

Introduction to New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe

Lucia Boldrini

*Goldsmiths University of London*

Marina Grishakova

*University of Tartu*

Matthew Reynolds

*University of Oxford*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#), [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), [Television Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: [<clcweb@purdue.edu>](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)

Recommended Citation

Boldrini, Lucia; Grishakova, Marina; and Reynolds, Matthew. "Introduction to New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.7 (2013): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2375>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2375)

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <[clcweb@purdue.edu](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)>

---

**Volume 15 Issue 7 (December 2013) Editorial 1**  
**Lucia Boldrini, Marina Grishakova, and Matthew Reynolds,**  
**"Introduction to *New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe*"**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/1>>

---

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 15.7 (2013)***  
Special Issue ***New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe.***  
**Ed. Marina Grishakova, Lucia Boldrini, and Matthew Reynolds**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/>>

---

**Introduction to *New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe***  
**Lucia BOLDRINI, Marina GRISHAKOVA, and Matthew REYNOLDS**

The articles gathered in *New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe* are written by scholars working in Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, and the United Kingdom (and in one case a co-author who works in India) and represent a variety of concerns, approaches, styles, and scholarly traditions which co-exist within comparative literary studies in Europe at present. Many of them originate in the sessions "Comparative Literature in Europe: State of the Art" under the auspices of REELC/ENCLS: Réseau Européen d'Etudes Littéraires Comparées / European Network of Comparative Literary Studies <<http://encls.net>> and "Disintegration and Integration in Comparative Literature" under the auspices of the British Comparative Literature Association at the 20th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association / Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée entitled "Comparative Literature as a Critical Approach." Contributors address the questions of how Europe is constructed in comparative literature and of what comparative literature can be in the twenty-first century given the discipline's European history which has caused it to be castigated by scholars both within Europe (see, e.g., Bassnett) and beyond (see, e.g., Spivak, *Death*; Tötösy de Zepetnek).

The comparative study of literature in Europe risks appearing to slide into a Eurocentric bias, yet the risk needs to be taken if we wish to continue to promote the discipline while doing so in a more self-aware form. The task remains of looking at ourselves in relation to a variety of issues: the history of comparative literature as a European discipline, how different identities of Europe fit — or not — within a notion of Europe, and how images of (other) Europes emerge within it, how different traditions of scholarly writing co-exist, how translation works within comparative literature and opens it up to the outside, and whether this too-often berated discipline can continue to act ethically — and, if so, how. Thus the articles (especially those by Boldrini, Grishakova, Franco, Le Juez, Shields, and Stojmenska-Elzesser) are about how comparative literature needs to re-think, expand, or reinvent itself, and they re-examine the origins, scope, and remit of comparative literature in its relations with other disciplines, in its ethical undertakings, and in the global context.

The old conception of European literature as a concert of national literatures is at odds with newly visible complexities of cultural production: texts which are themselves multilingual or multimedial or designed to be translated. Faced with such work and mindful of the global perspective and circulation of texts, it might at first sight seem best to discard the idea of Europe along with the idea of the nation and to adopt either more abstract or more local analytical frames. And yet the cultural nexuses in which these texts are embedded are complex and impossible to delimit: for many European writers, scholars, and critics ideas both of national and of European identity remain relevant even if they are contested. In one way or another, all contributors grapple with the question of how to contextualize the works discussed in a manner that does justice to the porosity of borders and hybridity of identities while not ignoring the persistent coercive power of national and European cultures. Contributors to the collection develop comparatist readings concerned with hybridity, multimediality, transmediality, digitization (Baetens, Bovcon, Grishakova, López-Varela and Khaski Gaglia), with understanding the impact of new media technologies on our apprehension of canonical texts and pasts, with finding the historical roots of such technological advances in the aesthetics of the avant-garde (Colombi and Fusillo), and with extending imagological readings and methods (Świdarska). They carry out analyses of texts in relation to other texts (Boldrini, Colombi and Fusillo) and through the theoretical examination of narrative or linguistic structures (Baetens, Grishakova, Dwivedi and Nielsen), they observe the effects of literary-historical categories as they are imported into different contexts from those in which they were originally developed (Marling, Meneghelli), they study how translation becomes the index of encounters between different cultures, of (im)migration, and of exile (Campbell, Djorić Francuski, Gjurčinova), and they consider how subjects are constantly constructed and reconstructed, whether through a "double I" (Boldrini) or a variable "we" (Dwivedi and Nielsen). Indeed, a multiple and fragmented "we" — formed through narratives which both meditate on our darkest histories and bring to our attention this "we" that both Europe and comparative literature, in their different spheres, construct — is both the subject and the object of much of this special issue of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*.

In "Positive Uncertainty and the Ethos of Comparative Literature"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/2>> Brigitte Le Juez focuses on the difficulty of arriving at a definition of comparative literature and argues that the difficulty needs to be embraced: collaborative projects between different specialists can make different methodologies and approaches available, thus increasing complexity without diluting focus. As she points out, complexity in other fields (such as career advice, hydrology, and geography) encourages flexibility and the ability to vary one's responses as a positive value, not as an obstacle to be overcome in the name of a single methodology. What Le Juez argues, then, is that the point of coherence for the comparative enterprise should be not so much a methodology as an ethos (see also Franco, Stojmenska-Elzeser). Similarly, in "Complexity, Hybridity, and Comparative Literature"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/5>> Marina Grishakova focuses on complexity, although she sees it not only in the combination of different approaches to a text or problem, but as being inherent in texts, media, and, more widely, aesthetic and cultural systems which are expressions of the social imaginary with the need to capture complex forms of experience which cannot be conveyed through dualistic modes of thinking. These expressions, often realized in hybrid forms, will, in turn, re-organize the social imaginary feeding back into the system. Grishakova describes various forms of "leakage" between textual and real-life experience and argues that the wish by certain critical schools to isolate the literary from the everyday clashes against the reciprocal contaminations which are produced by the complexity inherent in any semiotic communicative system. What Roman Jakobson called "poeticity" differentiating the literary from the ideological and the political in fact becomes an equivalent of Jan Mukařovsky's "aesthetic function" modifying every other function of discourse — artistic product, performance, etc. — in everyday experience.

Grishakova's insight into the fiction within non-fiction, the literariness of the non-literary, and Le Juez's focus on the ethical nature of the comparative enterprise give us additional angles from which to approach Sonja Stojmenska-Elzeser's championing of "aesthetic education" in her article "Comparative Literature, (Comparative) Cultural Studies, Aesthetic Education, and the Humanities" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/4>>. For Stojmenska-Elzeser, the history and present of

European comparative literature still need to come to terms with each other. On the one hand, the attempt to negotiate a tradition of comparative literary values from the perspective of a country, Macedonia, that can be seen as belonging to the "small or minor literatures" (see Casanova) highlights the difficulty of entering the mainstream as an equal partner when that mainstream has been discredited: in Macedonia there are constant debates about Europe and "us." On the other hand, the return, proposed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, to the Romantic context of Schiller's aesthetic education — the context that gives rise to that mainstream — can offer a possibility for European minor literatures to find their role within the European and the global context. Hence Stojmenska-Elzeser's emphasis on the teaching of literature "in European context" rather than of the literature(s) "of" Europe as a way to overcome Eurocentrism and pluralize the notion of Europe without seeking to sidestep the unavoidable fact of being European. Stojmenska-Elzeser thus triangulates comparative literature, (comparative) cultural studies, and aesthetic education as contiguous activities which can ground the boundary-crossing and interdisciplinary nature of our field. "Aesthetic education" is crucial in teaching us not to look for the "right" interpretation — which would be only a confirmation of ideological values — but to be open to the moment of surprise, of pleasure, of unexpected insight so as to recognize the uniqueness of the literary artifact that tells us something about ourselves and our relationship with the world. The positioning of comparative literature between the ability to foster aesthetic recognition and the ability to expand its horizons to examine other cultural productions (as it does through its proximity to cultural studies) is what, for Stojmenska-Elzeser, makes comparative literature an ethical activity.

Both Le Juez and Stojmenska-Elzeser refer to Yves Chevrel's assertion that comparative literature is a form of modern humanism (123). Bernard Franco adopts this as his title: "European Comparative Literature as Humanism" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/6>>. Franco — writing from the center of the Franco-Germanic tradition of comparative literature — reflects on the different epistemological pulls of that tradition. Like Le Juez, Franco asks whether comparative literature has a methodology, but his exploration of the issue concentrates on the place of the comparative enterprise within the changing historical relationships between the humanities, the human sciences, and the physical sciences. He traces these relationships as they elaborate notions of the human being: how best to study it? Should it be subjected to the use of reason and the separation of the scientist's subjectivity from the object of study? Or would this reduction de-humanize the human? For Franco, cosmopolitanism is inherent in the very nature of comparative literature and he traces the entwining of cosmopolitanism and humanism back to an exchange of letters between Erasmus and Luther in 1519 and describes various significant moments in the relationship between objective and subjective forms of knowledge until the moment when Stefan Zweig and Thomas Mann — as Europe is enveloped in the darkness of nazism and impending war and destruction — found a way to define the spirit of Europe and of the human through the mental distance created by departure from Europe. What Franco proposes is an endeavor to separate subject and object and, at the same time, a concern with an object that cannot be separated from the subject insofar as the observing subject cannot escape (nor wants to) his/her own investment in the idea of a humanist Europe.

While Franco's focus is firmly on Europe and seeks to recover (one may add, in a solidly Eurocentric tradition of comparative literary criticism) a humanist European spirit and while Le Juez and Stojmenska-Elzeser also emphasize the humanism of comparative literature, in "Comparative Literature, Ancient Rome, and the Crisis of Modern European History" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/3>> Lucia Boldrini warns against the uncritical embracing of such a "humanism" of (European) comparative literature. As she points out, Edward W. Said, while recognizing the generosity of spirit that imbued the trans-national perspective of a previous generation of scholars (such as Auerbach, Curtius, de Sanctis), warned against a notion of human values that conceals under the universalist ideal its own inscription within the European tradition — or even against values which inscribe Europe (more precisely, *Romania*) as the center of that tradition (Said 51-53). Further, as Jacques Derrida argued, the institution of "literature" is embedded in the Latin-Christian tradition. Boldrini considers novels which, written during or shortly after World War II and decolonization, but set at the time of the Roman Empire, establish a tense relationship between the moment of their composition and the period which they narrate — the period

that Ovid, in David Malouf's novel *An Imaginary Life*, defined as "the cusp ... between two cycles of time, the millennium of the old gods, that shudders to its end, and a new era that will come to its crisis at some far point in the future" (19): in other words, the period when the relationships between literature, power, nationality, and the human values which literature is seen to embody started acquiring the shape that would influence later centuries up to "its crisis" in the twentieth century. By putting in play history and transcendence, utopia and its impossibility (while opening the prospect of a future in which a better world can be envisaged), these novels, Boldrini argues, alert us to the fact that the ideal of the transcendent subject of humanism (and of comparative literature) needs to be tempered by a precise awareness of the particular historical conditions in which human beings exist.

In "Testimony and First-Person Plural Narration in Jensen's *We, the Drowned*"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/14>> Divya Dwivedi and Henrik Skov Nielsen explore the configuration of communities in relation to a shared history and problematize the idea that narration in the first person plural ("we"-narration) has necessarily to exclude an Other from the group which it represents. Dwivedi and Nielsen examine the distinction introduced in Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* between the "saved" and the "drowned." According to the paradox of testimony posited by Levi, the former can speak, but cannot speak for the latter: experience remains without language and language without experience. The "we" in *We, the Drowned*, however, constitutes and re-constitutes itself in different combinations. Thus "we" can include different generations, different sides in wars, and both the living and the dead in a co-narration that highlights rather than resolves tensions in the formation of identities. Dwivedi and Nielsen explore a question that lies at the heart of comparative literature: how do we negotiate the relationships between different communities — national, linguistic, cultural — whose identities are developed in linguistic and artistic artifacts and whose specificities, similarities, and differences the comparatist seeks to isolate?

How we represent ourselves, what happens when we encounter others, how "we" represent "them," how national stereotypes affect these representations — and also how we represent our own strangeness to ourselves — are related questions raised by Małgorzata Świdarska in "Comparativist Imagology and the Phenomenon of Strangeness" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/13>> where she develops an imagological methodology and deploys it to analyze two texts of Heimito von Doderer. Świdarska argues that representations which embody an ideological bias about a different group and representations of an other as other irremediably outside the community (cultural, national, or ethnic) of which one feels part can be studied in a way that extends the traditional methods of comparative imagology (as proposed for example by Beller and Leerssen). This enables us to understand better what Świdarska calls the multi-aspectual phenomenon of strangeness in literary texts and to identify a broader spectrum of the manifestations of "strangeness" in all their variety and complexity than other branches of literary criticism such as intercultural studies allow us to perceive.

The complexity of experience discussed by Grishakova and studied through imagology by Świdarska entails that contemporary comparative literature must focus on intercultural hybridization, diasporic communities, and sites of cultural fluidity. Such locations — theorized by Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés and, as Grishakova and Stojmenska-Elzeser remind us, adopted as the organizing principles of the *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (see also Sturm-Trigonakis) — can be analysed in a variety of ways. Grishakova, for example, refers to the representation of border spaces such as the German-Polish one in a film like *Lichter* (2003) directed by Hans-Christian Schmid. In other articles presented in *New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe* contributors explore texts which are themselves the result of linguistic and cultural hybridization, that foreground their own translatedness, and that employ techniques of multilingualism. Since they collapse the distinction between translation and source text, they pose a challenge to translation as it has been practised and understood traditionally.

In "Translation and Self-Translation in Today's (Im)Migration Literature"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/8>> Anastasija Gjurčinova explores the work of a range of writers who have immigrated to Italy to consider different negotiations of the relationship to the native and host languages. As she points out with reference to Edouard Glissant, writers never write monolingually as they are always in the presence of other languages: writing is always an encounter between the languages of the world. The Algerian-born Amara Lakhous lets Arabic and Italian

contaminate each other and for the Bosnian Božidar Stanišić — who usually writes in his native tongue and has his works translated into Italian by a professional translator — each Italian word is a journey with an uncertain destination and his native Serbo-Croatian a bridge to a country and a language that no longer exist. In Gëzim Hajdari's bilingual, parallel editions of poetry in Albanian and Italian, we find a refusal to choose, a constant dialogue between the languages, and a way to discover the world anew, although always in exile.

Biljana Djorić Francuski's "Multilingual Literature, Translation, and Crnjanski's *Роман о Лондону* (A Novel about London)" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/9>> is a detailed discussion of another linguistically laminated text, that of Miloš Crnjanski, and Djorić Francuski questions similarly the possibility of translation in a world of fluid movement between places, cultures, and languages. Crnjanski reproduces the linguistic variety he found in London where he lived in exile: English, of course, as well as French, Italian, Russian, and occasionally other languages contribute words to a text that also oscillates between scripts — Latin and Cyrillic — and "infiltrate" the Serbian, producing forms which belong to neither one language nor the other. Crnjanski worked on an English version of the novel, but never brought it to completion, and his work has still not been translated into English: Djorić Francuski suggests that one reason may lie in its hybrid linguistic texture, which is difficult to reproduce. With writing like this, translation is not something that comes to a pre-existing source text and transforms it, but is a constituent part of the creative process. At the same time, as Djorić Francuski demonstrates, the impossibility of translation can also be shown to be the product of the text's own translative nature.

For Madeleine Campbell too, translation can be performative, hybrid (in Grishakova's sense), and can be understood in terms of a journey with no single direction. In "Geomancing Dib's Transcultural Expression in Translation" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/10>> Campbell considers Mohammed Dib's work — written in French, but preserving the "ghost" of Arabic — as a nomadic oeuvre that draws on a wide range of sources including pre-Islamic and Islamic texts and moves between languages, texts, cultures, and periods, while remaining bound to the land and especially the desert and its shifting shapes. Campbell argues that Dib's "multivalent idiolect" asks to be translated performatively in a variety of styles and media, including "visual, auditory, or haptic semiotic systems." Whereas, in Dib's work, the French language can preserve many elements of other languages and cultures, in "Challenges and Possibilities for World Literature, Global Literature, and Translation" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/7>> Kathleen Shields shows how, in a globalized world, English can become a supraliterature and a language of mediation, located hierarchically at the apex of the pyramid of world languages and erasing difference and local specificity. The political role of translation and of making one's work "translation-ready" (or even "world-literature-ready") can be seen in the history of the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature and in the way that certain works are conceived with a global readership in mind. Thus works can resemble translations even when written originally in English. In this context, national and regional literatures, by contrast with a rising world literature that aims to be translated into English, may always appear marginal, provincial, "behind the times." Recovering the visibility of translation and studying its workings can be a way of arriving at an "ethics of translation." For Shields, then, learning to be aware of the role of translation comes close to what for Stojmenska-Elzeser is the function of aesthetic education. As Shields argues, referencing Suman Gupta, the study of translation enables the scholar and the critic to be both an insider of literary studies and an outsider who can observe the impact of globalized markets on literature (Gupta 170).

If writing and culture are in themselves hybrid, then comparative literature becomes a practice that can be pursued not only between texts and cultures, but also within them. Because multimedial forms require the reader/viewer to engage their different senses, contributors who discuss these forms — Baetens, Bovcon, Grishakova, López-Varela and Khaski Gaglia — are dealing with what an aesthetics of comparative literature ought to be: a focus not only on textual forms, but also on sensory responses to the encounter between forms, texts, and media. In "Monomedial Hybridization in Contemporary Poetry" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/15>> Jan Baetens argues that hybridity can occur through manipulation of the reader's experience of reading, for instance via textual ruptures, changes of pace, and even by the introduction of material that will provoke boredom. As

Baetens points out, hybridity has become a dominant way of thinking not only about genres and media, but also about individual texts. Yet one of the most prominent aspects of hybridity remains intermediality. In "Literary Aspects in New Media Art Works"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/17>> Narvika Bovcon explores works by Jaka Železnikar and Srečo Dragan who incorporate the verbal into a complex texture in order to stretch assumptions about reading and translation. Železnikar's works are algorithms and verbal texts making words fade or shift or turning readers into co-creators by requiring them to fill in gaps. Dragan creates installations which mingle verbalization with other types of response and require the explicit, active participation of their users. Referring to Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media*, Baetens points out that the advent of new media requires something more than routine observations about the superseding of previous media and the convergence of different media into the new forms: it requires the undertaking of a systematic study of their constituent elements, processes, and effects — not unlike the study of the avant-garde in the early decades of the last century. This is also what Bovcon suggests, inviting literary scholars of new media texts to focus on the production of code and algorithms which generate new work: this is located, each time — each virtually unrepeatably, we might say — in the space and moment of the reader-viewer-user, leading to an incessant updating of the work and of the very notions of literature and art.

Intermediality is not only the preserve of new media and in "Intermedial Serial Metarepresentation in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/16>> Asunción López-Varela and Camila Khaski Gaglia argue that the intermediality of illustrated texts is related to the interactivity between text and readers which is characteristic of serial publication. Readers of the *The Pickwick Papers* lived its multiple narratives more or less in real time and the illustrations by "Phiz" (Hablot Knight Browne) nurtured their involvement in the text. As readers could write to the author to comment on instalments — just as in equivalent modern forms of serial publication readers can publish their reactions on blogs and forums — their comments affected the story itself in ways not dissimilar to the processes Bovcon identifies in the works of new media artists. Illustrations printed alongside the verbal text might depart from its details, expanding some and neglecting others and in the case of re-publication with new illustrations, new alternatives could be introduced, modifying subtly the narrative or the relations between episodes or characters. As López-Varela and Khaski Gaglia highlight, the technical, legal, and commercial context of publication shaped the manner of production and consumption affecting both the texture of the work and its participation in the marketplace.

While López-Varela's and Khaski Gaglia's concern is with a Victorian text, Matteo Colombi and Massimo Fusillo discuss in "Artaud, Barney, and the Total Work of Art from Avant-Garde to the Posthuman" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/18>> the way in which the avant-garde has explored the limits of the human, hybridizing it and overcoming the boundaries with the animal, and also opening up the body to metamorphosis and manipulation. In this case, it is the human itself that becomes the subject of comparison and transformative hybridization. The fusion of art and life that the *Gesamtkunstwerk* entails (and which goes back at least to Romanticism) magnifies the complex processes of performance art. However, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* — from Wagner to the delirious aestheticism of nazism, Stalinist propaganda, and Disney theme parks — has also shown us how utopia can transform into dystopia and how the most experimental forms of the avant-garde can fall into kitsch. Literary analysis, and in particular comparative literary scholarship, shows us that when hybridity concerns the nature of the human the result combines disruptive aesthetics with a radical break in aesthetic theory and practice.

Colombi's and Fusillo's concern with the body is shared by Świdarska as she examines the acting and suffering *Leib* (in the phenomenological sense of the lived, experienced body) and it is also present in Raili Marling's discussion of the affective turn in recent criticism in "Gender and Emotion in Comparative Perspective" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/11>>. Emotions, normally thought of as private, are in fact mediated through cultural, social, and political processes and in turn can "attach us," in the words of Sara Ahmed, "to the very conditions of our subordination" (12). As the notion of the "public sphere" is defined increasingly by personal quotidian action, Marling argues that the challenge for feminism is how to combine the personal with the structural, affect with politics.

It would seem uncontroversial to wish for happiness, but what if this happiness means acquiescing in models proposed by social consensus." Few theorizations of affect and/or happiness have used literature outside of English, but how translatable are these theories to other contexts? Marling's explorations of the theme in Estonian literature, focusing in particular on Elo Viiding's work, raises interesting questions about these debates in a country that is caught between the post-Soviet era, the European Union, NATO membership, the neoliberal and nationalist, Western-looking present, and the vicinity of Nordic, social-democratic states. Marling suggests that the tensions present in the Estonian texts can help us to re-examine gendered anxieties in other literary contexts, including the international market.

The problem of translating theoretical models to new literary-cultural contexts is also tackled by Donata Meneghelli in "Periodization, Comparative Literature, and Italian Modernism" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/12>> with regard to the development of literary-historical categories. The initial theorizations of modernism come from Anglo-American contexts, yet its international nature is always emphasized suggesting an international inclusiveness which obscures differences in the construction of modernity and modernism in, for example, France, England, Germany, and Italy. Meneghelli discusses in particular the case of Italy where a notion of Italian modernism arose as a consequence not of international debates, but of a very local incident: the proclamation, by Italian Marxist criticism, of "the end of postmodernism." This required, on the one hand, the establishment of a "modernism" that postmodernism could differentiate itself from and on the other the diluting of the modernist break from realism, so that modernism itself was redefined as a form of realism. Such constructions complicate the field and demand that we engage in comparative analysis to start disentangling the local and international threads of these literary-historical knots.

From the studies gathered in *New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe* two key conclusions emerge: comparative literature is alert to questions of method because of its a priori transdisciplinary nature. Nothing in it can be taken for granted as being shared — not knowledge, values, languages, nor theoretical commitments — so that the grounds and purposes of our critical practice need to be continually reassessed and reasserted. And there is therefore not one discipline of comparative literature, but a multiplicity of comparative literatures — with different assumptions, frames, and styles of thinking — which ask in their turn to be compared. Any work of comparative literature has to orient itself in a field of comparative literatures.

*New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe* includes two book review articles: José Manuel Lucía Megías, "Cervantes and the World's Literatures: A Book Review Article on Hagedorn's *Don Quixote* Volumes" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/19>> and Arno Gimber, "European Romantic Prose: A Book Review Article of Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/20>>, and a thematic bibliography by Grishakova, Boldrini, and Reynolds, "Bibliography of New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/21>>. We thank the editor of the journal, Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, for making this publication possible.

### Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Bassnett, Susan. *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.
- Beller, Manfred, and Joep Leerssen, eds. *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. 1999. Trans. M.B. DeBevoise. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004.
- Chevrel, Yves. *La Littérature comparée*. Paris: PU de France, 1991.
- Cornis-Pope, Marcel, and John Neubauer, eds. *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Demeure: Fiction and Testimony." *The Instant of My Death and Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*. By Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000. 13-103.
- Gupta, Suman. *Globalization and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity P, 2009.
- Hutcheon, Linda, and Mario J. Valdés, *Rethinking Literary History: A Dialogue on Theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.
- Jakobson, Roman. "What is Poetry." *Selected Writings*. The Hague: Mouton, 1981. Vol. 3, 740-50.
- Malouf, David. *An Imaginary Life*. New York: Braziller, 1978.
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2000.



Mukařovsky, Jan. *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts*. Trans. Mark E. Suino. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1979.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1993.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2012.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia UP, 2003.

Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. "The New Humanities: The Intercultural, the Comparative, and the Interdisciplinary." *Globalization and the Futures of Comparative Literature*. Ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski and Alfred J. López. Thematic Section *The Global South* 1.2 (2007): 45-68.□

Author's profile: Lucia Boldrini teaches English and comparative literature at Goldsmiths University of London. Her interests in scholarship include comparative literature, fictional biographies and autobiographies of historical individuals, and modernism and the Middle Ages. In addition to numerous articles, Boldrini's book publications include *Autobiographies of Others: Historical Subjects and Literary Fiction* (2012) and *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in Finnegans Wake* (2001). E-mail: <[l.boldrini@gold.ac.uk](mailto:l.boldrini@gold.ac.uk)>

Author's profile: Marina Grishakova teaches literary and film theory at the University of Tartu. Her interests in scholarship include comparative literature, narrative and genre theory, semiotics, and film studies. In addition to numerous articles, Grishakova's book publications include *The Models of Space, Time and Vision in V. Nabokov's Fiction* (2006) and her edited volumes include *Semiotics, Communication, Cognition* (2009), *Intermediality and Storytelling* (with Marie-Laure Ryan, 2010), *Jutustamise teooriad ja praktikad* (2010) (Storytelling Theories and Practices). E-mail: <[marina.grisakova@ut.ee](mailto:marina.grisakova@ut.ee)>

Author's profile: Matthew Reynolds teaches English and comparative literature at the University of Oxford. His interests in scholarship include translation studies, the theory and practice of criticism, and the practice of fiction. In addition to numerous articles, Reynolds's books include *Likenesses: Translation, Illustration, Interpretation* (2013) and *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (2011). Also a writer, Reynolds published the novels *Designs for a Happy Home* (2009) and *The World Was All Before Them* (2013). E-mail: <[matthew.reynolds@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.reynolds@ell.ox.ac.uk)>