

THE NECESSITY OF RE-CONCEPTUALIZING WORLD LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

From comparative literature in the French school that emphasizes influences and historical research to the American school that de-emphasizes such detective work in literary criticism, topics in the field remain largely Eurocentric and basically grounded in the study of the American and European canon. My paper argues for the necessity of correcting and expanding the scope of comparative literature and accommodating works from the so-called 'minor literature' to combat the provincialism that threatens the comparative task and its findings. Stereotyped for their inferiority, works pertaining to the marginalized Western or non-Western communities, when included, however, prove to be enriching furthering the authenticity and openness of the comparative project. The second part of the paper asserts that a redefinition of the concept 'World Literature' must emerge, with a widening of the comparatist canon as well as a reflection of various disciplines, cultures, readings and ideologies. If Euro-centric, comparative literature perspectivizes World Literature and offers a homogenous worldview. Instead, World Literature nowadays, far from Goethe's aspiration of incorporating all literatures in the world in one literary global coalition, must highlight and value cultural differences. In an increasingly globalized yet divided world through the rise of nations and nationalism, it becomes necessary to re-conceptualize 'World Literature' in a cosmopolitan context which acknowledges particularity.

KEYWORDS:

Eurocentric-World Literature-comparatist canon-cultural difference-nationalism-globalization

INTRODUCTION:

The very idea of 'World Literature' involves comparative literature. The history of the latter has been subject to many upheavals responding to an ever-changing socio-political and economic landscape regarding its theorization and practices from the French school to the American school to comparative literature in the era of colonization and globalization. Through all these phases, as my paper shall argue, the literary comparison never really manages to overcome its Eurocentric

character. I argue consequently for the necessity of correcting and expanding the scope of comparative literature in favour of the accommodation of works from the so-called 'minor literature' so as to combat the provincialism that threatens the comparative task and its findings. The involvement and active participation of marginalized Western or non-Western literature proves necessary to mirror a correct human image of world literature and has, therefore, to discard the Goethean concept in its aspiration of the homogenization of the worldview. It must instead highlight cultural difference as a value in a globalized world that threatens the uniqueness of the nations as well as the survival of comparative literature as a discipline.

THE FRENCH SCHOOL:

La littérature comparée first emerged in France around the beginning of the nineteenth century. This is not to say that there were no comparative practices before but they were random attempts that did not follow any specific methodology or rules. The French school was then the first to give shape and outline to the field. It defines comparative literature as "a literary study that traces the mutual relations between two or more internationally and linguistically different literatures or texts" (Enani 1995,p.201) which means that neither comparing two texts inside one national literature nor the comparison of two different literatures whose authors have no historical links can belong to comparative literature. The practice looks for evidence of 'origins' and 'influences' between works from different nations. The comparatists' task turns to be rather journalistic looking for direct influences, shared histories and personal contacts between writers. Far away from literary analyses, such detective work adds nothing to the literatures of the nation but is only feeding chauvinistic nationalism(s) that boasts off the scope of influence of one nation over the other.

It is obvious that comparative literature in this sense shows in Maher Shafiq's words "astubborn national tendency" (Shafiq 1983,p.208) and that the French school "has come to an impasse" (Enani 1995, p.210). René Wellek famously announced "the crisis of comparative literature" in an essay bearing this title in 1958. He criticizes the French view of the discipline as falling into "factualism, scientism and historical relativism" (Wellek 1963,p.293) which ignores the literariness of literature. The lack of clear methodology and terminology as well as the evasion of internal literary treatment of the texts in question joined by a chauvinistic practice that emphasizes linguistic differences and national influences as well as an inevitable Eurocentric view that deals solely with the literature of Europe precipitate the coming of the American school as a new alternative.

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL:

This school advocates the depoliticization of comparative studies which means the non-involvement of 'nationalism' and a focus on the literary analysis of the text. Henry Remak in his *Comparative Literature: its Definition and Function* states that "comparative literature should not be regarded as a discipline on its own but rather as a connecting link between subjects or 'subject areas'. A comparison thus can be made between two different literatures and between literature and other fields of cognition (music, painting, sculpture, architecture, philosophy, sociology, psychology, religion, chemistry, mathematics, physics, etc)" (Remak 1961, p.3). In this sense, the American perspective is actually interdisciplinary. Therefore, it acknowledges the debt of other disciplines and other texts to a specific text eliminating ideas of chauvinistic nationalism that studies literature according to linguistic and political boundaries. "The American perspective of comparative literature", Bassnett concludes, "was based from the start on ideas of

interdisciplinarity and universalism” (Bassnett 1993, p.33). This universalism is to be understood away from the influences between international literatures and at the heart of humanity’s common achievements.

New fields of study are, in fact, created and the most notorious of which is intertextuality. The concept refutes notions of influence and origins and reveals an inter-connectivity between texts as the term itself suggests. Kristeva who coined the concept sees the “*literary word*” as “*an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context*” (Kristeva 1980, p.65). Already the word ‘dialogue’ undermines the centrality or the superiority of one nation/text over the other. It refers to a mutual participation in the textual production. Kristeva actually elaborates on Bakhtin’s dialogism and the double-voiced nature of the literary word by explaining intertextuality as follows:

“*Horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. In Bakhtin’s work, these two axes, which he calls ‘dialogue’ and ‘ambivalence’, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read at least double.*” (Kristeva 1980, p.66)

This pluralistic nature of the poetic language or what Bakhtin terms *polyphony* disrupts and resists monologism. Fearing the reduction of intertextuality to source-study again, Kristeva opts for a new term instead which is *transposition* where the original voices disappear in favour of a new voice which nonetheless bears traces of the old ones. She explains in *Revolution in Poetic Language* that “*transposition plays an essential role here in as much as it implies the abandonment of a former sign system, the passage to a second via an instinctual intermediary common to the two systems, and the articulation of the new system with its new representability*” (Kristeva 1984, p.60). No literature then can claim originality since all productions refer to a subtext, an ‘otherness’ altered to form a new text. This altering takes the form of exchange, permutations, rearrangements and repositioning that suit different representational purposes. Not only is the word subject to transposition but also the speaking subject forms part of the transpositional practice. “*The subject which speaks in a text*”, Graham Allen writes, “*is constructed in and by the specific transposition of signifying systems which make up the text... the subject position which any speaker or writer takes up is largely dependent upon the context in which that subject speaks or writes*” (Allen 2000, p.54-5). This means that the subject cannot be determined solely by its national affiliations but by multiple contexts.

Despite all her theories emphasizing the hybridity of texts revealing their artistic integrity and aesthetic interrelatedness, Kristeva’s Eurocentrism is obvious. She relies in her theoretical work on Marxist, Freudian and structuralist sign systems. And while the comparatist task relatively improves to be not only literary but also dynamic focusing on the intersection of multiple references and contexts that shape our interpretation of a specific production, it nonetheless keeps using European theories that again and again disclose a prejudice against the non-Western nations.

WORLD LITERATURE AS “THE CRACKED-LOOKING GLASS”:

The term 'World Literature' was first coined by the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to designate the dissemination of literatures around the world due to "*the ever-increasing rapidity of human interaction*" via "*vastly facilitated communications*" and the "*constantly spreading activities of trade and commerce*" (Birus 2000, p.2-3). Goethe envisions a "*universal world literature*" and acknowledges that "*art belongs to the whole world and can only be promoted by a free and general interaction among contemporaries*" (Birus 2000,p.3). He even famously announces in a conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann that "*national literature does not mean much at present, it is time for an era of world literature, and everybody must endeavor to accelerate this epoch*" (Birus 2000,p.5). This world literature will pay unexpected dividends as "*we are now*", says Goethe, "*with close contact between the French, the English and the Germans, beginning to correct each other*" (Birus 2000, p.5). Moreover, "*the disagreements that prevail within one nation*", Goethe believes, "*are smoothed out by the views and judgement of the others*"(Birus 2000, p.5). Comparing oneself to the other is very fertile and this by no means obliges nations "*to think in union*", Goethe emphasizes, "*rather, they should become aware of and understand each other, and if love proves impossible, they should at least learn to tolerate one another*" (Birus 2000, p.5).

). However, unfortunately, by this tolerance Goethe refers only to European nations equating humanity with Europeans by stressing: "*European, i.e., world literature*" (Birus 2000,p.2).

For all his cosmopolitan aspirations, Goethe is essentially Eurocentric and reduces the whole world into Europe. This Eurocentrism, consequently, perspectivizes World Literature by offering a homogenous worldview that will accelerate the "*death of the discipline*", to use Spivak's words. I shall borrow James Joyce's metaphor of "*the cracked looking-glass*" (Joyce2010, p.6) to describe the Eurocentric perspective of World Literature. The metaphor is used by Stephen, the protagonist of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, where he describes a naively pure and essentialist form of Irish art that, because of its emphasis on nativism was cut off from the world's modernity. It actually translates Joyce's dissatisfaction with the already prevailing models of Irish literary identity and justifies his continual experimentation and search for an appropriate reformulation of Irish identity and literature. I see it fit to deploy the image of the cracked looking-glass for World Literature that naively believes in a European purity or likes to believe so in a colonial and postcolonial era where the colonizer and the colonized mutually affect each other. It is equally naïve to believe in this purity in a globalized era when translations of different literatures are available facilitating the access of Europeans to non-Western materials added to the multiple migrations that have taken place and the open markets between different nations. The intentional indifference to other nations tends to produce reductive conclusions that cut Europe and America from the world's reality. The metaphor proves appropriate I think in these two instances where in the first, World Literature in its Eurocentric form does not only neglect what the Europeans consider as 'other' but also distorts and misrepresents the colonized. In the second instance, globalization proves as ideologically defective as colonization itself.

WORLD LITERATURE AND COLONIALISM:

Imperialism tries to justify its logic and consequently needs convincing arguments for territorial expansion. Since Western countries colonized non-Western ones, a stereotyping of the second from the part of the first emerged or what Edward Said calls "*Orientalizing the Orient*". In his book *Orientalism*, Said argues that the Oriental is a Western construction. In fact, there

“was a growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history; furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. The other feature of Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination...Many terms were used to express the relation...The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’”(Said [1978] 2003, p. 39-40)

Such a depraved and irrational population can only produce depraved and irrational literature that ought to be studied only as *“alien”* and exotic not as human. Therefore, naturally it can never be a part of a human World Literature. Of course, this misrepresentation is intentional and also explicable. Fearing the cultural and religious intervention of Arabs or the Orient, the Occident chooses to ignore their literature and their achievements on the premises stated above. This ignorance cannot amount to a complete indifference because other cultures can be a menace to the culture of Europe as Europeans know very well. A new mode of perception appears: *“Onetends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things”(Said [1978] 2003, p.58-9)*. Said cites the example of Islam whose very appearance, not to say expansion, threatened Christianity and *“was a lasting trauma”* (Said [1978] 2003, p. 59) for Europe. That is why *“Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity”* and it comes *“to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians”* (Said [1978] 2003, p.59). It is not what Islam really is that matters, it is how Islam must be known and offered to Western people that counts. Likewise, the Orientalist’s *“subject is not so much the East itself as the East made known, and therefore less fearsome, to the Western reading public”* (Said [1978] 2003, p.60). Thus instead of allowing a natural representation of the non-Western in World Literature, there is a deliberate distortion based mainly on binary oppositions in order to neglect or displace the genius of the ‘other’. Accordingly, if the ‘other’ is distorted in order to be expelled from humanity, his literature will be discarded as well.

This is, in fact, akin to Matthew Arnold’s view of Celtic literature. According to him, it is too sentimental to be as great as English literature because of the Celts’ readiness *“to react against the despotism of fact”*. This of course, he continues, has *“its dangers and...itshabitual want of success”* (Arnold 1867, p.102). Despite *“perception and warm emotion”*, the Celt *“even in spiritual creation...has never...succeeded perfectly”*. Unlike the Greek who *“has the same perspective, emotional temperament as the Celt”*, the latter *“has accomplished nothing”* because he does not add a sense of *“measure”* (Arnold 1867, p.102-3). He concludes in his fourth chapter of this study that the Celt’s *“rebellion against fact has thus lamed the Celt...in spiritual work [and] in the world of business and politics”* (Arnold 1867, p.105). His whole study, which tries to objectify its findings, discloses nonetheless an imperialistic project of homogenization with one single language that is English. He calls: *“for all serious purposes in modern literature (and trifling purposes in it who would care to encourage?) the language of a Welshman is and must be English... For all modern purposes, I repeat, let us all as soon as possible be one people; let the Welshman speak English, and, if he is an author, let him write English”* (Arnold 1867,

p.13). If English is the language of modernity and success, the mother tongue of the Welsh is the language of backwardness and failure. Thus, it must be erased.

Erasing the language of the natives is part of every imperialistic project and is generally justified by a construction of the native as a barbarous 'other' in opposition to the civilized self and hence colonialism takes on humanitarian connotations. In the process of homogenization, it is true that the native becomes subject to different metamorphoses but what goes unnoticed is that the colonizer is also affected by the contact with the natives. *"The cultural horizons of nationalism may be fatally limited by the common history it presumes of the colonizer and colonized. Imperialism after all was a cooperative venture... Both the master and the slave participate in it, and both grew up in it, albeit unequally"* (Said 1993, p.223). Therefore, in an era of colonization or postcolonization it is vain to claim any European purity, and for European literature itself, it is essential to measure the degree of other nations in its genesis to get an authentic image of itself. In a similar vein, postcolonial literature, although suffering from a linguistic homogenization and common experiences with the colonizer, cannot be amalgamated into or completely assimilated to the body of colonial literature. What W.B Yeats writes in English is still Irish and what Algerians write in French is also Arabic in spirit and so on. There is a fatal cross-fertilization between nations that cannot continue to be overlooked, discarded or neglected today. Bassnett, in her article *Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century*, formulates the idea as follows:

"Crucial here is the idea of polyphony or plurivocality, as opposed to an earlier model, promoted by the colonial powers, of univocality. Other voices can now be heard, rather than one single dominant voice. Plurivocality is at the heart of post-colonial thinking" (Bassnett 2006, p.4). Postcolonial literature with its resistance themes and uniqueness must be presented or I would rather say must participate in World Literature today as the reflection of both Europeans and non-Europeans and as a mirror of a very important period in history without which a flawed representation of the history of humanity will be provided, a flawed reflection indeed from a cracked looking-glass.

WORLD LITERATURE, MULTICULTURALISM AND GLOBALIZATION:

During the 90's, a phenomenon of multiculturalism has emerged due to the modern technological means and their role in facilitating the dissemination of information across the nations and the migration movements that led to various racial encounters. This actually helps the West be open to other cultures. While the concept of multiculturalism is controversial, there is a general consensus that it refers to the coexistence of multiple cultural traditions within one country. As such, it looks like a celebration of human diversity that promotes tolerance to cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic groups. Indeed, the magazine of BBC News quotes Lord Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth when he asserts that *"multiculturalism was intended to create a more tolerant society, one in which everyone, regardless of colour, creed or culture, felt at home"* yet its true message is that, he adds, *"there is no need to integrate"* (2011). The same source evokes the British prime minister David Cameron's proclamation that *"the doctrine of state multiculturalism encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream"* and thus it *"has failed"* to build a strong British national identity. In a similar vein, the magazine of BBC News cites also Melanie Phillips who argues that multiculturalism is *"a form of reverse-racism and 'sickeningly hypocritical'"* (2011). This hypocrisy takes shape in the Salad Bowl or the Cultural Mosaic

metaphor that juxtaposes different cultures but does not allow them to merge into one single culture.

This juxtaposition, whether absent or present, is in itself problematic. Interestingly enough, what started in the era of colonization and was thought to be over in the era of globalization with its promises of internationalism and multiculturalism is reproduced over and over in different moulds and ideological guises. In fact, in his article *World Literature in the Age of Globalization: Reflections on an Anthology*, Wail S.Hassan; an Assistant Professor of English at Western Illinois University; argues that *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces* eight editions “show how [their] Eurocentric definition of ‘World Literature’ itself has come to embody some of the most problematic aspects of multiculturalism” (Hassan 2000, p.40). He explains later on that the Norton Anthologies “are the most widely used textbooks in introductory and survey literature courses in American universities...edited by teams of highly distinguished scholars” and thus they become “the most concrete embodiment of the canon”(Hassan 2000, p.40). What passed as canon is deeply entrenched in a Eurocentric view that is “normalized”(Hassan 2000, p.41). He cites the example of *The World Masterpieces Anthology* that uses “Literature of Western Culture” as its subtitle limiting the world genius to the Western genius. Another easily traceable Eurocentric practice that he remarks on is that, while in the first and second editions of the anthologies, no non-Western works are included, in the later ones a companion volume entitled *Masterpieces of the Orient* was available as a supplement to the main anthology in an abridged version of 379 pages and an enlarged version of 834 pages compared to the main 4000-page anthology containing the Western works (Hassan 2000, p.41). From a European/American perspective, the oriental masterpieces cannot be but a supplement. Hassan also questions the logic behind the anthologies opting for the standard periodization of Western literature, i.e classical, medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, nineteenth century and twentieth century. What corresponds to the emergence of the Arab civilization, he notes, corresponds to the European Dark Ages which attests the erroneousness of the temporal pattern adopted by the anthologies to represent World Literature. Hassan also mentions that the anthologies are purposeful in hiding some historical realities which explains the rareness or the abundance of literary works in specific periods. For example, “in the sections covering 1500-1900 C.E which consist of 1400 pages of Western literature”, there are only 390 pages of non-western works because that is the period “when the world was rapidly being subjugated by the colonial powers of Europe on an unprecedented scale in history, so that by the end of World War I Europe not only dominated 85% of the earth surface but also imposed its languages and curricular in ways that permanently changed countless non-western cultures”. (Hassan 2000, p.42). He quotes the editors of the 1995 edition of the anthology who explains the fact as follows: “Selections from non-western literature diminish (in those sections) because in any culture the upwellings of creativity that produce works of great stature obey no time schedule”(Hassan 2000, p.42-3). An imperialist process of misrepresentation of the non-western culture is again at work although different from the colonial expansion discussed above.

The workings of the cracked looking-glass do not stop at the level of misrepresentation or distortion but move to a deeper layer of hypocrisy that refuses to mirror the ‘other’ as equal. Under the cover of tolerating and accepting others lies a capitalist ideology which reveals that racism has never stopped but only assumes new forms. Stavoj Zizek actually links multiculturalism with global capitalism as mainly its economical as well as political cognate in his essay *Multiculturalism, or the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism*. He says:

“The ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism is multiculturalism ...[it] is a disavowed, inverted self-referential form of racism, a “racism with a distance”- it “respects” the Other’s identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed “authentic” community towards which he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position. Multiculturalism is a racism which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist, he doesn’t oppose to the Other the particular values of his own culture),but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) properly other particular cultures-the multiculturalist respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority” (Zizek 1997, p.44).

It seems that by moving from colonization to globalization, humanity moves only from one form of racism to another, indeed from an avowed to a ‘disavowed’ and masked one in an endless chain of Eurocentric and American monopoly of the world and its literature. Throwing away the old racial premises of colonization, globalization promotes tolerance and respect for the other only to use him as a potential market in an era of capitalism whose chief objective is maximizing profits at any cost. What looks like an international integration of cultures is nothing else than a dissemination of Euro/American patterns of behavior, products, styles of living and cultural values throughout the world. It is a process of homogenization that aims at eradicating various cultures in favour of one hegemonic culture. It is, then, true to say that *“the apparent end of Eurocentrism”* as Arif Dirlik asserts *“is an illusion because capitalist culture as it has taken shape has Eurocentrism built into the very structure of its narrative”* (Dirlik 1996,p.30). Globalization is in fact a virtual colonization that usurps and charts space in a capitalist fashion and mobilizes the fixed notion of national identity to embrace an internationalism that promotes American and European norms. Notice for example that the expansion of the English language in the world of business, science and electronics has expanded the virtual territory of America. Speaking English means thinking like English which reveals that globalization is a colonization working from distance or as Sivanandan affirms: *“globalization is the latest stage of imperialism”* (Sivanandan 1998-1999, p.5).

CONCLUSION: THE NECESSITY OF RE-CONCEPTUALIZING WORLD LITERATURE:

As shown above the history of the world is inseparable from the history of World Literature that has remained American and Eurocentric despite the fact of many calls to widen its scope. Etiemble, for example, insists on the study of non-western literature as for him it is *“senseless to keep on ignoring the Urgo-Finnish languages that have given us the Kalevala, Mihaly Vorosmarty, and EndreAdy”* (Guillen1993 ,p.86). Wang, in his article *Canon Formation, or LiteraryRevisionism: The Formation of Modern Chinese Literary Canon*, refers to the importance of Douwe Fokkema, who died in 2011 and who was the ex-president of the International Comparative Literature Association, in *“the issue of canon formation and reformation by referring to non-Western literary experiences”* (Wang 2004, p.172). He also states that Fokkema was *“one of the first European literary theorists who introduced the theory of cultural relativism in comparative literature studies”* (Wang 2004, p.172). The influential study of the American scholar of Japanese poetry Earl Roy Miner *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature “has more than justified the extension of comparative studies to East-West literary relations”* (Bertocci et al 1963, p.138). Miner tackles the issue of American and Eurocentrism in the comparative practice and asks *“Why...should our ‘comparative literature’*

lack an eastern and southern hemisphere?” (Miner 1990, p.20). “*In any event*”, he thinks, “*as with given poems and poets, so with poetics: to consider those of but one cultural tradition is to investigate only a single conceptual cosmos, however intricate, subtle, or rich that may be*” (Miner 1990, p.7). He continues that “*to consider the other varieties of poetics is by definition to inquire into the full heterocosmic range, the full argument from design, of literature. And to do so comparatively is to establish the principles and the relations of those many poetic worlds*” (Miner 1990, p.7). For him, the inclusion of the non-western cultures is necessarily enriching and illuminating. It also helps eradicate dogmatism and essentialism. Miner’s survey of many Eastern and Western traditions reveals that “*all other examples of poetics are founded not on drama, but on lyric*” and concludes consequently that “*Western literature with many familiar suppositions is a minority of one, the odd one out. It has no claim to be normative*” (Miner 1990, p.8). He continues to explain that he calls the Western poetics “*mimetic*”, and it is “*only Eurocentrism [which] allows one to term the other poetics those of the world besides nonmimetic; if any, western poetics is the true nonentity*” (Miner 1990, p.24). From its self-supposed universal position, the Western culture allows itself to be the norm while the ‘other’ is the exotic non-western that occupies many categories ranging from the non-human to justify colonization to the non-producer to disseminate globalization with its dependence on capitalism.

For European literature to be true to itself and to others, it must go beyond the categorization of the non-western ‘other’ as its opposite or as a supplement in the traditional sense. Non-western cultures are not there waiting for European or American expeditions to be explored. After a long history of colonization followed by multiculturalism and globalization, the non-western character definitely inhabits the western culture and literature. It shapes the European and American traditions as much as it is shaped by them. Heterogeneity imposes itself as a reality in the present and all claims of cultural purity are vain. In his introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said points to this idea of cultural interdependency between the colonies and the empire and that neither could the first in its search of independence claim a pure heritage nor could the second simply ignore the metamorphoses that affected it in the imperialistic process and that despite the horrors of colonization, the overlapping of experiences and culture is to be hailed. He writes that “*for the first time, the history of imperialism and its culture can now be studied as neither monolithic nor reductively compartmentalized, separate, distinct*” (Said 1993, p.xx). And he continues:

“One of imperialism’s achievements was to bring the world closer together, and although in the process the separation between Europeans and natives was an insidious and fundamentally unjust one, most of us should now regard the historical experience of empire as a common one. The task then is to describe it as pertaining to Indians and Britishers, Algerians and French, Westerners and Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and Australians despite the horrors, the bloodshed, and the vengeful bitterness” (Said 1993, p.xxi-i).

What Said writes about imperialism in its original meaning applies also to the virtual imperialism imposed on other cultures by Europe and mainly America. In the capitalist regime, both the producer and the consumer are affected by each other and this double-sidedness of influence results in a third culture that cannot be reduced to the mere juxtaposition of two cultures or the melting of one into the other in a homogenizing process. The effect is akin to what intertextuality promises to achieve that is by borrowing textual elements from outside the main text, one gets a new representability, a transformation of the first and the second text to get a third space that it is, while the sum of both, recalcitrant in limiting its surprisingly new layers of meaning. In this sense, homogeneity and heterogeneity are not necessarily antithetical, they must operate

dialectically towards production. Cultural difference, instead, must be perceived as a value that adds to humanity. World Literature has, then, to be reconceptualized along these new lines. The other must be a supplement in a Derridean sense which means without which the self cannot be defined or recognized. Or should we speak about multiple selves beneath the apparently unified single self? Derrida employs a revolutionary phrase that of the ‘*originary supplement*’ (Derrida 1976, p.313) rather than the essentialist one ‘*the supplement of origin*’ (Derrida 1976, p.313) which promotes the idea of self-sufficiency and problematizes the concept of the ‘origin’. Instead, the concept of the supplement according to Derrida is related to the ever deferring/differing of meaning which subverts the metaphysics of presence endorsed by traditional Western thought. Europe following this logic can never claim its presence and thus its privileged position in the essentialist binary opposition European/non-European as it is simply part of an endless chain of supplements. Derrida, discussing the relationship of writing to speech, explains the concept of supplementarity as follows:

“...in as much as I show the interiority of exteriority, which amounts to annulling the ethical qualification and to thinking of writing beyond good and evil; yes above all, in as much as we designate the impossibility of formulating the movement of supplementarity within the classical logos, within the logic of identity, within ontology, within the opposition of presence and absence, positive and negative, and even within dialectics, if at least one determines it, as spiritualistic or materialistic metaphysics has always done, within the horizon of presence and reappropriation... One can no longer see disease in substitution when one sees that the substitute is substituted for a substitute” (Derrida 1976, p.314).

For World Literature to move beyond the cracked looking-glass (Joyce 2010, p.6) metaphor to a nicely-polished looking glass; a phrase used by James Joyce in one of his letters to one of his publishers; it must discard the classical and essentialist belief in a self-sufficient identity. Discarding the Euro-American centrism must not come through a benevolent gesture of involving the non-western or minor Western literatures in the comparative practice but by consciously realizing that without their mutual supplementary participation in the production of the ever deferred/differing meaning, World Literature is necessarily flawed or even non-existent.

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