). As noted by Rebecca Walkowitz, it is as if Ishiguro's books and those of other major transnational/postnational authors were from the moment of their conception already meant either to be read in English by readers whose native tongue is not English or to be translated into other languages and thus to become part of a wider literary context. Talking specifically about the literature produced in English away from the centers of publishing in the U.S. and the United Kingdom, Jay shows us how this literature is becoming increasingly postnational "defined less by a nation than by a language, in which authors from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds write" (33).

Undoubtedly, there still exists a manifested predominance of the Anglo-American cultural sphere in the current circumstances of literary market production and distribution. Writers who achieve international visibility are still mainly selected and "created" by the publishing houses and reviews remain concentrated in the metropolitan centers of the West. But even when channeled, if not forced, by a dominantly Anglo-American book market, this trend towards literary globalization still achieves a positive impact: Armando Gnisci maintains that there is a world literature which "begins to form a planetary network of knowledge and acknowledgements, of translations and multiple reciprocities ... a poetics of the future" (Gnisci qtd. in D'Angelo 177). The commercialization of books and the celebrity industry surrounding their creators on a global scale is also responsible for a parallel and increasingly contested phenomenon, the carefully marketed push towards "ethnicized" authors and the growing fashion of inserting transnational settings in so-called global novels. In other words, we are witnessing an attempt to sell to a global audience novels with an ethnic and most often exotic flavor of India, China, or the deep African South. Talking about the international success of a number of authors from the Indian subcontinent, Kai Friese warns that they all belong to a type of fiction he calls "Hinduistic

realism ... with an eye on international consumption ... An excess of 'authentic' detail ... This is India by numbers. Hinduism 101 ... peppered with set pieces on spicy food, master-servant dynamics and redeeming vignettes on the possibility of romance in an arranged marriage. Reincarnation. Mighty Avatars, Spicy Food, Servants, Arranged Marriage. Sound familiar?" (Friese qtd. in Baranay 126).

Despite the flattening commercial practices, the simplistic search for ethnic color and the alluring traps of the "postcolonial exotic" hovering over the contemporary international literary market, transcultural literature, which *de facto* belongs to the growing and globalizing terrain of world literature(s), tends towards that "transpace" that lies beyond the divides, often commercially or ideologically emphasized, of cultures (see Huggan). Paraphrasing J. Hillis Miller — who speaks of contemporary world literature in general — transcultural works help us "to understand and to live productively in the new uncomfortable world of global intercommunication and global wandering that Nietzsche calls 'nomadism'" (264). In this light, transcultural literature is similar to "new world literature" as proposed by Elke Sturm-Trigonakis in her *Comparative Cultural Studies and the New Weltliteratur*: "the complexity and diversity in the economy of communication resulting from globalization is correlated with the appearance of linguistically heterogeneous texts, whose symbolic character feeds on more than one cultural environment" (159).

In conclusion, the realm of world literature(s) encompasses all those literary works which "circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (Damrosch, *What Is 4*). For those who see it in a slightly more stringent — and probably more pragmatic — perspective, it encompasses only those works which are "actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture" (Damrosch, *What Is 4*). For this very reason, Damrosch's conclusion is that world literature is both "a mode of circulation" and "a mode of reading" whose parameters are constantly shifting: "Just as there never has been a single set canon of world literature, so too no single way of reading can be appropriate to all texts, or even to any text at all times" (Damrosch, *What Is 4*). Further, Damrosch proposes to include in the broad definition of world literature also those works which, instead of going out in the world, bring in the world; this usually happens, for example, when "writers draw on foreign literatures in order to intervene within their own culture" ("World" 307). Following this line of reasoning, I see as an integral part of world literature(s) also those Literatures of Mobility, including transcultural literature, whose authors have — in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously, physically or virtually — made the voyage out of and from their national, linguistic, ethnic, or cultural boundaries. This is why, in their writings, they negotiate but also inspire new border-crossing imaginaries and, in some instances, either create entirely imaginary homelands or re-imagine the world at large.

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