

World Literature(s) and Comparative Literature: A Book Review Article of Books Published in English and German

2011-2013

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Elke STURM-TRIGONAKIS

World Literature(s) and Comparative Literature: A Book Review Article of Books Published in English and German 2011-2013

For the study of literature in a global context Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* is primary and among recent publications for those who read German, it is Katharina Mommsen's 2012 "*Orient und Okzident sind nicht mehr zu trennen.*" *Goethe und die Weltkulturen* best to start with (see also Birus <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1090>>). Divided in five thematic parts, Mommsen presents her thoughts on the influence of Oriental poetry on Goethe and other German poets, on various aspects of Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, on the relationships between Goethe and Turkish culture, on Goethe and China, Alexander the Great, etc. Providing the reader with detailed insights into the world-embracing and transcultural orientation of Goethe's oeuvre, Mommsen's book is an excellent contribution to the present efforts for the revival of *Weltliteratur*. Reading Mommsen's seminal book one becomes aware of the fact that world literature is much more than a scholarly field: it is a timeless way of thinking which today is as fruitful and relevant as it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Similar to Mommsen's book, Peter Goßens's 2011 *Weltliteratur. Modelle transnationaler Literaturwahrnehmung im 19. Jahrhundert* is about the early evolution of the term *Weltliteratur* and fills a lacuna in comparative literature because demonstrates the presence of transnational thinking during the entire nineteenth century, usually considered as the nationalist century *par excellence*. Unfolding bibliographical exhaustiveness and detail, Goßens follows the traces of world literature from August Wilhelm Schläzer's first mention of *Weltliteratur* in 1773 to Adolf Stern's 1888 *Geschichte der Weltliteratur in übersichtlicher Darstellung*. Goßens discerns three different phases: the first comprises the genesis of the term and its evolution from 1773 until Goethe's death in 1832. The success of the term would not be conceivable without precedent pretensions of universal education (*Bildung*) or universal history as they were manifest in various *historiae literariae*, a concept in the tradition of the compendia of universal knowledge which go back to the sixteenth century (33-34) and prepared the soil for cosmopolitan Humanism around 1800. Besides important predecessors such as Johann Gottfried Herder or the Schlegel brothers, journals such as the *Edinburgh Reviews*, *Le Globe*, *L'Eco*, and of course Goethe's *Über Kunst und Alterthum* offered a forum of debate about world literature: these were the new media of an *époque* of accelerated circulation of information, goods, and, last but not least, cultural products of any kind (92-104). In this international exchange of ideas, translation played a prominent role as a way towards a transnational perception of literature. Goethe emphasized that the translator not only makes the foreign text accessible for a greater audience, but has to create his/her own work of art which was thought to be part of the project of world literature in German (108). Around 1832, the year of Goethe's death, the debate about world literature gains a political utopian character. As Goßens explains, Giuseppe Mazzini, writer and fighter for an independent Italy within a European civil society modifies Goethe's idea of world literature as an intellectual stock market of ideas about aesthetics and literature towards a *letteratura europea* as a concept in the evolution of life without any hierarchization or dominance of one single nation (118). Thus politicized, the term reaches the next generation, especially the group of the Junges Deutschland whose members perceived world literature as a space of liberal thought open to all nations and social classes. Thus 1832 signifies not the death of Goethe's idea, but its enrichment by a socio-political dimension and a diversification of its transnational character.

During the second phase between 1832 and 1848, the term is modified towards the field of societal and political reforms, and Goßens explores the plethora of functionalizations and contextualizations of *Weltliteratur* in detail and evidences the fact that the transnational dimension of the term has always been present. Thus, he emphasizes the transnational character of a historical period in which in the majority of studies about literature and culture the perspective was primarily nationalist (e.g., Fohrmann) (8) owing to the formation of ideological blocks after 1945 (129). In my opinion this chapter is the most innovative in the book and we owe to Goßens a new approach to this period: he shows how the concept of world literature was discussed in the Berlin

circles of followers of Goethe and Hegel around Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (145-75), still being related to a cosmopolitan vision of the world on the one hand, whereas especially Goethe's later works were read as a social utopia à la Saint Simon on the other (9). The controversial discussion about world literature reaches a culmination with Marx's and Engels's 1848 *Communist Manifesto* directed against bourgeois socialism and in which *Weltliteratur* was not understood as a transnational concept for education, but as one of the repressive instruments of transnational bourgeoisie in order to oppress the working classes (Goßens 304-06).

After the failure of the 1848-49 revolutions, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism gave way to nationalism and *Weltliteratur* as part of a liberal civil society was substituted by a qualitative historiographical project of world literature. Nevertheless, as Goßens argues, both controversial currents were constitutive for the nation building of Germany because as much as political ideology praised the national, horizons became wider owing to technological and economical developments (315-18). Theodor Mundt, Adolf Stern, or Hermann Hettner published various histories of literatures worldwide using a comparative approach in order to define — with a more or less nationalist orientation — a global canon of highbrow texts, which laid the foundations for the perception of world literature (11). Around 1860-70 the concept of *Weltliteratur* entered scholarship with comparative poetics whereas the term *Vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* already circulated since 1839 when Theodor Mundt used it for the first time in his essay about the French comparatist Edgar Quinet (11), but only in 1927 will Victor Klemperer occupy the first chair of comparative literature at the University of Leipzig (399).

Three new introductions into comparative literature in German have recently been published, but which weigh the role of world literature differently: Ernst Grabovszki in his 2011 *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft für Einsteiger* locates the current discussion on world literature in the context of US-American debate on multiculturalism and postcolonialism. Grabovszki underwrites a traditional perception of the study of literature based on financial conditions meaning the production and distribution of books (61-70). In my opinion, even for his target readers — "beginners" — his approach is insufficient. Goßens's article on world literature in Rüdiger Zymner's and Achim Höller's 2013 *Handbuch Komparatistik. Theorien, Arbeitsfelder, Wissenspraxis* is more substantial because Goßens evaluates world literature as one of the main working fields of comparative literature and delineates an outline of the discourse in question and supports it with a bibliography. Evi Zemanek's and Alexander Nebrig's 2012 *Komparatistik* the pedagogical intention of the volume is obvious: it is divided into thirteen chapters with key words at the margins of every paragraph and supplemented by a short reading list for students of comparative literature. There is also a list of universities with comparative literature departments in German-speaking countries (although such is available easily online), it contains a student's guide for essay writing, and discusses professional perspectives for graduates. Beyond these practical advantages of the volume, the authors present an excellent outline of the discipline's history (chapters 1 to 3) and dedicate chapters to topics such as interdisciplinarity (chapter 4), interart studies (chapter 11), intergeneric relations (chapter 6), etc. Zemanek and Nebrig locate literary translation within the frame of comparative literature — as do also Mommsen and Grabovszki — and the chapter is a good overview of translation as cultural transfer (118-25), but the absence of Emily Apter's, Susan Bassnett's, Lawrence Venuti's, and André Lefevere's works is astonishing given the fact that Anglophone scholarship is present throughout the book. Helpful is Nebrig's article about *Interlingualität* because it supplies undergraduate students with some foundations of linguistics which is necessary when analyzing multilingual texts and Dirk Kretzschmar's article about *Interkulturalität* adds to the relevance of Nebrig's article in the context of interculturalism / postcolonialism / globalization and contextualization world literature (on this, see also Sturm-Trigonakis).

I now turn to English-language volumes on world literatures: Theo D'haen's 2011 *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature* and the collected volumes *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* edited by D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (2012) and *World Literature: A Reader* edited by D'haen, César Domínguez, and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (2013). The eight chapters of the *Routledge Concise History of World Literature* lead the reader through all

dimensions of world literature from its beginnings in Goethe's era and France to the Renaissance to the leading role of US-American scholarship after World War II, etc. In chapter one D'haen offers an outline of the special political situation in the German-speaking countries around 1800 and their longing for a national state which had as a consequence that "Goethe concentrate[d] on the complementarity of the local and the universal" (11) and set into being the interpretation of Goethe's idea as "the totality of all the world's [i.e., then European] literature" (26). In chapter two he discusses Eurocentrism as an inherent perspective of world literature and comparative literature owing to humanism (e.g., Erasmus, More, Palladio, etc.) and why exiled scholars such as Leo Spitzer or Erich Auerbach focused on world literature and served as the starting point for Edward W. Said as a "driving force in the emergence of postcolonial studies in the USA and the world with his ground-breaking *Orientalism* (1978)" (35). Further, he elaborates on the work of US-American scholars such as Apter who perceives Goethe's concept precisely because of its anchorage in European humanist philology as open to function on a worldwide scale. The beginnings of world literature coincided with those of comparative literature and in chapter three D'haen shows how the French-dominated polyglot discipline of comparative literature from the first discourses by Jean-Jacques Ampère on *littérature comparée* after World War II developed into a US-dominated discipline with a broader scope beyond the genealogical filiation (51), but so with the loss of plurilingualism and a concentration on literary theory (51). As a consequence, comparative literature was absorbed by departments of English and saw its revival only when scholars such as Djelal Kadir claimed a "radical re-thinking of comparative literature" and a "worlding" of literary criticism in general (70), thus returning to René Etiemble in the 1960s (71). The practical side and the applicability of world literature has been widely thematized in US-American scholarship where comparative literature and world literature courses have been taught since the late nineteenth century and this lead to the boom of anthologies of world literature in English translation and a reduced reception of the established canon of works which triggered critical reactions by such as David Damrosch, John Pizer, Sarah Lawall, Eric Hayot, Djelal Kadir, etc., who posit that "distant reading" of the translated texts is best in order to provoke awareness of the students about their own standpoints (94-95; see also D'haen, "Major" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/9>>). Contrary to this pedagogical approach to world literature in the U.S., scholarship in Europe has favored a micro-systemic approach to world literature which D'haen discusses in his chapter five referring to Marxist influenced literary criticism from Lukács, Benjamin, Adorno, and Habermas to Jameson, Bourdieu, Luhmann, Wallerstein, and Even-Zohar (interestingly, the work of Siegfried J. Schmidt is not mentioned; on Schmidt's work see, e.g., Lisiak and Tötösy de Zepetnek <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1581>>; see also Schmidt <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1569>>; Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Systemic"; on micro-systemic versus macro-systemic approaches to the study of literature and culture see, e.g., Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári).

In chapter six D'haen goes beyond literary matters *in stricto sensu* and engages on a discussion about translation studies as an important part of world literature studies and refers to the work of Bassnett, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Venuti's contributions to the field. Whereas in chapters one to six D'haen focuses on theories and approaches originating in the major linguistic communities of Europe and the USA, in chapters seven and eight he broadens the perspective to postcolonialism and postmodernism — or "counter-postmodernism, as D'haen puts it (138) — as the two decisive theoretical modes which added innovative initiatives from Scandinavia, Spain, Portugal, Latin America, and China. A commented guide to further reading and a rich bibliography concludes his introduction to the vast field of world literatures. The special merit of the above books lies in D'haen's ability to expose intellectual developments through the centuries, thus demonstrating the deep roots of many contemporary theories.

D'haen's, Damrosch's, and Kadir's *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* contains fifty articles whose authors are prominent scholars of contemporary world literature studies. The volume is divided into four parts: 1) a survey of the historical dimension of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* and including Auerbach and Etiemble, as well as non-Western writers such as Rabindranath Tagore and Zhongshu Qian, 2) a discussion on the relationship between world literature and other disciplines,

discourses, or research fields, e.g., history and theory (Vilashini Cooppan), cosmopolitanism (César Domínguez), and postmodernism (Robert J.C. Young), 3) the theoretical dimension of world literature and issues such as the role of the book market (Ann Steiner), the influence of the internet (Thomas O. Beebee), and the importance of the environment (Ursula K. Heise), and 4) approaches from different geographical areas and it goes beyond traditional Western perceptions of world literature and offers a panorama of the world literature discourse today including Africa (Nirvana Tanoukhi), colonial and postcolonial India (Vinay Dharwadker), the Arabic world (Sandra Naddaff), Latin America (Djelal Kadir), and East and Southeast Asia (Red Chan, Ronit Ricci).

The majority of the articles are written by scholars in each field: for example, Longxi Zhang introduces the reader to the in the West unknown — unjustly so — Chinese comparatist Zhongshu Qian (1910-98) who in 1985 — together with Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, Gérard Genette, Wolfgang Iser, and Robert Weimann — became an honorary member of the Modern Language Association of America and is considered to "represent the best humanistic scholarship in twentieth-century China" linking Chinese and Western literature and culture (81; on Chinese-language scholarship in comparative literature see, e.g., Chen and Sheng <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/14>>; Wang <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/17>>; Wang and Liu; Zhou and Tong <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1092>>). Another example of outstanding scholarship in my view is the article by Michael Holquist who reveals the strong interdependence between philology and world literature: he exposes the history of philological practices from the first written Sumerian and Sanskrit documents passing over the philological beginnings in Germany around 1800 and draws the conclusion that "philology will have to bring the skills it has honed over the centuries from the study of antiquarian works to bear on very recent works ... under the revolutionary conditions of world literature it must once again reinvent itself" (155). Applying philological methods of analysis to contemporary texts is Jason Frydman who negotiates world literatures in examples including Maryse Condé's texts (236-40). According to Frydman, it is diasporic literature which constitutes more than any other type of texts in Goethe's space of transnational flows of texts and communication and thus "diaspora studies refract through an alternative set of spatial and temporal coordinates the mapping of world literary systems" (240). I underline that the volume, in its first and second part, presents an excellent introduction to the historical evolution of *Weltliteratur*, but more interesting and innovative are the parts 3 and 4 because of their global approach as far as scholarship is concerned and because they offer points to other discourses such as gender, the internet, politics, or the environment each time demonstrating the actuality and the interconnectedness of world literature as a mode of perspective. As target group of this book I would see more the scholar or the graduate student than the undergraduate student since it presupposes familiarity with texts of the main exponents of world literatures. However, this can be compensated to great extent by the complementary use of D'haen's, Domínguez's, and Thomsen's *World Literature: A Reader*.

Another recent introduction to comparative literature is the 2011 *Companion to Comparative Literature* edited by Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas. The editors highlight the fact that comparative literature "is a dynamic and plural field of study perpetually transforming its theoretical assumptions, critical methodologies, and objects of study" (3). In their opinion, the capability of the discipline to continuously reinvent itself — i.e., in the U.S. — can be followed in the reports of the American Comparative Literature Association by Harry Levin (1965), Roland Greene (1975), Charles Bernheimer (1993), and Haun Saussy (2004) with their different foci and postulates (3). As a consequence, Behdad and Thomas have chosen metaphors of mobility in order to describe antecedent and current dimensions of a discipline in continuous motion.

In the first section entitled "Roadmaps" scholars such as Rey Chow, David Palumbo-Liu, and Saussy circumscribe the genealogy and the conflicting characteristics of comparative literature and discuss the relation between world literature and comparative literature. Following Saussy, world literature should not be reduced to "good" versus "narrow-minded" nationalist literature, but can serve as a "starting point rather than a goal toward which Goethe urged us to be 'hastening'" a practical framework of comparative investigation instead of a "truth awaiting discovery" (63).

Contrary to the opening of comparative literature toward the literatures of the whole world, Kenneth Surin prophesizes a further proliferation of world literature courses in English with translated texts whose boundaries to courses of "global English literature" become always more vague and thus narrow the field on the other side (71). In the second section — "Theoretical Directions" — Sharon Marcus argues precisely against these tendencies of reduction and for more inclusive comparative practices. She draws attention to the scant presence of drama and theater (136) and thus acts in the spirit of her fellow authors such as Efraín Kristal or Eric Hayot who in their way support an opening of the discipline to artistic media other than literary texts and consequently to a wide range of theoretical approaches (136; on this see also Finger; Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Digital*). This claim is elaborated in the contributions of the third section — entitled "Disciplinary Intersections" — on "the cross- and inter-disciplinary nature of comparative analysis" (6) and articles provide examples for overlapping fields of study in comparative literature with sociology (Gisèle Sapiro) and political economy (Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller). A relevant and timely contribution is by Jorge Coronado who explores the visual and the literary in Latin America underlining that working with visual material such as photographs "seems to represent a disciplinary reformulation in Spanish and Portuguese" (157).

Contributors to the fourth section — entitled "Linguistic Trajectories" — negotiate questions of language in terms of center-periphery binarisms and discuss the still dominating relevance of European languages and "high culture" with their corresponding philologies (7). For example, Mary Louise Pratt traces the lingual performance in contemporary texts and finds "first, the increased redistribution of linguistic competences through migration, and second, the expansiveness of comprehension" (286) and introduces "heterolingualism" as a term for literary code-switching (288). It might be owing to the Anglophone matter of course of English dominance that language mixing allows for intensive reflection paired with astonishment: since the publication of Leonard Forster's 1970 *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature* and considering the language mixing practices in Chicano literature or European immigrants' texts, to name only two examples, it should be obvious that monolingualism has not been and is not the rule (see, e.g., Sturm Trigonakis).

The fifth section of *Companion to Comparative Literature* — "Postcolonial Mobilities" — is most relevant because of the importance of contextualizing postcolonial studies with new contours of comparison. Thus, Allison Crumly Deventer and Thomas define a new configuration of Europe that includes the acceptance of the African "heritage" of European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, and even Germany (the latter being an example for a recent approach to its colonial past [on this, see also Dunker; Honold; Schneider]). As a consequence, Deventer and Thomas point to "Emerging Fields and New Directions" by pleading for Afro-European studies in order to reveal a forgotten part of Europeanness without falling back into the binarism of periphery and center (352). The traditionally asymmetrical balance between the former colonial and the colonized as it was the point of departure seems to be of an always lesser relevance: Theo Goldberg, observing more a "globalization of the racial than the racialization of the globe" (361) proposes to go beyond comparison to relationality through putting "the elements in question into play, causally and productively" in order to get a "cartography of reiterative impacts, of their transformations and redirections" (364). Similarly, Françoise Lionnet underlines the "potential for 'transcolonial solidarities'" and argues for "transversal and rhizomatic" critical work instead of a reduction to revealing power asymmetries (393). Sangeeta Ray broadens comparative methodology by linking the study of postnational US-American literature to postcolonial ecocriticism "in order to critically engage with the comparative possibilities enabled in both" (421).

The final section is of the volume dedicated to "Global Connections," that is, world literature itself that in the first article by Apter is traced in Edward W. Said's "Terrestrial Humanism." Brian T. Edwards explores the idea of world literature in the circulation of literary texts beyond their context and asks whether texts in another environment than that of their authors require "another version of reception theory, or even a replay of an older understanding of literary influence?" (454). Charles Forsdick puts emphasis on the variety of languages and locations of world literature and questions the equation of the traditional configurations *Weltliteratur*, world literature, and

littérature-monde when considering the fact that monolingualism has stopped being a characteristic of high-brow literary works (476-77). The section closes with an outlook on what world literature can signify today and where it can be located — although it causes "trouble" as Graham Huggan puts it in his contribution. Following Huggan, "the 'new' Comparative Literature ... seems condemned — at least for now — either to depend on translation practices that inadvertently reinforce the cultural hegemony of English, or to preach a linguistic diversity it cannot possibly practice, just as World literature reaches out towards a differentiated world it cannot possibly grasp" (504).

In sum, contributors to *Companion to Comparative Literature* reflect the US-American comparative literature scholarship and its searching for a new contouring of their all too dynamic and mobile discipline. As a consequence, the reader often finds more questions than answers. Thus, while the volume is an important contribution because it presents a panorama of approaches and problems, the following monographs offer more finished pictures concerning various aspects of world literature as a challenge and comparative literature as a discipline.

Alexander C.Y. Huang's approach to the discourse of world literature in his 2012 *Weltliteratur und Welttheater. Ästhetischer Humanismus in der kulturellen Globalisierung* stems from a perception of world literature as the sum of canonical works in every national literature. Huang seems to be predestinated for comparative cultural work by his acquaintance with English and Chinese literature with specialization on Shakespeare's studies and publications in English, German, and Chinese. Huang argues that humanism is the driving force behind any artistic effort and that humanistic values — contrarily to aesthetics — have not really changed throughout the centuries. As a consequence, he inquires into traces of humanism as the discourse of *aporia* and subversion towards established values and hierarchies in literary texts of globalization with emphasis on Chinese authors of the twentieth century. In the first part of his book Huang presents a survey over more than a hundred years of Chinese literature followed by chapters about the reception, translation, and adaption of Shakespeare's oeuvre in the Sinophone world and he underlines the intertwining of European Renaissance ethics, the values of the beginning of the industry epoch, and Chinese Confucian humanistic tradition in modern Chinese literature. In the second part of the book he negotiates the concretization of humanist ideals through featuring human subjectivity in Chinese and intercultural theater. In his chapters about Shakespeare's adaptations on Asian stages or in films, Huang discusses problems of cultural tourism and how Asian Shakespeare performances are received in Europe (127-150). Summarizing contemporary reality in Western world literature courses, Huang discerns two contrary tendencies: following Chow, he states a still ongoing discrimination of non-Western literature when teaching world literature on the one hand (193-95) and that is contrasted by a mystification of particularly every Chinese cultural utterance as the older and better opposite concept to any Western one on the other (196): both hinder a veritable perception of alterity (spatial or temporary). Instead, every scholar as "translator of cultures" ought to be challenged to include both, the universals and the differences (198). Thus, Huang succeeds in deepening the debate about world literature and globalization through a historical prolongation in the sense of the Annales School's *longue durée* and he provides a depth of focus in his point of view which is unusual in the nervous and swiftly moving discourse of/on globalization.

What Huang argues for could also be said about Ottmar Ette's "four phases of accelerated globalization" (7). Although Ette has his scholarly roots in Romanic philology, he has been investigating the vast field of "literatures on the move" based on processes of transfer between Latin America and Europe as a starting point, but always inscribing them in a global context. In his other book — *TransArea. Eine literarische Globalisierungsgeschichte* — Ette offers a summary of his tenets about literature worldwide and globalization and he perceives several globalizations: world history of the last five centuries per se is a history of globalization with four phases of special acceleration each of which has its own symbols, texts, and world wide spread diseases. According to Ette, the first accelerated phase was the Spanish expansion to the Americas: it signified the first politics on a global scale and found its symbol in the caravel, but also in syphilis (8-12). The second phase comprises the period approximately from 1750 to 1850 when explorers such as Bougainville and Cook eliminated the last blank spots from the world's map with help of the frigate. This period

resulted not only in an increase of knowledge, but also revolutions such as the industrial revolution or the revolution in France, Haiti, and in the U.S., and the spread of the yellow fever. In Germany — Goethe's time — this phase is characterized by the proliferation of composite constructions with "welt" which demonstrates a new consciousness of thinking globally (14-16). The third phase from 1860 until the end of World War I is symbolized by the steam ship and the rise of the U.S. as the first non-European hegemonic power on the one hand and harsh fights for the distribution of the planet's wealth together with the dissemination of the cow pox on the other (18-20). The fourth phase is set from the 1980s until now and represents the period of globalization including sensibility for the Other, but with Europe and the U.S. still being the world's hegemonic powers.

For every phase of accelerated globalization, Ette discusses a wide range of different texts from Bartolomé de las Casas and Alexander von Humboldt to Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, José Martí, and Edouard Glissant, Amin Maalouf, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Yoko Tawada. Although Ette puts special emphasis on the Caribbean area, he demonstrates that the literatures of the world are a complex reservoir and medium of knowledge with a plethora of forms which allow us to think of and to map the world in a polyperspective and polylogical way (30). Ette refuses any attempt to define literature from a fixed starting point (e.g., from Europe or from a national literature) because most literary texts unfold a dynamic field which corresponds with a world that has at least since the sixteenth century functioned within the logic of vectorization. Thus, Ette not only goes beyond the translational turn and the spatial turn because he favors movement and mobile mapping instead of territorialization and fixing boundaries (27). With *TransArea* Ette generates a theoretical configuration which is able to explore literatures on a global scale grounded on the principles of transdisciplinarity, transculturalism, translanguaging, transmediality, transtemporality, and transspatiality (32-38). Ette's concept convinces because it shows the entanglement of different globalizations and reveals that every single phase of the accelerated phase of globalization has foundations in former ones and because it offers tools of analysis for reading contemporary hybrid texts backgrounding them with older texts. Contrary to the focus on contingency and rhizome patterns of new historicism, Ette provides our globalization and its texts with a history in Braudel's sense of a *longue durée* (286) and finds the adequate metaphor for the continuous processes of lingual and cultural translations and transfers in the coral, a picture created by the poet Khal Torabully from Mauritius (294). The coral, on first sight, seems to build up enormous underwater mountains, but at second sight these coral mountains such as Australia's Great Barrier Reef consist of millions of small flexible entities interconnected and rooted in the ground of the sea. This is how literature is entangled worldwide and consequently every attempt to isolate parts of this literary coral would be condemned to failure. In *TransArea* Ette has not only written a literary history of globalization(s) shaping the perception of transrealism of the majority of literary texts on a global scale, but created a set of identifying and analyzing tools to approach and contextualize these texts on a theoretical level by means of close and distant reading.

Focusing exclusively on literary texts but starting from a similar point of departure as Ette, in his 2011 *Literature of the Global Age: A Critical Study of Transcultural Narratives* Maurizio Ascari aims at configuring a new class of literary texts since "the contexts in which literature is produced and consumed have changed dramatically in the last few decades due to the process of globalization" (6). Ascari perceives a tendency to transculturality and hybridity in the broadest sense of the term be it with regard to the transcultural existence of many authors, be it linguistically by the use of polyglossia, be it by blurring boundaries between inner and outer matters, or be it because of the entanglement/interconnectedness of "fictional characters and events ... pertaining to different discourses and literary genres" (96, 139, 146). Based on this, Ascari discusses eight novels — published between 1984 and 2003 — in order to prove his tenet that around the turn of the millennium a "cultural shift" has taken place which expresses itself in a "change in cultural perceptions and preoccupations" and not only "reassess[es] the category of postmodernism" (7), but also requires distant reading in Franco Moretti's sense instead of a close reading based on methodologies rooted in traditional categories such as national literature (8-9; see also Moretti). The choice of his literary examples reflects this globally oriented view: Julian

Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot*, Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*, Magda Szabó's *The Door*, Abraham B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani*, W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*, and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Although these books follow the logics of globalization on the expression and on the content planes, they also negotiate their subjects on a diachronic axis covering great historical events such as World War II, the Holocaust, the Cold War, and the Iranian Revolution (7).

The common denominator of the novels Ascari is analyzing is the fact that they delve into posttraumatic psychic stages and narrate the present through the past. In Ascari's opinion, individual and collective memory is the most relevant concern of the texts: they set stories going and unfold vast panoramas of the greatest traumatic events of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. In his readings of the novels, Ascari demonstrates convincingly that indeed one can detect a collective need of the writers to preserve memory in the most diverse circumstances, but usually in connection with personal living conditions, for example, when in Barnes's text the narrator rewrites the story of Flaubert's life and thus intends to overcome the grief of loss of his wife. In a similar way, Ascari reads *Everything Is Illuminated* as a quest of lost space of the Ukrainian Jewish Shtetl Trachimbrod during World War II and as a "self-inquiry in the Ukrainian characters, therefore setting the ground for reconciliation between victims and perpetrators" (158). Whereas novels such as these are about processes of re-orientation in posttraumatic situations, others such as *Kafka on the Shore* shatter certainties of history and disorient the reader because they reveal the ambiguity of past events for those who witnessed or lived them (159).

Ascari posits that in the novels the reader is confronted not only with narratives about life as "instrumental to a reflection that brings us into contact with the shadows of history" (20), but also with transtemporality in form of different time layers often represented in form of an investigation for two or more generations of a family. These time layers are interwoven in a sometimes tragic (Sebald, Foer, Szabó), sometimes playful (Barnes), sometimes magical (Murakami) way unfolding narratives grounded on the two basic historical pivots. For Ascari, therein lies the decisive difference to postmodernism with its uncritically nostalgic or distantly ironic approach to history (37) with a strong focus on self-referentiality (156) and these narratives reflect a new discourse of humanism in literature: "the human is back, right at centre stage" promoting "the metamorphosis of postmodernism into a new stage of our cultural evolution" (165). Although Ascari is against the foundation of a new canon (7), he succeeds in directing our attention to a globally spread, but nevertheless homogeneous category of contemporary texts which in their specific way elaborate issues of globalization through inscribing them in historical contexts.

In conclusion, the above reviewed books suggest 1) a reanimation of comparative literature through the debate around world literature, 2) despite the still overweight of Western classics in European languages there is a clear tendency to also considering non-canonical texts of any provenance, 3) comparison has become a matter of inter-arts practice under the influence of cultural studies, and 4) however world literature might be defined, it remains linked to comparative literature — and cultural studies — and to the discourse of/on globalization. However, there reigns a new awareness of historicity and following historiography philosophy and sociology one observes a tendency to expand world literature(s) as a category which link(s) globalization to previous ones. This historical contextualization of world literature(s) opens new perspectives for the re-reading of older texts as much it inscribes current historical works into a system of several globalization waves of different intensity. After decades of dead authors and structuralist close reading, the historical inscription declares presence again. While the often postulated requirement of more foreign language knowledge among comparatists remains far from being realized, the presumed "to world" and "worlding" literature (see Juvan <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/10>>; Kadir, "To World"; Klitgard) has led to the paradoxical situation that texts circulating in English translation have a good chance to become objects of research, but not others (see Eoyang <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/16>>). Thus, the hegemony of English not only in scholarship, but also concerning the selection of the research objects remains a lacuna. Further, the global perception of other discourses than English contradicts the pretension of a discipline representing global affairs. The transformation of comparative literature as a Western discipline

featuring world literature into a global scholarship dealing with literature has not been realized yet, but, as the above-discussed books document, we are on our way.

Last, but not least, I am surprised that the field of "comparative cultural studies" — when in fact many comparatists and world literature scholars partake in adopting tenets from cultural studies as the above reviewed books suggest — is rarely referred to despite the many relevant articles published in the journal *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>> or the numerous books and collected volumes published in the Purdue University Press series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies, not to speak of Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's publications who established the field since the late 1980s and early 1990s. Perhaps the contributions to the 2013 collected volume *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies* — edited by Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee — would raise interest because many of the tenets postulated in the books I review here are discussed in the volume.

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