A G A I N S T W O R L D L I T E R A T U R E

AGAINST WORLD LITERATURE

ON THE POLITICS OF UNTRANSLATABILITY

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Introduction

World Literature, as a disciplinary rallying point of literary criticism and the academic humanities, became increasingly prominent from the mid-1990s on. Between 1991 and 1997, under the editorial stewardship of Djelal Kadir, the journal *World Literature Today* cast World Literature as a hosting ground to literary postcolonialism. Pascale Casanova's watershed book *La République mondiale des lettres* sparked renewed interest in World Literature in France after it appeared in 1999 despite an opening salvo that sounded anxieties over whether it was even legitimate to speak of World Literature. In its second life in English as *The World Republic of Letters* (published in 2004 in the series "Convergences: Inventories of the Present" edited by Edward Said), the book became a flashpoint in literary and cultural studies, especially with respect to allegations that it preserved a Eurocentric (and more specifically Francocentric) perspective in its reliance on the metropole-periphery distinction and Europe-generated criteria of cultural legitimation. *Debating World Literature*, a collection of essays edited by Christopher Prendergast in 2004, assessed the impact of Casanova's book as well as Franco Moretti's influential essay "Conjectures on World Literature" (2000) as it set out to rescue the "literature" half of the World Literature configuration from the de-aestheticizing jaws of globalization. A conference held at Istanbul Bilgi University in December 2008 titled "World Literature in Between," which kicked off with a conversation between David Damrosch and the Nobel Prize–winning Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, served as prelude to the launch of the The Institute of World Literature, spearheaded by David Damrosch at Harvard University. The Institute held its inaugural session at Peking University, Beijing in 2011 and on the same occasion marked The First Congress of the World Literature Association with a special focus on "The Rise of World Literatures." As anthologies, volumes of critical essays and specialized studies with a world literary focus propagate—some emphasizing networks and systems oriented around Marx's hypothetical of a literary International, others emphasizing a Goethean lineage adjusted to an era of global finance capital—the disciplinary construct that is here designated with upper case has secured its foothold in both the university institution and mainstream publishing. It stands in contrast to lowercase "world literature," which may be considered a descriptive catch-all for the sum of all forms of literary expression in all the world's languages.

In titling this book *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* an interrogation shadows the provocation of the fore-title: if one is *against* the revival of World Literature in some of its new institutional guises, then what is one *for*? Certainly, as this book will make clear, I endorse World Literature's deprovincialization of the canon and the way in which, at its best, it draws on translation to deliver surprising cognitive landscapes hailing from inaccessible linguistic folds (what R. A. Judy, citing the eleventh-century Islamic philosopher ibn Sina, refers to as the "arousal" and "wonder" [*takhyil*] sparked by poetic syllogisms). However, I do harbor serious reservations about tendencies in World Literature toward reflexive endorsement of cultural equivalence and substitutability, or toward the celebration of nationally and ethnically branded "differences" that have been niche-marketed as commercialized "identities." As Simon During states convincingly: "The interest in world literature obviously follows the recent rapid extension of cross-border flows of tourists and cultural goods around the world, including literary fiction." During gleans "a complex dynamic between literature's increased participation in the genteel leisure industry and the relative decline of literary writing's importance both in the education system and in the market.[1]

I have been left uneasy in the face of the entrepreneurial, bulimic drive to anthologize and curricularize the world's cultural resources, as evinced in projects sponsored by some proponents of World Literature. Studies of broad ambition like the richly synthetic volume *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (2012), whose programmatic reach covers "the disciplinary relationship of World Literature to areas such as philology, translation, globalization and diaspora studies," fall prey inevitably to the tendency to zoom over the speed bumps of untranslatability in the rush to cover ground.[2] In a counter-move, I invoke untranslatability as a deflationary gesture toward the expansionism and gargantuan scale of world-literary endeavors.

A primary argument of this book is that many recent efforts to revive World Literature rely on a translatability assumption. As a result, incommensurability and what has been called the Untranslatable are insufficiently built into the literary heuristic. Drawing on philosophies of translation developed by Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Samuel Weber, Barbara Johnson, Abdelfattah Kilito and Édouard Glissant, as well as on the way in which the Untranslatable is given substance in the context of Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (whose English translation I supervised with co-editors Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood), the aim is to activate untranslatability as a theoretical fulcrum of comparative literature with bearing on approaches to world literatures, literary world-systems and literary history, the politics of periodization, the translation of philosophy and theory, the relation between sovereign and linguistic borders at the checkpoint, the bounds of non-secular proscription and cultural sanction, free versus privatized authorial property, the poetics of translational difference, as well as ethical, cosmological and theological dimensions of worldliness. Though the book is divided into chapters, it is conceived as a long essay in which the problematics unfold with reference to a central thesis about the interest of an approach to literary comparatism that recognizes the importance of non-translation, mistranslation, incomparability and untranslatability.

Translation studies' particular appeal derived from its ability to respond to a planetary remit without sacrificing engagement with the world's languages. The number of publications, books, book series, articles in journals about, and journals devoted to the practices and theory of translation spiked from 2000–2012, attesting to the combination of excitement and disaggregation characteristic of the emerging discipline.[3] Translation studies gained traction in the humanities because it was interdisciplinary without diluting a disciplinary formation in comparative literature. It drew on the tradition of *translatio studii* in Renaissance humanism (so important to comparative literature's foundation as a discipline), reworking it for a contemporary global education. Among the substantive issues that transferred most obviously from early periods to the present, I would mention knowledge transmission; philosophies of "world," "humanity" and "human rights"; the idea of a "classic"; aesthetic judgment and its critique; vernacularization and linguistic ethnocentrism in tension with cosmopolitan culture. Such

topics go to the heart of what is of direct concern to graduate students preparing to teach subjects in the humanities at a difficult juncture in the economy of education. As teachers in training, graduate students have an obvious stake not only in acquiring pedagogies (competence in the translation *practicum* and the related subfield of translation theory), they also need to identify problems and topics that clearly communicate why the humanities matter in contemporary society. Translation remains one of those areas that relates to a larger public without sacrificing intellectual nuance. It is also the kind of paradigm—the translational humanities—whose global relevance has just begun to be understood in relation to public policy, legal theories of authorship and intellectual property, and international security, and whose implications as a language technology for media theory ask to be more fully explored. Finally, as a practice that lends itself to collaborative pedagogy, translation opens up questions of how to teach literature in the humanities now, especially when there is a need to ford the divisions between World Literature and Theory that have led to unproductive rifts.[4]

As momentum increased in translation studies, *Weltliteratur*—with its Euro-Romantic, neo-Hegelian, Marxist and humanist pedigree, from Goethe to Lukács, Auerbach to Said—also gained renewed attention. Franco Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" induced a non-apologetic swerve away from close reading toward distant reading. Another essay, "Evolution, World-Systems, *Weltliteratur*" (2006), after noting the dearth of viable concepts and hypotheses in the study of World Literature, proposed using evolutionary theory and world-system analysis in the name of a unitary perspective that reveals (as it does with the system of capitalism) the "one and unequal" playing field of national and local literatures. *Death of a Discipline* (2003) by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak introduced the concept of "planetarity" for a critical, non-"globalized" area studies. Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah, drawing on the work of Étienne Balibar, married political theories of citizenship to the politics of cosmopolitanism in forging their notion of "cosmopolitics" (1998). David Damrosch's *What is World Literature?* (2003) used a text's translational circulation as a metric of World Literature's worldliness. Katie Trumpener modeled the ascendant geopolitical ascription of World Literature in her contribution to a 2006 volume *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization* (edited by Haun Saussy) that grew out of the 2004 American Comparative Literature Association Report on the State of the Discipline. "Modernism in the World" was the title theme of a 2006 essay by Simon Gikandi critiquing postcolonial emulations of high modernist literature. In an essay on translations of Kazuo Ishiguro (2007) Rebecca Walkowitz introduced the notion of "unimaginable largeness" to characterize "the New World Literature." The World Novel acquired currency as a unit of analysis in Joseph Slaughter's *Human Rights, Inc.* (2007), a book that calibrated the rise of the bildungsroman with the emergence of international charters. Wai Chee Dimock's *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature* (2007) imposed the prospect of a planetarized America, as did *A New Literary History of America* (2009), edited by Werner Sollors and Greil Marcus. Postcolonial criticism—galvanized by Edward Said, Ato Quayson, Homi Bhabha, Achille Mbembe, Mary Louise Pratt, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Walter Mignolo, Robert Young, Gauri Viswanathan and countless others—assumed the world literary purview as a given, integral to oppositional theoretical paradigms.

In France, the resurgence of engagement with World Literature had a lot to do with the impact of Pascale Casanova's *World Republic of Letters* (1999). The book projected a new model of World Literature by assailing the old universalist form. The author showed how France's success in defining the World Literature canon in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries guaranteed its national prestige and its dominance as a geographic axis of cultural capital. Casanova also underscored the role of translation in assigning national authors and literary works a place in the world literary system of publication, distribution and critical review (despite failing to account for the "re-arrangement of world literary space in philological work on classical languages of the East prior to Herder's writings on language in the 1770s," as Aamir Mufti has argued).[5] Though no utopian program of a retrofitted World Literature was explicitly promulgated, the book pointed implicitly in the direction of a galaxy of micro-mondes in translation, in which the role of hegemonic societies in the management and mediation of literature was curtailed. More recent work in France, all of which bear Bourdieu's imprint, focused on the migration of ideas and the displacement and re-formation of intellectual networks (Laurent Jeanpierre, Yves Chevrel) the sociology of translation (Gisèle Sapiro, Blaise Wilfert) and the genealogy of *Weltliteratur* as a Goethean "situated universalism" with prophetic resonance for contemporary translation studies (i.e., François Xavier Landrin's "La sémantique historique de la *Weltliteratur*: genèse conceptuelle et usages savants"). In 2012 Jérôme David's *Spectres de Goethe. Les métamorphoses de la "littérature mondiale"* [Specters of Goethe: The Metamorphoses of "World Literature"]—a tour de force of critical ventriloquism in the manner of Goethe's conversations with Johann Peter Eckermann—attested to *Weltliteratur*'s renewed piquancy as a literary paradigm.

Both translation studies and World Literature extended the promise of worldly criticism, politicized cosmopolitanism, comparability aesthetics galvanized by a deprovincialized Europe, an academically redistributed area studies and a redrawn map of language geopolitics. Partnered, they could deliver still more: translation theory as *Weltliteratur* would challenge flaccid globalisms that paid lip service to alterity while doing little more than to buttress neoliberal "big tent" syllabi taught in English.

Unfortunately though, translation studies and World Literature, even in their renewed and best-intentioned guises, inevitably fell short of such objectives. Their institutional forms could not escape being too pluralistic, too ecumenical, insufficiently hard-line in the face of appropriation by universities seeking to justify the downsizing of national literature departments or the cutting of "foreign" language instruction. A course in translation—carrying a distinguished imprimatur as a professional training that could even produce measurable "outcomes"—was often deployed as a patch for "humanities lite" and for literary education that was politically *appauvri* in its amenability to soft diplomacy and its default to models of oneworldedness freighted with the psychopolitical burden of delusional democracy. Here, the psychopolitics of planetary dysphoria were itself definable as the depression of the globe or the thymotic frustration of the world.

Both fields, moreover, were unable to rework literary history through planetary cartographies and temporalities despite their recourse to world-systems theory. Shaped by classical genre theory, Renaissance humanism, Hegelian historical consciousness, Goethean *Weltliteratur*, Diltheyan *Geistesgeschichte* and the Marxist ideal of an "International of letters," literary history has been beset by what Christopher Prendergast, following Arjun Appadurai, calls the "Eurochronology problem." This is a problem arising from the fact that critical traditions and disciplines founded in the Western academy contain inbuilt typologies—"epic," "classicism," "Renaissance," "realism," "the avant-garde," "the postmodern"—adduced from Western literary examples.

In addition to giving short shrift to temporality and periodization, translation studies and World Literature ignored problems more internal to their theoretical premises. With translation assumed to be a good thing *en soi*—under the assumption that it is a critical praxis enabling communication across languages, cultures, time periods and disciplines—the right to the Untranslatable was blindsided. In a parallel way, at its very core World Literature seemed oblivious to the Untranslatable—as shown by its unqueried inclusion of the word "world." World was famously interrogated by Heidegger alongside "finitude" and "individuation" in his *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. It was defined as that which humans (as opposed to animals or stones) richly "have." In having World—that is to say, in having the capacity for World made possible by language and subjective accessibility—beings become human. The concept of World, Heidegger affirms, "means the accessibility of beings as such rather than beings in themselves." Aside from the dichotomies of animal/human or living/non-living—they are juggernauts of critical theory at the current pass—the philosophization of World remains a fundamental problem demanding the rephilosophization of literary history through the history of translation. "The history of philosophy," as Abdelfattah Kilito reminds us with reference to the historic importance of Averroës's translation and exegesis of Aristotle, "is at its core the history of translation."[6] The expression "history of translation" from my perspective implies a decided emphasis on when and where translation happens, and, especially, on how and why it fails.

Translation failure—one of Walter Benjamin's obsessions and a concept whose richness has been plumbed by translation studies far

less than his famously enigmatic notion of *reine Sprache* (pure or transparent language)—invites elaboration alongside other iterations of the non-translatable: "lost in translation," the mistranslated, unreliable translation and the *contresens*, an impassive condition that would seem to nest in language; sometimes discernible as a pull away from language norming. We see this last effect in Kilito's characterization of cases in which the target language refuses to cooperate with the translator, especially where devilishly difficult phrases in Arabic like *amma ba'ad* (roughly, "so now," "as to what follows," "that said") and *layta chi'ari* ("if only my knowledge," "if only I knew") are concerned.[7] Glossolalia, or speaking in tongues—or language that bars access to translation—represents yet another form of translation failure. What we have in this instance, as Daniel Heller-Roazen points out, is speech that preserves only the envelope of semantic intention. "Glossolalia," he recalls, "is a technical expression referring to a variety of speech act whose name derives from the Greek term for speaking in tongues" … Giorgio Agamben has commented that such speech consists not so much in the "pure uttering of inarticulate sounds" as in a "'speaking in *gloss*'; that is, in words whose meaning one does not know." "To hear such sounds is to know they mean something without knowing exactly what such a 'something' might be; in other words, it is to discern an intention to signify that cannot be identified with any particular signification."[8] For Heller-Roazen, glossolalia posits a non-signifying model of communicability against the grain of language's inherent profit motive. The conventional economic ends of communication—transactions, deals, exchanges, investment returns—are put out of action and, in their stead, we find a pure language that plays off disinterested communicative gestures.

Glossolalia is interestingly compared to Wittgenstein's nonsense, with its attendant lexicon of *das Unsagbare* (the Unsayable), and *das Unaussprechliche* (the Inexpressible) encountered in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. These terms demarcate where logic fails; where propositions that lack sense (*sinnlos*) and direction must be identified; where inexpressible things put pressure on speech; or where the nonsense of mysticism and metaphysics prevails. The idea that nonsense is the result of the "failure to understand the logic of our language" implies that language can make sense of a proposition like "Green is green," as long as humans grasp the logic of the sentence (as long, that is, as "green" is understood as the proper name of an individual who has turned green due to sickness, a skin condition or the inebriation of the beholder).[9] For Wittgenstein, translation is the mechanism by which language logic is tested. And, in translation studies, the limits of sayability and expressibility are increasingly a focus, conjugating logic and philology, with the latter understood in Werner Hamacher's ascription as an "inclination" (or disinclination) to that which is "said and not said."[10] Wittgenstein's understanding of nonsense (*unsinn, bedeutungslos*)—qualifed as gibberish or as pseudo-propositions about the world—holds further potential for analyzing poetic opacity: he defines it as the outer edge of intelligibility in language; the limitrophe of a discrete tongue; or inflections of madness, schizo-language and autism. From here, it is but a short step to translation theory filtered through Saul Kripke's Wittgensteinian "private language argument" (*Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*) or Nelson Goodman's "new riddle of induction" (*Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*), which argues that, with time factored, a given object could meaningfully be *grue* or *bleen*.

Where the Untranslatable in language philosophy directs one to the logic of grammar, the limits of reference, the outer reach of thinkability or the difference between meaningful and meaningless propositions, in semiology it connotes grand abstractions—Logos, God, Truth, Marx's General Equivalent—nouns, in short, at their greatest distance from material referents. These transcendental signifieds emphasize how questions of untranslatability are rooted in theology, hermeticism, hermeneutics and epigraphy, which associate them with such notions as *alêtheia* (hidden being, truth), "glossolalia" (speaking in tongues), gnomic or apodictic utterances, the differend, the nonpareil, the sublime, the exception and the sovereign. Foregrounded here are questions concerning the theological grounding of "language as such" posed by early Benjamin, as he countered Kantian pure reason through recourse to Hamann's theory of creation that suggests it to be the physical imprint of the divine word.[11] Of parallel importance is the last seminar given by Derrida in 2002 organized around the theme of "The Beast and the Sovereign." Derrida designated Christ the master translator of the Logos, and, from thence, of "man as a *zoon*, as a living animal possessed of *logos* who gives rise to an entire tradition of rational man" as the "calculating animal." He attributes the logocentrism of monotheistic religions to "forced translations" that form the basis of "sovereign hegemony." Located, then, at the core of political theology, translation carries with it this weight of coercion.

Another history of forcing is tangible in legislation against blasphemy or historic prohibitions on the vernacularization of sacred texts.[12] So we have the Latin Bible proscribed in English in the early Middle Ages; the German Bible, translated by Luther, initially condemned as a travesty; and Arabic-only strictures applied to the Qur'an. The theological ban on the portage of holy words from one language to another extends, in secular contexts, to a *force de frappe*. This is evinced in the injunction issued (albeit somewhat ironically) by Kilito: "Thou Shalt Not Translate Me!" Kilito's fables of translational impropriety add density to recent efforts by Naomi Seidman (in *Faithful Renderings*), Daniel Heller-Roazen (in a prospective project on "secret language" and idiolects that are off-limits to tourists and travelers) and Saba Mahmood (in *Politics of Piety*) to rethink secular criticism in terms of theologies of translation. Kilito is no anti-secularist, but he refuses to delegitimate the force of translational interdiction in sacred language by dismissing it as dogma or traditionalism or subordinating it to culturalist accounts of divine authority. Mahmood, by contrast, adopts a culturalist approach, arguing that piety is always already a politics, situationally localized and personally negotiated. Glossing Talal Asad, she notes:

> Asad shifts from an understanding of scripture as a corpus of authoritatively inscribed opinions that stand for religious truth, to one in which divine texts are one of the central elements in a discursive field of relations of power *through which* truth is established.

Judith Butler, for her part, circumvents the impasse between religious absolutism and cultural relativism by transforming the critique of judgment into the problem of adjudicating translatability. For Butler, cultural translation as a practice

> would be a condition of such judgment, and that what is being judged is not only whether the question of whether a given action is injurious but also whether, if it is, legal remedies are the best way to approach the issue, and what other ways of acknowledging and repairing injury are available.[13]

Cultural translation, in these terms, shifts the politics of offense, blasphemy, moral injury, dogma, religious truth and the culture of belief from the obdurately dichotomized framework dividing piety and secularism (mired in ongoing wars of religion as well as the intractable Western/non-Western culture wars) to one of law and language. Butler has recourse to translation to explicate how scriptural and legal truths become grounded in universals, legally sanctioned or situationally overdetermined. There is a pragmatics of translatability built into this approach but therein lies its limitations; for in proposing just "to translate" the translational interdiction as part of a larger grammar of linguistic judgment calls, the boundaries of untranslatability are perforce traduced and sacral untranslatability as such is no longer taken seriously. The difficulty remains concerning how to take sacral untranslatability at its word without secularist condescension. I make no pretense of resolving the issue, only to ensuring that it be recognized as a major heuristic challenge for the interpretive humanities.

Theological untranslatability—a property of non-controversion vested in "theological onomasiology" (God-naming), and associated historically with the way polytheistic, intercultural translations of the gods' proper names gave way to Judeo-Christian strictures that held any translation of God's name to be apostasy—often functions as an adhesive of bonded community and the hegemony of monotheistic religions. But François Noudelmann provides the grounds for thinking untranslatability in the guise of "disruptive kinship," where elective as opposed to genetically ordained affinities are the rule. Disruptive kinship implies an *air de famille* minus the *lien de parenté*: it refers to blood ties that have been broken, thwarted orders of nature, queer families, subcultures, soul mates, monsters, the progeny of Virgin birth, spirits born of metempsychosis, or in the case of language, Untranslatables that stand outside of language families. Derrida initiated thinking

along these lines in "Des Tours de Babel," with reference to the breakdown of kinship models in nineteenth-century historical linguistics:

> The allusion to the maturation of a seed could resemble a vitalist or geneticist metaphor; it would come, then, in support of the genealogical and parental code which seems to dominate this text. In fact it seems necessary here to invert this order and recognize what I have elsewhere proposed to call the "metaphoric catastrophe": far from knowing first what "life" or "family" mean whenever we use these familiar values to talk about language and translation; it is rather starting from the notion of a language and its "sur-vival" in translation that we could have access to the notion of what life and family mean. This reversal is operated expressly by Benjamin.[14]

Sundered filiation leads to orphaned, dispossessed literary properties, which is the unifying idea in the book's last section, "Who Owns My Translation?" Building on Derrida's articulation of linguistic dispropriation in *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin* ("I speak only one language and it is not my own"), I conjecture that one reason why literary studies falls short as anti-capitalist critique is because it insufficiently questions what it means to "have" a literature or to lay claim to aesthetic property. Literary communities are gated: according to Western law and international statute, authors *have* texts, publishers *have* a universal right to translate (as long as they pay), and nations *own* literary patrimony as cultural inheritance. Translation, seen as authorized plagiarism, emerges as a form of creative property that belongs fully to no one. As a model of deowned literature, it stands against the swell of corporate privatization in the arts, with its awards given to individual genius and bias against collective authorship. A translational author—shorn of a singular signature—is the natural complement, in my view, to World Literature understood as an experiment in national sublation that signs itself as collective, terrestrial property.

If the conditions of property-value and economic privatization underwriting contemporary literary world-systems are crucial to analyzing literature's material assets, they also inflect the economy of comparison. The Hellenist Marcel Detienne, whose *Comparer l'incomparable* (2000) engages with the heuristics of the Untranslatable in the comparative human sciences, takes us in this direction when he examines the comparatist's *art de monnayer*—the ability to traffic in differential civilities, in "incomparable" sacred and patrimonial objects. Incomparables and Untranslatables are thus set about in a world in which mobile social placing and terrestrial property-lines both affirm and trump national heritage claims. Disputes over art restitution or access to archaeological sites, seen in this light, provide insight into the material stakes of "having" something culturally unique, nationally branding, or personally self-defining, and I have experimented with looking at these topics in relation to literary property.

Against World Literature is obviously not a "how-to" book for teaching world literature in translation. Nor is it a comprehensive census-taking of the field of World Literature with pretenses to regional coverage and equitable language distribution. There are few close encounters with individual texts and the texts that are analyzed have been selected because they illuminate a problem and not because they are representative texts of world literatures. If there is a scene of instruction in play, it is an oblique one, which is to say, an array of loosely affiliated topoi—oneworldedness, literary world-systems, terrestrial humanism, checkpoints, theologies of translation, the translational interdiction, pedagogy, authorial deownership, possessive collectivism. These topoi—hardly exhaustive—provide so many ways of looking at how untranslatability plays out in literary studies. Hardly programmatic, they nonetheless imply a politics of literature critical of global literary management within corporate education.

Against World Literature tests the hypothesis that translation and untranslatability are constitutive of world forms of literature. Consider, for instance, how Tolstoy gained admission to the precinct of the "world novel" by opening *War and Peace* in French. This gambit may look paradoxical—to attain greatness as a Russian novelist, write in French!—but it confirms that one function of foreign languages is to certify the novel's non-provincialism; its bona fides as *Weltliteratur*. As Richard Pevear, co-translator with Larissa Volokhonsky, of the 2007 Knopf English translation of the novel notes:

> The book opens in French—not with a few words of French (as in those English versions that do not eliminate the French altogether), but with a whole paragraph of French, with only a few phrases of Russian at the end. This mixing of French and Russian goes on for another five chapters or more, and occurs frequently throughout the rest of the book. There are also some long letters entirely in French, as well as official dispatches, and quotations from the French historian Adolphe Thiers. There are passages in German as well. For all of them Tolstoy supplied his own translations in footnotes, as we do. But that made the question still more problematic, because Tolstoy's translations are occasionally inaccurate, perhaps deliberately so. The amount of French in the text is smaller than some early critics asserted—not a third, but only about two percent. But there is a great deal of gallicized Russian, either implying that the speaker is speaking in French, or showing that upper-class ladies like Julie Karagin are unable to write correctly in their own language.[15]

Tolstoy arguably trademarked the world novel as a chronicle of political instability and crisis by leaning heavily on untranslatability, whether in the guise of non-translated passages in French and German, Russian-inflected French, or unreliable translations of textual segments earmarked for translation in the notes. Pevear implies that the Untranslatable performs a metafunction in the novel, tormenting its would-be translator with the impossibility of the task at hand; demonstrating, with a certain realism, how language-savvy aristocratic society lives in a world in which blunted comprehension and linguistic subterfuge are the norm; and contributing to an effect that Pevear suggests occurs throughout, namely a compositional heterogeneity that "disrupts the fictional continuum."

The "invasion" of French onto the territory of the Russian language in *War and Peace* reiterates the plot structure, which devolves around the Napoleonic incursion and its consequent shake-up of the old social order. It may not be too great a stretch to say that Tolstoy's heteroglossic micro-society, with its subterranean revolutionary urges multilingually channeled, foreshadows *The Communist Manifesto* circulating the world over in multiple translations. This idea of a translational International leads us to a free translation of World Literature as "screwed-up literature" based on a passage of *The Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels wrote:

> In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property … and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.

Jonathan Arac notes:

> So much of the business of this passage is condensed in the single word translated "intercourse": German *Verkehr*. A standard dictionary lists the meanings for this word in sequence as: traffic, transportation, communication, commerce, intercourse in its sexual as well as other senses, and communion. It is all but communism (in German, *Kommunismus*), for which Marx and Engels required recourse to a Latin, rather than a Germanic, derivation, perhaps to signal the movement's internationalism. The related verb, *verkehren*, means to turn over, with the usual off-key sense carried by the prefix *ver-*, so to put it colloquially, to screw up. *Die verkehter Welt* is the world turned upside down, which in the metahistory of Marx and Engels is just what the bourgeoisie does by means of its *Verkehr*.[16]

Verkehrte Weltliteratur, or screwed-up literature, has precisely the right impertinent coding. For in standing the world on its head, it encourages the literatures of the world to mess with World Literature, turning it into a process of translating untranslatably. It beckons one to run the experiment of imagining what a literary studies contoured around untranslatability might be.

It may seem counter-intuitive to argue for untranslatability in the era of a translational turn. Certainly there are critics who consider such a move to be unconvincing, if not downright folly. In his *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* (2011), the critic and accomplished translator David Bellos insists that nothing is *un*translatable. "The circulation of novels," he writes,

> among all the vehicular languages of the world and their incontestable conversations with one another demonstrate without a shadow of doubt that style does survive translation … In sum, the widespread notion that style is untranslatable is just a variant of the folkish nostrum that a translation is no substitute for the original.

Bellos treats the idea that certain contents are ineffable or ungraspable with similar skepticism, arguing with clever reverse logic, that "the ineffable is [not] a problem for translation, but translation is one big problem for the ineffable." Here, he is positioning himself contra Jerrold Katz's Wittgensteinian *axiom of ineffability* (which states that "What cannot be expressed in any human language … lies outside the boundaries of translation and … outside the field of language too"). For Bellos, "One of the truths that translation teaches us—is that everything is effable." In this sense, the view that everything is effable implies a faith in the limitless capabilities of rationalism to appropriate (aligned with what Heidegger would insist is the capacity to turn the earth into a world). Such a categorical statement about the conditions of optimal cognizability does not in itself necessarily offer a disproof of linguistic ineffability or untranslatability. It would seem that Bellos' opposition to untranslatability is guided by his role as a professional translator having to overcome difficult hurdles. Thus a joke visiting card signed "Adolf Hitler—Fourreur," encountered in a shop by a character from Perec's novel *Life: A User's Manual*, is translated by Bellos as "Adolf Hitler—German Lieder." The match here works off the French term for "furrier," homonymically close to a French pronunciation of führer (leader), and the German word for "songs" (*lieder*), whose English pronunciation sounds out the English "leader." Bellos comments: "It may well be not the only or the best possible translation of Perec's joke visiting card, but it matches well enough in the dimensions that matter … It doesn't preserve all dimensions of the original—what ever does?—but matches enough of them, in my honest but not very humble opinion, to count as a satisfactory translation of a self-referring, metalinguistic, and interlingual joke."[17] While this maximal translation may be justified under the special constraints imposed by humor, in dismissing the untranslated as a "dimension that doesn't matter," Bellos leaves hanging the question of what matters.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to understand the Untranslatable, not as pure difference in opposition to the always translatable (rightly suspect as just another non-coeval form of the romantic Absolute, or fetish of the Other, or myth of hermeneutic inaccessibility) but as a linguistic form of creative failure with homeopathic uses.

Alain Badiou's opposition to philosophical untranslatability proves harder to contend with, coming as it does from a philosopher recently turned translator whose ideas have been much with me during the course of writing this book. Badiou's "hypertranslation" of Plato's *Republic* (*La République de Platon*, 2012) is a true adventure in philosophy. He theatricalizes the mise-en-scène of Platonic discourse (in a cross between Brecht and Beckett). He introduces French slang and he takes liberties with Plato's content to the point of inventing a new female character. Throughout, there is an attempt to stage an encounter with "the real" through recourse to colloquial diction; a diction contributing to the translation's political intention. Badiou valorizes equality (rather than liberty or freedom of expression, associated with "the politics of appearance and opinion") alongside the text's potential for a contemporary politics of justice.[18] According to him, "I turned to the *Republic*, the masterwork of the Master, precisely dedicated to the concept of Justice, to allow its power to scintillate the present."[19] As Susan Spitzer, the translator of the text into American English, intimates, Badiou's *Republic* may be seen as an exercise in "communist" translation whose "fidelity" to the Greek original should be gauged in political terms:

> "Hypertranslation" is the word Alain Badiou has used, in *The Communist Hypothesis* and elsewhere, to describe his treatment of Plato's *Republic*. Not a "simple" translation into French of the Greek original, then, and still less a scholarly critique of it, Badiou's text transforms the *Republic* into something startlingly new by expanding, reducing, updating and dramatizing it, leavening it with humor and revitalizing its language with his own philosophical lexicon. Yet, for all the plasticity of the hypertranslation, its freewheeling appropriation of the source text, it still remains an adaptation based firmly on his painstaking translation of Plato's language into modern French.[20]

Badiou's approach to translating involves "absolute comprehending": "I start by trying to comprehend the text, absolutely, in its own language." He broke this process down by doing line readings of the original Greek, consulting three (standard but very dated) French translations, and making notes on specific passages, some dating back to the earliest years of his philosophical education. A series of procedures that avoid excessive recourse to scholarly tools allowed him to channel Plato directly. The result, he avows, is not a "translation" in the strict sense of that term but a faithful philosophical transcription; a translation that militantly refuses "capitulation" to editorial normalization in the name of staying constant to the text's "eternity." Badiou modernizes images (the cave becomes a moviehouse) and adds anachronistic references (to the Paris Commune, World War I, Freud, AIDS, Jean-François Lyotard, etc.). This "faithful" infidelity, jarring though it may be, supports the creation of "Badiou-Plato": a sublation or philosophical event referring to a politics of Truths and an ontology of the Subject. It is this construct that authorizes Badiou's strong translation of Plato's "Idea of the Good" (*idée du Bien*) as "Truth" (*Vérité*); "soul" (*âme*) as "Subject" (*Sujet*); "God" (*Dieu*) as "Big Other" or "Other" (*grand Autre, Autre*); and "Republic" (*République*)—a notoriously difficult Untranslatable going back to the Greek *Politeia*, commonly construed as "constitution"—as "State" (*État*) or "politics" (*politique*).[21] Kenneth Reinhard associates this pattern of over-translation with a unique form of sublimation that he poses as

> a sublime—*hypselos*—place of new topological proximities, unmappable according to the conventional metrics of history and geography. The hyper-space opened up by Badiou's translation is a realm of ideas, but it is no heavenly empyrean; Badiou's *Republic* is neither a philosophical purification nor a literary modernization of Plato in the sense of being an attempt to reduce historical distance for the sake of making an ancient text more familiar, a part of our world. On the contrary, Badiou's "hyper"translation *sublimates* Plato's text, in Lacan's sense of sublimation as "the elevation of an object to the status of a Thing," which is precisely to *de*-familiarize it, to bring out its strangeness—at least from the perspective of current opinion about Plato and Platonism.

Badiou's translational practice marshals Plato's opposition to sophistics in the service of his own. He groups lines 336b–357 from Book 1, for example, into a chapter captioned "Reduce the Sophist to Silence" to emphasize Socrates's relentless smack-down of the Sophist Thrasymachus (a vain pugilist and champion of "Might makes right"). Bruno Bosteels links this aspect of Badiou's Platonism to his general refusal of the linguistic turn in philosophy:

> For Badiou, subordinating the doctrine of being to the logic of the signifier or to a linguistic anthropology amounts to reducing philosophy to sophistics—ontology then becomes what Barbara Cassin, following Novalis, calls "logology." Aside from his polemics against the great modern sophists that would include everyone from the second Wittgenstein to the late Lyotard, the fact remains that there is a rather glaring absence of any theory of language in Badiou's philosophy of the event… .
>
> Badiou also never indulges in play on etymologies and alleged un-translatables, nor does he in any way privilege the aura of the original, mostly Greek or German texts of philosophy, as has become customary in much post-Heideggerian thinking. For Badiou, the French language would be utterly foreign to such auratic philosophical uses…
>
> Cassin's overarching aim in recognizing the protagonism of sophistics is to give the history of philosophy a different beginning by reverting the decision of sense away from the principle of univocity and back to linguistic equivocation.

Cassin herself wishes to avoid reductive dichotomies: "Anti-Platonism seems like such an outdated notion! But anti-sophistics, too, seems so outdated!" Acknowledging that Badiou is committed to a form of Platonism that refuses to "recognize the constitutive character of the linguistic variation," Cassin suggests that he nonetheless retains the structural function of the sophist idea of Truth as an empty set within his own definition of Truth as a void in the situation, as "withdrawal" from the authority of language.[22]

Badiou may recognize that sophistics makes philosophy stronger, but his anti-sophistic elevation of univocity over equivocation, of idea

over language, of transparency over opacity, of transmission over hermeneutics, results in the subordination of translation to philosophy. This explains why he could rely without apology on an old mimeographed copy of Étienne Balibar's "teaching" translation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* when writing his book on *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy* rather than on published scholarly editions in French and English. The translation's quality is not at issue, it is the communication of the Idea that counts. The "Communist Idea," as evental form, is contingent on furthering access to philosophy to the non-initiate. In this respect, Badiou's democratic and demotic translation targets a point of pride held dear by the academic guild: expertise in reading works of philosophy in the original. According to Badiou:

> Specialists from all disciplines love to seek shelter behind the old destroyed Babel. Who has not heard the objection that, not knowing the language—from Greek to formal logic via German or Hebrew—they could not hope to understand anything whatever of what was said therein? Only to be followed by organizing an interdisciplinary conference on translation, without in any way moving the lines.[23]

If there is a philosophy of untranslatability in Badiou, it has little to do with language. It derives from an*incommensurability* at the heart of mathematical Platonism. To cite Kenneth Reinhard's introduction to Badiou's *Republic* yet once more, at issue is

> a subjective construction that begins with the thesis that there is something incommensurable about all existing measures, something similar to the irrational relation between a diagonal and the sides of a square. But, unlike the exponents of mystical Platonism, Badiou insists that it is incumbent on us to *determine* this non-relation, to construct a new measure for the immeasurable.[24]

Arguably, between Badiou's example as a translator of Plato and his philosophical commitment to a Platonic mathematical ontology that activates the incommensurable, one can posit a philosophical Untranslatable. It may be identified with a sublime gesture of hypertranslation—convertible into a matheme—that denominates a subjective "inexistent." It might also be thought of (after Graham Harman) as an action of "vicarious causation" that makes the Idea appear when contiguous but non-communicating objects, qualia and ontic states are brought into relation.[25] Badiou's philosophical translation, indifferent to language and sworn to mathematical ontology (in which the Subject lines up structurally with Parmenides' suprasensible form of the One), sits at the antipode of Cassin's "philosophizing in languages," where the politics of linguistic difference is availed to unhorse language nationalisms.[26] As I have already intimated, Cassin's dictionary of Untranslatables constitutes a venture in sophistical philosophizing with and in translation as its heuristic of choice.

Cassin's practice of untranslatability in the *Vocabulaire* has deepened more recently into a theory of equivocal symptoms in language; historically stigmatized as the mark of radical evil in translation. In "Homonymy and Amphiboly, or Radical Evil in Translation," she has argued that homonymy destabilizes language in its very structure. Noting that we are used to viewing homonymy as an accident of language, or one of those tricks that language plays on the translator, similar to "false friends" (*faux amis;* words or expressions that sound the same across languages but that have very different significations), Cassin recognizes that it nonetheless expresses something about language's very essence. For Aristotle, she notes, it served as a paradigm of the transcendental illusion; an evil that could be temporarily neutralized but that would continuously return. She suggests that for Aristotle the evil of homonymy is compounded by amphiboly: a form of ambivalent syntax that normalizes the expression of logical fallacies and grammatical anomalies. An oft-cited example in English hails from Groucho Marx in *Animal Crackers*: "One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I will never know." Here, semantic ambiguity and humorous effect are produced by the phrase "in my pajamas," which modifies both the subject of the sentence, "I," and the elephant. For Cassin, verbs and expressions in Greek signifying "to be" or "being"—*ontôs on, to ti ên einai*—reveal this troubling aspect of the amphiboly. The fact that the Greek word *esti* produces a grammatical sentence without a verb yields a host of ontological brain-teasers typically found in Gorgias's treatise *On Non-Being* and Parmenides' *Poem*. Such formulations may not qualify as amphibolous in the strict syntactic sense (as in Cassin's French translation of line 3 of fragment 2 of Parmenides' poem: "l'une que est et que n'est pas ne pas être" [roughly, the one that it is and that it is not not to be]), but they produce the same effect of intelligibility within nonsense that one finds, say, in the phrase "Helicopter powered by human flies" or in this line from Molière's *Mélicerte*, "Et de même qu'à vous je ne lui suis pas chère," [literally something like, And I am not dear to him, the same way I am to you] which I would be tempted to render very freely as: "I am cheap because I'm not his dear." What we experience here is the shock of a logical economy that permits a "twofer" (two for the price of one); itself a kind of *double-bind* or state of exception in syntax and semantics. Amphiboly, as Cassin intimates, makes an error of meaning acceptable even as it arouses conscious suspicion of something off-kilter or terribly wrong within language. It is not by chance that from Aristotle to Kant, amphiboly has been treated with suspicion. In *The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection*, Kant would cast amphiboly as an obstruction to the apprehension of things in themselves, a grand deception of phenomena. In Lalande's gloss on Kant, the imputation of conceptual predicates to sensible phenomena results in ignorance of the conditions proper to the sensible."[27] Though stigmatized by the philosophers, Cassin wants to recuperate homonymy and amphiboly as strong forms of equivocity for a fully performative sophistics whose ultimate goal—following a path leading from Gorgias to Lacan and J. L. Austin—is a "consequential relativism."

I have been faced with the difficult prospect of trying to conjugate Cassin*with* Badiou; which is to say, linguistic relativism with subjective truth; logology with matheme; the unconscious with logics of worlds; deterritorialized languages with the genius of language in one tongue. For literary studies more broadly, this endeavor has involved an effort to relate linguistic pluralism (inherent in translation as a liberal art) to a practice of *Weltliteratur* that takes full measure of linguistic constraints and truth conditions in the investigation of singular modes of existing in the world's languages.

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1 R. A. Judy, "Discrepant Diaspora, Inchoate Reflections on a Neo-Humanist Style," Precirculated essay draft, contemporary literary theory seminar, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University. Session took place February 18, 2011; Simon During, *Exit Capitalism: Literary Culture, Theory and Post-Secular Modernity*, London: Routledge, 2009, 57–8.

2 Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir, eds., "Opening Brief," *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, New York: Routledge, 2012.

3 Works like *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* (Jeremy Munday, 2009); *Key Terms in Translation Studies* (Giuseppe Palumbo, 2009); *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (Munday, 2008); *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, 2008); *Translation and Creativity: Perspectives on Creative Writing and Translation Studies* (Eugenia Loffredo and Manuela Perteghella, 2008); *A Companion To Translation Studies* (Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau, 2007); *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Emily Apter, 2005); *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood, 2005); *The Translation Studies Reader* (Lawrence Venuti, 2004); and *Translation Studies* (Susan Bassnett, 2002) built on earlier collections, including *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, 1999); *Gender in Translation* (Sherry Simon, 1996); and *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Gideon Toury, 1995).

4 Revathi Krishnaswamy, "Toward World Literary Knowledges: Theory in the Age of Globalization," *Comparative Literature* 62: 4, Fall 2010, 399, 400. Krishnaswamy is one of many to note that the field of "world literary theory" or "non-Western literary theory before European colonialism" is paltry. Even work on classical non-Western languages coming out of comparative poetics tends to have little influence on the critical projects associated with theory.

5 Mufti's criticism of Casanova relies on "a rather obvious historical claim but one that has been rigorously present in a great deal of contemporary critical discussion, namely, that the deep encounter between English and the other Western languages and the languages of the global periphery as media of literary expression did not take place for the first time in the postcolonial era, let alone in the supposedly transnational transactions of the period of high globalization but, especially, at the dawn of the modern era itself and fundamentally transformed both cultural formations involved in the encounter." See Aamir Mufti, "Orientalism and

the Institution of World Literatures," *Critical Inquiry* 36, Spring 2010, 461.

6 Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, 280 (original German text: *Grundbegriffe der metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit*); Abdelfattah Kilito, introduction to *De la traduction*, by Abdessalam Benabdelali, trans. (from Arabic) Kamal Toumi, Morocco: Editions Toukbal, 2006, 9.

7 Ibid. My thanks to Omar Berrada for his help with the approximative translations of *amma ba'ad* and *layta chi'ari*.

8 Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, 66; "To hear such sounds …": Daniel Heller-Roazen, "Glossolalia"; entry commissioned for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (ed. Barbara Cassin, Paris: Seuil, 2006). English edition: Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, and Michael Wood, eds., *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, forthcoming.

9 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, London: Routledge, 1997, 19 and 16, respectively.

10 Werner Hamacher, "From 95 Theses on Philology,'" *PMLA* 125: 4, October 2010, 997. Thesis 57 states: "What belongs to philology—besides the inclination to that which is said—is the courage for what is not said."

11 Peter Osborne and Matthew Charles develop this point in their summary of Benjamin's anti-Kantianianism. They note: "In the essay 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man' (c. 1916), Benjamin offers a theological conception of language which draws on Hamann's discussion of Creation as the physical imprint of the divine Word of God, to claim that there 'is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language.' Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings* Vol. 1, 1913–1926, Ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 62–3. Peter Osborne and Matthew Charles, "Walter Benjamin," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2011 edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta.

12 Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, 450; ibid., 455; "Located … at the core of political theology": see Ernesto Laclau, "On the Names of God," in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, eds. Hent de Vries and Lawrence Eugene Sullivan, New York: Fordham University Press, 2006, 137–47.

13 Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, 116; Judith Butler, "The Sensibility of Critique: Response to Asad and Mahmood," in *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, ed. Talal Asad et al., Berkeley: The Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California, Berkeley, 2009, 103.

14 On theological untranslatability: see Jan Assmann, "Translating Gods: Religion as a Factor of Cultural (Un)Translatability," in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996, 26 and 31–3; see François Noudelmann, *Pour en finir avec la généalogie*, Paris: Léo Scheer, 2004, and François Noudelmann, *Les airs de famille: Une philosophie des affinités*, Paris: Gallimard, 2012; Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," trans. Joseph F. Graham in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985, 178; Jacques Derrida, *Le monolinguisme de l'autre; ou, La prothèse d'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 15. Translation (my own) of *"Oui, je n'ai qu'une langue, et ce n'est pas la mienne*." In *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), the translator Patrick Mensah renders this phrase as: *"Yes, I have only one language, yet it is not mine."*

15 Richard Pevear, translator's introduction to Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, x–xi.

16 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, trans. Samuel Moore, London: Verso, 1998, 39; Jonathan Arac, "Global and Babel: Language and Planet," in *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007, 21.

17 David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything*, USA: Penguin Books, 2011, 290, 152, 153, and 279.

18 Opposition to philosophical untranslatability: Alain Badiou, *La République de Platon*, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2012; an attempt to stage an encounter with the real: Alain Badiou, *The Adventure of French Philosophy*, trans. Bruno Bosteels, New York and London: Verso, 2012, 311.

19 Quote translated by the author from the original French: "Je me suis donc tourné vers *La République*, oeuvre centrale du Maître, précisément consacrée au problème de la justice, pour en faire briller la puissance contemporaine." Alain Badiou, *La République de Platon*, Paris: Fayard, 2012, 10.

20 Susan Spitzer, "Translator's Preface," in Alain Badiou, *Plato's Republic: A Dialogue in Sixteen Chapters, with a Prologue and an Epilogue*, trans. Susan Spitzer, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012, xxiv.

21 Badiou, *Plato's Republic*, 13–14.

22 Kenneth Reinhard, "Introduction," Alain Badiou, *Plato's Republic*, xii; "Reduce the Sophist to Silence": "Réduire le sophiste au silence" (translation mine), Badiou, author's translation, *La République de Platon*, Paris: Fayard, 2012; Badiou, *Plato's Republic: A Dialogue in 16 Chapters* trans. Susan Spitzer (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012); Bruno Bosteels, Translator's introduction, in Badiou, *The Adventure of Philosophy*, xlvii–xlviii; Barbara Cassin, "Who's Afraid of the Sophists? Against Ethical Correctness," trans Charles T. Wolfe, *Hypathia* 15: 4, Fall 2000, 116. She refers to Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, Paris: Seuil, 1992, 72–6.

23 Badiou, *The Adventure of Philosophy*, 344.

24 Reinhard, "Introduction," Badiou, *Plato's Republic*, x.

25 See Graham Harman, "On Vicarious Causation," in *Collapse* 2, May 2007, 190. Harman writes: "Vicarious causation, of which science so far knows nothing, is closer to what is called formal cause. To say that formal cause operates vicariously means that forms do not touch one another directly, but somehow melt, fuse, and decompress in a shared common space from which all are partly absent. My claim is that two entities influence one another only by meeting on the interior of a third, where they exist side-by-side until something happens that allows them to interact. In this sense, the theory of vicarious causation is a theory of the molten inner core of objects—a sort of plate tectonics of ontology."

26 As a pendant to Cassin's return to sophistics, see Pascal Quignard's *Rhétorique spéculative* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), which seeks to rehabilitate the Sophist position against neoplatonic tendencies of mathematization.

27 Parménide, *Sur la nature ou sur l'étant: La langue de l'être?* trans. and ed. Barbara Cassin, Paris: Seuil, 1998, 77. English rendering of her French my own; Molière, *Mélicerte*, Act II, Scene 3. *Oeuvres complètes* ed. Georges Couton, Paris: Gallimard, 1971, 309. English translations my own; *"The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection" (Amphibolie der reflexionsbegriffe)*, André Lalande, *Vocabulaire critique et technique de la philosophie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996, 50. See also, Cassin, "Homonymie et amphibolie, ou le mal radical en traduction," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, No. 1 (January/ March 1989): 71–78.

Part One
Oneworldliness

I

Untranslatables: A World-System

Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*[1] produces wide-span intellectual cartography without a hegemonic global paradigm; that is to say, through interpretive procedures that reveal philosophical world-systems in the making. The book uses untranslatability as an epistemological fulcrum for rethinking philosophical concepts and discourses of the humanities. With critical finesse, it calls into question the very possibility of naming the predicates of Western thought even as it shows how such lodestones have been and continue to be actively translated. It is an exercise in the reclamation of sophistry and logology over and against the Platonic tradition of positing truths in an absolute sense, as a kind of mathemathical intelligence unbeholden to language.[2] This semantic predicament is consequential for the humanities; useful in defining a translational condition that complicates nation-based epistemes and literary denominations. Using the *Vocabulaire's* construct of the Untranslatable, one can construe a translational humanities whose fault lines traverse the cultural subdivisions of nations or "foreign" languages while coalescing around hubs of singularity.

With a linguistic range that includes ancient European languages (such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic) and modern ones (such as English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Danish, German, Arabic), the *Vocabulaire* represents a unique experiment in plurilingual analysis. Though, ideally, it would have had a companion volume covering Asian, African, Indian and Middle Eastern languages, the *Vocabulaire* succeeds within its terms as a latter-day version of the humanist *translatio studii*. Each entry is cued to a multilingual complement: The subject pronoun "I," for example, is keyed to the French *je, moi*, and *soi*; to the Greek *egô*; and to the Latin *ego*. *Ipse* is keyed to the German *Ich; Selbst* to the English *me, self*, and *myself*; and to the Italian *io, se, si*, and *si-mismo*. Right away, the alterity of signifiers is made visible, preparing the way for a more systematic presentation of concepts labeled in their native tongues and alphabets. Peter Osborne characterizes the Untranslatable as that which refers to "the conceptual differences carried by the differences between languages, not in a pure form, but via the fractured histories of translation through which European philosophies have been constituted." Cassin, more geopolitically attuned, speaks of a "cartography of philosophical differences."[3]

The Untranslatable yields a revisionist history of ideas that gives full weight to mistranslation. This way of working is especially apparent in Étienne Balibar's entry on the "Subject":

> We know that Averroës's *Long Commentary on the De Anima* is, given the current state of the corpus, fully accessible only in Latin, or in Michel Scot's tricky translation (the Arabic original having been lost). One of the most famous statements, in which Averroës appears to introduce the notion of the subject, is the passage on eternity and the corruptability of the theoretical intellect—the ultimate human perfection. It asserts: "Perhaps philosophy always exists in the greater part of the subject, just as the man exists thanks to man, and just as the horse exists thanks to horse." What does the expression mean? Going against the very principles of Averroës's noetics, the Averroist Jean de Jandun understands it to mean that "philosophy is perfect in the greater part of its subject (*sui subjecti*)," or in other words "in most men" (*in majori parte hominum*). There are no grounds for this interpretation. We can explain it, however, if we recall that Averroës' Latin translator has confused the Arabic terms *mawdu* [word in Arabic in original] (subject or substratum in the sense of *hupokeimenon*) and *mawdi* [word in Arabic in original] (place). When Averroës simply says that philosophy has always existed "in the greater part of the place," meaning "almost everywhere," Jean understands him as saying that it has as its subject "the majority of men," as every man (or almost every man) contributes to a full (perfect) realization in keeping with his knowledge and aptitudes. "Subjectivity" does slip into Averroism here, but only because of a huge misunderstanding resulting from a translator's error. It therefore contradicts Averroës.

For the authors of this entry (Étienne Balibar, Barbara Cassin, and Alain de Libera), mistranslation is adduced to explain the historic transformation of Aristotle's *hypokeimenon* (substrate, the individual substance in a given form) into *subjectum* (I-ness, *égoité*, the subject of metaphysics, the power of thought). It is shown that non-transference of medieval heteronomy (the it-ness of I) haunts modern concepts of free will, egoic autonomy, and transcendent subjecthood. Balibar demonstrates how translation error has been determinative in the genealogy of the subject. The Cartesian subject, he argues, was improperly transcendentalized by Kant, while the Nietzschean *Subjekt* (which contains a critique of the effects of subjective submission) was confounded by the French *sujet;* a term that fails to render the slide between commanding and obeying that is inherent in Nietzsche's usage.[4] The "subject" is thus revealed not only to have an interesting intra-European and transtemporal history but also a "global" frame of reference that puts Arabic mistranslation into dialogue with mistranslated French Nietzscheanism.

As a stand-alone term with no ready equivalent, *pravda* is another paramount Untranslatable. It is arrayed alongside the Greek *dikaiosunê;* the Latin *justitia;* and the English "righteousness," "justice," "truth"; as well as *vérité, droit, istina, loi, mir, postupok, praxis, sobornost'*, and *svet*. The article speculates that *pravda*'s absence in the Russian *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is attributable to it being too ideologically marked as the name of the USSR's official government-controlled newspaper. *Pravda* thus comes into its own as that which is philosophically off-limits in its home country. This national dislocation matches up with its semantic relocation in the interstices of non-equivalent abstract nouns. The article locates *pravda* in the "hiatus" between legality and legitimacy, justice and truth, ethics and praxis. It is traced to the "short circuiting" of pardon by vengeance, and vice versa. The word's (often-colliding) gamut covers democratic cosmopolitics, the topology of exile, solidarity with persecuted minorities and refugees, Russian Saint-Simonianism, and Russophilic worldviews. Placed in apposition to *slovo, pravda* connotes "word," "discourse," "logos," and linguistically embodied rationalism. *Pravda-Dikaiosunê*, we learn, is one of the names for God as well as a figure of free speech, or open relationality among free agents. Negatively qualified as *nevprada*, the word alludes to linguistic mystification, to misinformation spread by corrupted institutions of state power and the media (*pravdophobia* was apparently coined at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 in response to the official media lying about its severity). The *pravda* entry, like many others in the *Vocabulaire*, allows us to grasp how an Untranslatable moves—often with tension and violence—between historically and nationally circumscribed contexts to unbounded conceptual outposts; resistant yet mobile.

The Untranslatable emerges as something on the order of "an Incredible," an "Incontournable," an "Untouchable" (*L'Incorruptible* in French). There is a quality of militant semiotic intransigence attached to the Untranslatable, making it more than just a garden-variety keyword. Often it can come off as non-sense that becomes strangely accessible through the sheer force of grammar. Marina Warner points

to this form of the Untranslatable in one of the examples she gives of Mallarmé's English in *Thèmes anglais*: "Who can shave an egg?" It is not strictly speaking English, but it is English nonetheless. This effect of the non-carry-over (of meaning) that carries over nonetheless (on the back of grammar), or that transmits at a half-crocked semantic angle, endows the Untranslatable with a distinct symptomology. Words that assign new meanings to old terms, neologisms, names for ideas that are continually re-translated or mistranslated, translations that are obviously incommensurate (as in the use of *esprit* for "mind" or *Geist*), these are among the most salient symptoms of the genuine Untranslatable. The Anglophone reader of the *Vocabulaire* might well be baffled by an extended entry on *Paronyme* ("derivatively named," "denominative"), and that is just the point. Brought to an unfamiliar linguistic *nomos*, the reader is introduced to the language world of Boethius's translation of Aristotle's work on categories, and to a lost set of associations around the denominative that pinpoint an intermediary semantic zone between homonym and synonym. Semantically related to "predication," a more universally recognized concept with a substantial philosophical literature devoted to it in analytic philosophy, paronym could in theory have been filed under predication, but that would have literally diminished its space in the geography of philosophy. The editors want it revalued as a hinge between ancient and medieval scholasticism and ordinary language philosophy. The differential weight assigned by cultures to common cognates is also registered in the distribution of pages to ideas. A word like "force," that hardly qualifies as a philosophical concept in the Anglophone context, warrants a substantive entry in French. Grouped with *dunamis, energeia, entelekheia, virtus, Kraft, Wirkung, pouvoir, puissance*, force straddles entelechy, physics, bodily substance, conservation, and power. In another case, the term "sensation," (a crux of British empiricism) shrinks in scale upon being continentalized; that is, colonized under the entries *sens* and *sentir*. Such a move reveals how Anglo-American philosophical traditions are typically negotiated, or not, within Europe. Ordinary language philosophy, along with the names of its avatars—Wittgenstein, Russell, Austin, Quine and Cavell—are duly represented in the *Vocabulaire*, but the imperium of English is polemically curtailed. Analytic philosophy's inveterate hostility to its continental counterpart and its obsession with, to borrow Cassin's expression, "deflating the windbags of metaphysics"[5] creates a gulf of untranslatability as much cultural as it is intellectual.

Throughout the volume, chasms among discrete philosophical cultures are revealed in stark relief. Nowhere are they more evident than in the entries devoted to language names. Notwithstanding the *Vocabulaire*'s express commitment to undercutting national language ontologies, there is a measure of national recidivism in these entries. Portuguese becomes a hymn to the sensibility of the baroque with *le fado* (fate, fibula, lassitude, melancholia) its emblematic figure. German hews to the language of Kant and Hegel. Greek is pinioned by the Athenian efflorescence and Heidegger's homage to Greek as the *Ursprache* of philosophy. Italian remains indebted to Machiavelli's notion of "the effective truth of things" and Vico's philological historicism. In tracing how French came to be globally identified as a preeminent language of philosophy, Badiou backhandedly returns national ontology to linguistic nominalism. Such ontologies are, of course, impossible to purge entirely from the names of languages, for they lend coherence to the world map of languages; they triage and circumscribe the verbal grammatical protocols that qualify for naming as a discrete language.

Even the term "translation," which in a sense signifies language in a state of non-belonging, or nationalism degree zero, is nationally marked. The *Vocabulaire* entry on translation notes that *dolmetschen*, a "lost" verb whose origins go back to Luther's translation of the Bible into German, describes "to translate" as, literally, "to render as German" or "to Germanize." Schleiermacher was instrumental in replacing *dolmetschen* with *übersetzung* on the grounds that dolmetschen referred to the functional work of the interpreter while übersetzung referred to the loftier challenge of rendering thought. From this perspective, *übersetzung* is the name of a disavowed Germanocentrism that clings to the history of the word "translation."[6]

Must the names for language, including the names for translation, always revert to a predicate of *ethnos*? Fights like the one over the nation-name "Macedonia" (which involves Greece's allegation that the former Yugoslav republic has no legitimate claim to an appellation that also designates a Northern Greek province) suggest that they must. The Greece–Macedonia dispute shows not only that nation-names are intractable referents of regional ethnic chauvinism but also that they function as name-domains or trademarked political zones that guarantee a country's claim to self-ownership and right to enter the fray of international power politics (which in Macedonia's case meant access to NATO membership).

Pierre Bourdieu recognized the power of language names as incontrovertible cognates, though he worked politically toward a linguistic International. In a 1995 issue of *Liber*, he called for a language of the "collective intellectual" that would denationalize the dissemination of ideas and information:

> To contribute effectively to the realistic internationalism that is its *raison d'être, Liber* has initiated two complementary strategies. On the one hand, it has sought to offer its Turkish, Greek, German and Bulgarian readers the possibility of familiarizing themselves with English, Scottish, Czech and Irish authors, works and institutions—and vice versa—and make known on the international scale particularities bound up with national traditions (this is the particular function of issues devoted to a single country, or analyses and descriptions of singular features and characteristics of a historical tradition under headings such as "Untranslatable" or "European ethnography"). On the other hand, it has set out to bring together and compare different analyses of the same particular object (in this case intellectuals) as it presents itself in different national cultures, showing in this way, against the presuppositions and stereotypes of superficial journalism, facts and effects that are to be found on all sides, invariants that are denied or ignored just as infallibly by the vague and pompous assertions of international meetings and reviews, as by descriptions limited to a single nation. By thus enabling readers from different countries to read in their own language texts that are free of the anecdotal particularities that fill national newspapers and reviews, and filled with information that on the contrary is absent because it is taken for granted by those familiar with it, we hope to contribute, patiently but constantly, to leading them out of the limits of their national universe and creating a kind of collective intellectual, freed from the idolatry of those cultural idioms that are too often identified with culture.

Bourdieu displaces language from its habitus by freeing it "from the idolatry of cultural idioms." He imagines a neutral zone of print literacy and media dissemination capable of transcribing the political in a pure state, "outside the national universe." Bourdieu treats the Untranslatable as a critical unit conscripted for a media commons perhaps not so distant from Habermas's discursive public sphere. Like Cassin, Bourdieu would pose an ideal of linguistic *civitas* over and against ethnic and nation-based language cartographies. What emerges is a translation zone constructed off the power grid of dominant world languages and potentially mobilized around what Jacques Rancière characterizes as *la mésentente*, an extended notion of diplomatic disagreement,[7] or what Christopher Prendergast describes as a "negotiation": "the minimalist presupposition of some common language in and over which to negotiate, although without in any way papering over the many cognitive misfits and value clashes that might and do arise in the conduct of negotiations."[8]

Cassin's *Vocabulaire* thus stands out as an approach to globality that fully activates the Untranslatable. Though its first order of commitment is to a translational approach to doing philosophy, it lends itself to the making of worldscapes contoured by mistranslation, neologism, and semantic dissonance. It gives rise to an idea of comparative literature as a discipline that derives its raison d'être from the constant updating and revision of vocabularies of cultural reference; the better to serve as a kind of self-translating machine of the humanities. The book lends itself to a linguistic cartography that allows literary comparatism to be more responsive to the geopolitics of literary worlds as they occur in real time.

Ideally, one could redesign the teaching of literature to respond critically and in real time to cartographies of emergent world-systems. Parag Khanna, writing from an American "think tank" perspective on the shrinkage of the U.S. as a superpower, usefully identifies a host of new "Second World" midsize empires built up from global trade-offs in resources and financial services whose networks traverse but also bypass "The Big Three" (China, Europe, America). Khanna's nomenclature—from retro regionalisms (e.g., "the Middle Kingdom" the

"Greater Chinese Co-Prosperity Sphere") to modern transnational acronyms (e.g., "the BRIC countries" [Brazil, Russia, India, China], associated through their common status as sites of "the world's greatest concentration of foreign-exchange reserves and savings")—assigns renewed momentum to thinking in empires (problematic, in my view), but it is at least responsive to geopolitical configurations that overturn Western assumptions about who should be aligned with whom:

> To the Western eye, it is a bizarre phenomenon: small Asian nation-states should be balancing against the rising China, but increasingly they rally toward it out of Asian cultural pride and an understanding of the historical-cultural reality of Chinese dominance. And in the former Soviet Central Asian countries—the so-called Stans—China is the new heavyweight player, its manifest destiny pushing its Han pioneers westward while pulling defunct microstates like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as oil-rich Kazakhstan, into its orbit. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization gathers these Central Asian strongmen together with China and Russia and may eventually become the "NATO of the East."[9]

Comparative literature has yet to catch up with this kind of socioeconomic mapping. Even in the most recent iterations of postcolonial history and theory, its terms are more often than not resolutely "old economy"; that is to say, settled on a vision of Western imperialism that fails to take stock of the extent to which, as Robert Young puts it, "the world has come to globalize the United States." There is no coincident or contingent structure in place that enables fluid analysis of "Second World" cultural interactions among, say, "the Stans," the Greater Middle East, "Chindia," the Americas, Eurasia, intra-Asia, "other Asias," or Euroland. Certainly, transnational research and teaching occurs; I think here of Neil Doshi's syllabus, inspired by Karla Mallette's book *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (2010) for a graduate seminar entitled Mediterranean Studies and the Countercultures of Modernity offered in 2011 at the University of Pittsburgh, which "privileges cultural heterogeneity, transregionality and ocean-spaces in the Mediterranean basin in order to challenge if not reconfigure notions of Occident and Orient." And there is no dearth of transhistorical or asynchronous historical analysis. But the academic organization of the humanities tends to re-impose traditional national spatial coordinates and periodizing structures on knowledge-fields, some of them inherited from area studies. Despite game-changing works like Simon Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, which identified the transnational regionalisms that proliferate within a single language when that language is colonially and coercively deployed across a continent, literary history's cartographic catalogue is thus either constrained by the national habitus or the agglomerative rubric of World Literature.[10] With respect to the latter, what we find in the place of self-updating world-systems is a proliferation of geographically emptied names that all more or less refer to the same thing—globality—albeit with different political valences.

World Literature is the blue-chip moniker; benefiting from its pedigreed association with Goethean *Weltliteratur*. World Literature evokes the great comparatist tradition of encyclopedic mastery and scholarly ecumenicalism. It is an encapsulating model of literary comparatism that, in promoting an ethic of liberal inclusiveness or the formal structures of cultural similitude, often has the collateral effect of blunting political critique. Then there is "the world republic of letters," historically tied to a Francocentric republican ideal of universal excellence ("the literary Greenwich meridian" in Pascale Casanova's ascription), and denoting world literature's adjudicating power manifest in prize-conferring institutions of cultural legitimation. "Cosmopolitanism," and its contemporary variant "the cosmopolitical," both steeped in a Kantian vision of perpetual peace through enlightened common culture, often act as code for an ethics of transnational citizenship, worldliness as the basis of secular criticism, and minoritarian humanism. "Planetarity" would purge "global" of its capitalist hubris, greening its economy and rendering it accountable to disempowered subjects. "Literary World-Systems," Braudelian and Wallersteinian in inspiration, rely on networks of cultural circulation, literary markets, and genre translation. *Littérature-monde* is the banner term for a writers' movement that refuses postcolonial sectorizations of the literary field (*francophonie* is denounced as "the last avatar of colonialism"). Here, decentralized polyphonic voices that are *mondiale* in address give rise to a concept of fluctuating, relational, unbordered language worlds. I would add to this list "cities," which treat metropolitan nexuses as metonyms of World. Despite its current seductiveness as unit of analysis, cities remains vulnerable to the charge of depoliticization levied recently by a *New Left Review* editor: "City spaces are studied in abstraction from their national contexts" and "The wielders of economic power and social coercion remain anonymous."[11] Efforts to correct for the unipolar logic that persists in each of these paradigms have yielded supplemental vocabularies for non-national blocs of culture: "the Global South," "imagined communities," "the Americas," "the terraqueous globe," "Bandoon," "parastates," "translingualism," "diaspora," "majimboism," "silicon cities," "circum-Atlantic," "îles-refuges," and so on. And though such terms add some measure of specificity and localism to networks that striate nation-states or ethnic borderlands, they are inconsistently and haphazardly entered into the lexicon of comparative literature. In this respect, they fail to answer fully the challenge of making comparative literature geopolitically case-sensitive and site-specific in ways that avoid reproducing neoimperialist cartographies.

Comparative literature is no more beset than other humanities fields by the constraints imposed by its historic subject fields (genres, periodizing frames, theoretical paradigms). But it faces the rigors of the globalist injunction with a heightened awareness of the Babelian ironies of disciplinary self-naming, and remains more vulnerable than national literatures to the charge of shortchanging non-Western approaches because of its commitment to inclusiveness. It also rubs up against what Nirvana Tanoukhi identifies as a fundamental disciplinary paradox: comparative literature's "cartographic claim to scale" and a "poetics of distance" leading to "the task of charting zones, paths, and crossroads obscured by strict adherence to 'national traditions.'" This task is undercut by the fact that "comparison depends for its existence on the entrenchment of nation-based geography."[12]

A translational model of comparative literature goes some distance in answering such concerns and paradoxes. Languages are inherently transnational and time sensitive. Their plurilingual composition embodies histories of language travel that do not necessarily reproduce imperial trajectories. They create small worlds of idiom and creative idiolect that ford the divide, often imposed on postcolonial writers, between those deferring to the experimental modernity of the West (stream of consciousness, wordplay) and those adhering to a colonial realism informed by local custom, tradition, and the romance of political aspirations to national self-determination. Language worlds that bleed out of dichotomized generic categories afford a planetary approach to literary history that responds to the dynamics of geopolitics without shying away from fractious border wars. This translational transnationalism corresponds to a critical praxis capable of adjusting literary technics—interlinear translation, exegesis, gloss, close reading—to the exigencies of a contemporary language politics marked by:[13]

- language diasporas that bolster transnational literary communities;
- the internationalization of (North) American literary studies with multilingualism from within;
- the critique of linguistic imperialism: specifically global English and the bipolar competition for language dominance between English and Mandarin Chinese;
- the ecology of endangered languages and the statistics of language extinction;
- the impact of accents, vernacular, code-switching, argot and diglossia within non-standard language use;
- translation and war—and the particular vulnerability of translators, stringers, and cultural interpreters to targeting;
- the conflation of anti-terror and anti-immigrant language politics (exemplified in language profiling and linguistic racism, or the merge of Arabophobia and Hispanophobia);
- and the critique of legislation aimed at shrinking language literacy, the self-defeating parochialism of English-only policies, and the blindness to the socioeconomic advantages of English Plus in the world economy.

With these concerns in play, comparative literature takes shape as a field in which the *Realpolitik* of language conflict draws on and transforms the philological heritage of humanistic transference, displacement and exile. Comparative literature's longstanding commitment to investigating zones of cultural and literary expression that go unnamed or that are walled off into untranslatability is mobilized, then, for curricular ventures that aim for geopolitical specificity and theoretical reach against the fine grain of philological comparison.

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1 The direct translation of the title is "The European Vocabulary of Philosophies: A Dictionary of Untranslatables." The English editors modified this as *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*.

2 Alain Badiou, "Logology against Ontology," in *The Adventure of French Philosophy*, 310.

3 Peter Osborne, introducing a dossier dedicated to the *Vocabulaire* in *Radical Philosophy* 138, July/August 2006, 9; Barbara Cassin, *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004, xxi.

4 Étienne Balibar, Barbara Cassin and Alain de Libera, "Subject," trans. David Macey, included as excerpt from *Vocabulary* in *Radical Philosophy* 138 (July/August 2006): 21, 28.

5 Marina Warner, "Commentary," *Times Literary Supplem*ent 5474, February 29, 2008, 14; "Brought to an unfamiliar linguistic *nomos*": Cassin, *Vocabulaire européen*, 897; Cassin, *Vocabulaire européen*, xix.

6 Cassin, *Vocabulaire européen*, 1316.

7 Pierre Bourdieu, "Declaration of Intent," *Liber*, in Pierre Bourdieu, *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action*, ed. Thierry Discepolo, trans. David Fernbach, London: Verso, 2008, 233; Jacques Rancière, *La mésentente: Politique et philosophie*, Paris: Galilée, 1995.

8 Christopher Prendergast, "The World Republic of Letters," in *Debating World Literature* ed. Christopher Prendergast, London: Verso, 2004, 14. In the same footnote, Prendergast takes aim at the "'incommensurability hypothesis' according to which different cultural systems are mutually unintelligible to one another and thus non-translatable." Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition postmoderne* and *Le Différend* are representative, Prendergast argues, of the argument that "Western *grands récits* have not merely dominated but effective annihilated alternative narratives by the simple gesture of refusing their terms" (14).

9 Parag Khanna, "Waving Goodbye to Hegemony," *New York Times Magazine*, January 27, 2008, 37.

10 Robert Young, opening remarks to conference "Postcolonialism and the Hit of the Real," New York University, March 6, 2008; paraphrased from the course description of Neil Doshi's University of Pittsburgh graduate seminar "Mediterranean Studies and the Countercultures of Modernity," which I visited as a guest lecturer in September 2011; Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

11 Preamble to essay by Mike Davis, "Fear and Money in Dubai," *New Left Review* 41, September–October 2006, 46.

12 Nirvana Tanoukhi, "The Scale of World Literature," in *Immanuel Wallerstein and the Problem of the World: System, Scale, Culture*, ed. David Palumbo-Liu, Bruce Robbins, and Nirvana Tanoukhi, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011, 78.

13 See Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

II

Moretti's Literary World-Systems

> The fact that philology applies itself to detail, to the nuances of a detail, to the *intermundia* between these nuances, slows its movement in language and in the world.
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> —Werner Hamacher, "From '95 Theses on Philology'"

The Italian literary historian Franco Moretti accelerates philology and surveys literary forms from on high, the better to quantify genres, historicize autonomous texts, record "waves" of influence, classify canonical and non-canonical literary works, chart symbolic capital and institutional market forces, and track historical change in literary history. He marshals book history, statistics, reader reception, narratology, aesthetics, philology, genetics, and computational data-mining, assigning coherence to method through adherence to system. Yet what he means by "system" often remains elusive. He describes his multivolume editorial project on the novel, for example, as an *ecosystem*. Suggestive though it is, the term compounds what was already in his previous writings an under-articulated relationship to systems theory in the sciences and world-systems theory in the social sciences. System emerges, then, as an Untranslatable, a loose name for a practice of World Literature shaped by quantitative analysis and computational skills.

If world-systems theory has gained traction in literary studies over the last twenty years (propelled along by Franco Moretti, Fredric Jameson, Perry Anderson, Pascale Casanova, Joseph Slaughter, and Alexander Beecroft, among others), it would not have been possible without the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. A sociologist by training, Wallerstein was himself indebted to a host of thinkers, among them: William McNeill, a "world" historian of human history's systolic and diastolic rhythms; Nikolai Kondratieff, an economic theorist who wrote in the 1920s on "long wave production cycles"; Ferdinand Braudel, the *Annales* school historian who analyzed large, complex swaths of geopolitical territory such as the Mediterranean region; Marian Malowist, the Marxist economic historian of early modern European money markets; Gregory Bateson, author of the epistemologically synthetic work *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*; Giovanni Arrighi, whose notion of "long centuries" stretched historical continua beyond the bounds of periodizing convention; and Ilya Prigogine, a theorist of "dissipative structures," or the laws of self-organizing systems as defined by temporality, chaos, and uncertainty.[1] Specifying that the hyphen in "world-system" was "intended to underscore that we are talking not about systems, economies, empires *of the* (whole) world, but about systems, economies, empires *that are* a world," Wallerstein analyzed interstate markets in early capitalism as a causal condition (rather than symptom) of world-making.[2] He demonstrated how war, transportation networks, technological know-how, capital accumulation, the size of bureaucracies, and the organization of empire enabled cities in early modern Europe to gain ascendancy as "core" centers of power, around which "peripheral" nations orbited.

Whether ascribed to history, sociology or literature, the paradigm of the world-system bore little resemblance to systems theory proper, which flourished in the social sciences from the 1940s to the 1960s, often as a result of self-conscious discussions of cross-disciplinary paradigms.[3] The social theorist Talcott Parsons published *The Social System* in 1951, and the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy, often considered the movement's intellectual anchor, published his *General Systems Theory* in 1968. Topics in systems theory included the mathematical modeling of neural networks, cybernetics, and "world dynamics" (which used biofeedback models to examine the organization of industries, cities, and environmental situations). Starting in the early 1970s, and following the lead of Chilean cognitive scientists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann linked autopoiesis to social systems (*Social Systems* appeared in 1986). Modeled on the life cell, on the construct of a "self "-region patrolled by an autonomous boundary (filtering environmental stimuli to enable a distinct identity to self-create), autopoiesis in its very name suggested a migration of systems theory into poetics, or the reverse, the movement of Romantic aesthetic irony—a self-referential, closed system—into systems theory. Luhmann would endorse a functionalist construct of humans as complex assemblages or forms of program that filter environmental information.

Starting with *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez* (1996), Moretti began experimenting with the world-system paradigm, offering variations in *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (1998) and *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (2005). Each of these works examined how genres, styles, and subgenres—picaresque novels, sentimental novels, oriental tales, war stories, minor historical novels, village stories, bildungsroman, naturalist fiction, decadent poetry, modernist narrative, "new woman" novels)—might be taken as literary units of value equivalent to units of economic capital. The mention of "abstract models" in the subtitle of *Graphs, Maps and Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* confirmed an unabashed admiration for quantitative history, geographic maps, and topological schemata. This love of system, often alien to humanists, is traced back to the "scientific spirit" of Marxism, acknowledged by Moretti as crucial to the motivation of his method. Moretti marshals science in the service of understanding literature as a socialization process responsible for cultural power structures, class hierarchies, the bourgeois domestication of consciousness, and the revolutionary potential of intellectual labor. In *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, the political purpose of literary history seems less evident than Moretti's scientific ends: "While recent literary theory was turning for inspiration towards French and German metaphysics" he writes, "I kept thinking there was actually much more to be learned from the natural and the social sciences."[4] Neo-Darwinian calculations of how a literary "tree" selects for maximizing its survival supplant the earlier emphasis on global narrative economy.

Though Moretti's rehabilitation of evolutionary theory has been criticized as a throwback to nineteenth-century theories of natural selection (with their eugenicist baggage), his modeling of literary life cycles, seasoned with quirky examples, open up new directions for systems theory in the marriage of biogenetics and philology, some of them already announced in the neo-vitalist materialism of the late French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. The afterword to *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, contributed by the evolutionary biologist Alberto Piazza, explores the possibility of literal analogies between linguistic and DNA codes. When Moretti asserts, for example, that the bildungsroman emerged after the French Revolution "in response to a precise social need"—that is to say, for the sake of mediating "the conflicting demands of freedom and stability"—Piazza reads his argument as illustrative of how "even literary genres cannot survive without cultural variety." The open or closed status of a literary world-system is thus defined in terms of the system's ability to mutate like a micro-organism or species. "Literary writing," Piazza alleges, "can be construed as a system that is not bound by the particular instruments it has itself created, and is therefore

capable of metabolizing metaphors and ambiguities belonging to several systems of knowledge." In pushing analogies between biological and literary metabolism, Piazza fixes on "translation" as the literary process most comparable to natural selection, random genetic drift, and migration:

> *Graphs, Maps, Trees* does not tell us how far translation of the same novel into different languages may alter the reception and success of a literary genre in the country where it is translated, but Moretti's findings in the third chapter of *Atlas of the European Novel*, on literary diffusion and the correlation between literary models and geographical space, suggest an important role for migration, not of people but of "forms," at least in Europe.[5]

Though translation, in Piazza's estimation, affords an imprecise measure of literary survival, it nonetheless emerges as a crucial variable in the determination of a literary form's capacity for migration and mutation. Implicitly capitalizing on the common derivation in *genus* (type or species) of the words *genre* and *gene*, Piazza assigns translatability a signal role in biogenetic and literary evolution.

For Moretti, translatablity is defined both in market terms (by mapping or graphing a genre's circulation, influence, imitation, marketability, election to the canon, congeniality to cultural comparatism and appropriation) and in evolutionary terms (as when he hypothesizes that "morphological novelty" results from "spatial discontinuity." "Take a form," he writes,

> follow it from space to space, and study the reasons for its transformations: the "opportunistic, hence unpredictable" reasons of evolution, in Ernst Mayr's words. And of course the multiplicity of spaces is the great challenge, and the curse, almost, of comparative literature: but it is also its peculiar strength, because it is only in such a wide, non-homogeneous geography that some fundamental principles of cultural history become manifest.[6]

Here, it would seem, texts must experience the condition of exile. Transplanted from their native soil, and forced to encounter extreme cultural and linguistic difference, literary forms jump the line into morphological innovation. This happens, according to Moretti, when a form like "free indirect discourse" (associated with the post-Revolutionary nineteenth-century European novel, famous for bringing unruly subjective consciousness into line with bourgeois *idées recues* via the conceit of a covertly inserted omniscient narrator) travels to Russia and confronts an alien discursive mode. As Flaubert becomes Dostoevsky, as *Madame Bovary* turns into *Crime and Punishment*, the supposed passivity of free indirect style gives way to an active stream of consciousness delivered as riposte in the second-person singular voice. The conclusion one is meant to draw from this example is that substantive generic modification occurs not because "difference" is reconciled in hybridity (that would be a "dialogic-free indirect discourse") but rather as a result of the absence of mediation. Born of Dostoevsky's "genius," dialogism emerges as the equivalent of genetic drift; that is to say, a new morphology or novelty literary form.

Whether or not one is persuaded by Moretti's literary examples, his focus on the diversification and speciation of literary forms highlights critical issues and questions for the study of world literatures: Are new genres made by virtue of translation failure? Is the lack of a common ground of comparison a spur to literary evolution? Does differentiation (in the species sense) necessarily come at the expense of hybridity models of cultural difference? Is the interdependency of narrative markets—crucial to a Wallersteinian model of literary world-systems—now simply the economic symptom of literary survivalism? Is a genre's travel the measure of its aliveness, its drift the gauge of force required to break open the bounds of a closed world-system? When Moretti speaks of "a materialist conception of form" that would reveal "form as force," it would seem that he is re-imagining the literary world-system as a universe of competing national galaxies, each combating the other for title to possession of the maximum number of novelty genres; each rivaling the other to become the universal form of a homogenized, capitalized Global Lit.[7]

It was perhaps to ease away from this Malthusian endgame that Moretti changed course, adopting a permutation of systems theory borrowed from ecology. In *The Novel*, an ambitious collective study of the world history of a genre under his editorial supervision, he shifts to a notion of "ecosystem." *The Novel*'s critical apparatus, he stipulates, refers to a "wider ecosystem, focusing, for instance, on how the semantic field of 'narrative' took shape around keywords such as *midrash, monogatari, xiaoshuo, qissa*—and, why not, *romance*." Here, the names for generic forms in Hebrew, Japanese, Mandarin and Arabic are allowed to stand in their original languages. As Untranslatables, they prompt the Western reader to reverse the order of comparison, with midrash, monogatari, xiaoshuo, and qissa serving as *points de repères* against which Western prose forms should be measured. The Japananese monogatari, whose most celebrated exemplar is *The Pillow Book*, and which is characterized as a genre of feminine fantasy, amorous intrigue, and leisure-class pastimes, would then be a logical default for consideration of Western genres of popular romance. Similarly, the Arabic *qissa*—a generic term for narrative associated with religious instruction qualified as less translatable than, say, the *mathal* (fable), the *nadira* (anecdote), or the *sira* (chivalric tale)—would center a global curriculum devoted to religious and secular literary expression.[8]

Moretti's project falls short of its non-Eurocentric ambitions (in volume 1, *midrash, monogatari, qissa* and *povest* are all grouped under "Critical Apparatus"; key texts by writers from Lebanon, Japan, Turkey, Korea, South Africa and Iran are similarly compressed under the vague title "Readings"), but he somewhat offsets this bundling of non-Western narratives with extended essays on "Historiography and Fiction in Chinese Culture" and "The Novel in Premodern China." In volume 2, Asia fairs less well. The big genres of epic, picaresque, romance, epistolary, sentimentality, and providential realism are accorded in-depth treatments in relation to specific European works, whereas world literatures, including Lu Xun's *The True Story of Ah Q*, Mao Dun's *Midnight*, Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, Naguib Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Orhan Pamuk's *The Black Book* receive short shrift as representative prototypes (i.e., political narrative, literature of the metropolis). Typically, too, there is the familiar tendency to assign whole continents to essays on non-Western forms of narrative.

Criticizing Moretti's *The Novel* on grounds that its contents are proportionally Eurocentric is ultimately unsatisfying even if justified. What makes the project more interestingly problematic is its pledge to the literary ecosystem, its push to reconcile literary history with ecology. A "world" from this perspective might be distinguishable as a critical epithelium; as what Timothy Morton (in *The Ecological Thought*) calls "mesh" (interconnectedness, concatenation, weaving and computing, "infinite connections and infinitesimal differences," lichen, fungus, bacteria, endosymbiosis or symbiosis within organisms, envelopes and filters); or as what Isabelle Stengers refers to as "process," which recurs to thermodynamical systems (emergence, conservation, entropy, percolation) and takes into account "the consequences, for a given milieu, of the appearance of a new technical practice just as it does for the consequences of climate change or the appearance of a new species."[9] Stengers underscores an adaptive notion of system centering on the *technical milieu*, itself a construct indebted to Georges Friedmann, Gilbert Simondon, Bernard Stiegler and Tiziana Terranova (whose *informational milieu* is applied to digital telecommunication systems).[10]

In the vanguard of early adopters, Moretti revises concepts of literary milieu going back to the author Hippolyte Taine for an informational milieu adaptive to new technical practices, specifically data-mining and quantitative formalism. The essay "Hamlet by Numbers" (2011) uses automated data retrieval to produce statistically driven plot vectors. Mindful of politics, he diagrams the transfer of sovereignty from Court to State and the important role of minor characters in greasing the mechanisms of state function. Taking as his watchword Napoleon's anointment "of politics as the fate of the moderns," Moretti emphasizes "weak ties" among characters and "flat" informational dialogue (contrasted to the figuration-drenched language of Hamlet): "Flat, just like the style of the State (or at least, of its bureaucracy) … Flat, like the typical utterances we encounter at the periphery of *Hamlet*: orders and news: 'And we here dispatch/You, good Cornelius, and you,

Voltemand.'" Plot and style are the variables controlled for in Moretti's experiment. They provide, he says,

> a small-scale model to study two general properties of human societies: plot, to understand how the simple exchange between two individuals evolves into complex patterns made of thousands of interactions; and style, to study how human beings make sense of their actions. A model for the relationship between what we do, and how we think about it.

These vectoral diagrams of sociality contribute to visualizing how politics "small p" is gridded onto the "big P" politics of Elizabethan sovereignty. But they remain critical blunt instruments; insufficiently tuned to score the phenomenality of politics; the extra-institutional power that exerts unseen pressure on manifest governance; or the effects of Machiavellian rhetoric, which, as Victoria Kahn has argued, Renaissance readers were right to associate with force, fraud, cunning, deception, and de-facto power.[11]

Moretti's "quant Hamlet" typifies a whole way of doing literary criticism based on collaborative research in the hard sciences. The Stanford Literary Lab, directed by Moretti and Matthew Jockers, issues pamphlets dedicated to realizing clear objectives:

> first, finding a new type of literary and cultural evidence, that may design a new landscape for our historical and interpretive work; second, producing, as far as possible [and reasonable], a geographical and visual "geometricization" of narrative form; and, third, indulging in morphological and historical speculations on what may have produced such forms.

The study report of a lab experiment conducted by Moretti and his team published in the magazine *n+1* describes the genre-recognition capabilities of computer-generated algorithms. It consists of an exercise in inputting that sidelines the role of human interpretation in favor of outcomes produced by DocuScope, a text-tagging device that allows for sophisticated data-mining on "very large textual objects." Using Language Action Types (called LATs, as in first- or third-person narration), Cluster Dendograms of novel genres using Most Frequent Words (MFWs), and scatterplot matrices, the experiment tested for generic typology recognition in both the Shakespeare corpus and a representative sample of nineteenth-century British novels. There were dreams of moving from these control groups to "the Great Unread—the vast unexplored archive that lies underneath the narrow canon of literary history … One could envisage generation-by-generation maps of the literary universe, with galaxies, supernovae, black holes …" For the Stanford Literary Lab, the literary world-system's parametric potential encompasses the cosmic imperium of all texts—read and unread. The researchers cast themselves as space voyagers or seafarers leading maritime expeditions into icy waters:

> We started with an experiment: testing the classifying power of Docuscope in a new and controlled setting. The experiment then turned into an exploration: Docuscope and MFW, charting the field of novelistic genres, and their inner composition … Statistical findings, said Heuser, made us realize that genres are icebergs: with a visible portion floating above the water, and a much larger part hidden below, and extending to unknown depths. Realizing that these depths exist; that they can be systematically explored; and that they may lead to a multidimensional reconceptualization of genre: such, we think, are solid findings of our research.

The language of unknown depths, systematic exploration, solid findings, and "dead ends" doggedly overcome through tweaks to the data-mining instruments is typically found in science journals. Here, it gives rise to a rhetorical mode that is precritical in the sense that it shakes off the influence of decades of metatheory, hermeneutics and deconstruction. Individual works of literature, aggregated in sets and organized schematically according to generic morphology, are treated as empirical entities assumed to be amenable to quantitative analysis. While Moretti himself often enlivens his quantitative formalism with witty phrases and bold hypotheses about cultural and political change, the Literary Lab pamphlets adhere to the flattened diction of technics, drawing on the vocabulary of methodology, scales, frequencies, practices, principles, criteria, correlation, signals, and proofs. *Pamphlet 4*, produced by the lab, details the construction of a research tool baptized the Correlator, which "proved to be a method of discovering large word cohorts" and enabled researchers to refine semantic fields in 2,958 nineteenth-century British novels. If the labs are harbingers of the future status of systems theory in literary studies, they spell out less concern with ecosystems (and their organicist, genetic, evolutionary applications) and more concern with computational systems tout court, albeit in the service of literary and social history. From the well-endowed seat of the digital humanities, gracious concessions are offered to the old humanities:

> For all we have learned from the admirable restraint the sciences show towards making conclusions, we find great value in the humanistic modes of argument that put forward possibilities and power ideas, which may not yet be conclusive or certain, but which drive further study and force us to look at what we thought we knew in new ways.[12]

Hope is pinned on inconclusiveness and skepticism toward what one knows, but rarely are the rewards of this abstracted, digital account of World Literature made clear. It would seem that the expansive "world" of this quant-driven ecosystem tends towards contraction of the economy of interpretation.

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1 Ilya Prigogine, "Order through Fluctuation: Self-Organization and Social System," in *Evolution and Consciousness*, ed. E. Jantch and C. H. Waddington, Ontario: Addison-Wellesley, 1976, 93–126. As well as Prigogine, *From Being to Becoming: Time and Complexity in the Physical Sciences*, San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1980. See also Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *La Nouvelle alliance: Métamorphose de la science*, Paris: Gallimard, 1974, as well as their postface to Michel Serres's *Hermès: Literature, Science, Philosophy*, ed. Josué V. Harari, Michael Serres, and David F. Bell, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982. David Porush extends Prigogine's theory into literary analysis in his essay "Fictions as Dissipative Structures: Prigogine's Theory and Postmodernism's Roadshow," in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, ed. N. Katherine Hayles, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 54–84. Finally, Elizabeth Grosz draws on Prigogine's notion of "being and becoming" in her Deleuzian reading of temporality, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2004.

2 Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2004, 16–17.

3 References to "systems theory" proper are curiously absent from Wallerstein's theoretical pieces on world-systems theory though he draws heavily on Nikolai Kondratieff's definition of cycles (especially B-phase). In *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (1995), Wallerstein seems more concerned to establish world-systems theory as a paradigm shifter within the social sciences.

4 Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, London: Verso, 2005, 2.

5 Piazza, cited in Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 99; Piazza, "Evolution at Close Range," afterword to *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 95; ibid., 104.

6 Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 90.

7 Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 92. Worldwide concern over the homogenization of culture, particularly through Hollywood film production and distribution, was expressed in the passage of a UNESCO resolution in October of 2005 designed to protect cultural diversity. The convention grants governments permission to use protectionist measures such as quotas or subsidies to mitigate U.S. cultural dominance.

8 Franco Moretti, "On *The Novel*," preface to *The Novel*, vol. 1, ed. Franco Moretti, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, x; the Japananese *monogatari*: ibid., 241–8; the Arabic *qissa*: ibid., 262.

9 Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010, 29, 30, 36; Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmpopolitics I*, trans. Robert Bononno Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 33.

10 "We are no longer mostly dealing with information that is transmitted from a source to a receiver, but increasingly also with informational dynamics—that is with the relation between noise and signal, including fluctuations and microvariations, entropic emergences and negentropic emergences, positive feedback and chaotic

processes. If there is an informational quality to contemporary culture, then it might be not so much because we exchange more information than before, or even because we buy, sell or copy informational commodities, but because cultural processes are taking on the attributes of information—they are increasingly grasped and conceived in terms of their informational dynamics." Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*, New York: Pluto, 2004, 7.

11 Franco Moretti, "Network Theory," *New Left Review* 68, March–April 2011, 93–4; Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric from the Counter Reformation to Milton*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

12 Stanford Literary Lab, litlab.stanford.edu; the study report of a lab experiment: Jonathan Hope and Michael Witmore, "The Very Large Textual Object: A Prosthetic Reading of Shakespeare," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9: 3, January 2004, as cited by Sarah Allison, Ryan Heuser, Matthew Jockers, Franco Moretti, and Michael Witmore, "Quantitative Formalism: An Experiment," *n+1* 13, Winter 2012, 81; Hope and Witmore, "The Very Large Textual Object," 92; ibid, 108; Ryan Heuser and Long Le-Khac "A Quantitative Literary History of 2,958 Nineteenth-Century British Novels: The Semantic Cohort Method," *Literary Lab Pamphlet* 4, 7; ibid., 49.

III

Eurochronology and Periodicity

Shaped by classical genre theory, Renaissance humanism, Hegelian historical consciousness, *Geistesgeschichte*, Goethean *Weltliteratur*, and the Marxist ideal of an "International of letters," literary history has been beset by what Christopher Prendergast, following Arjun Appadurai, calls the "Eurochronology problem." This is a problem arising from the fact that critical traditions and disciplines founded in the Western academy contain inbuilt typologies—"epic," "classicism," "Renaissance," "genre," "world history"—adduced from Western literary examples.[1] It is impossible, for instance, to disintricate the genre of epic from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and from the idea of ancient Greece as the foundation of Western civilization. Developmental narratives of literary history that structure the unfurling of national literary traditions privilege the works of canonical authors as peaks in a world-literary landscape. They tend to naturalize parameters of comparison that exclude certain kinds of cultural production from the realm of "art," or assign the term art only to certain kinds of objects. So, for example, when European nineteenth-century art history invented "Chinese art," it treated China as a totalized cultural essence; calligraphy and painting were anointed as art, while temple architecture was consigned to lower status as sacred building.[2] Similarly divisive categorizations govern Western classification of works as either "literature" or "folklore." European literatures carry the prestige of print culture (heightened by a special claim on the modern novel), while non-European literatures, subject to Eurocentric standards of literariness and readability that class them closer to folklore and oral culture, tend to occupy a more tenuous position in World Literature. Clearly, the nations that name the critical lexicon are the nations that dominate the classification of genres in literary history and the critical paradigms that prevail in literary world-systems.

In recent years, the critique of Orientalism within international modernism has prompted the need for new paradigms of literary history; paradigms that assign cultural specificity and theoretical density to Asian modernisms. Attention has increasingly been devoted to the multiple "imperialisms" of modernism, and, in particular, to the impact of the Japanese occupation during World War II. In the context of intra-Asian world-systems, Western modernism continues to figure strongly as a critical rubric for literary techniques and genres, but the emphasis is on how Western forms enabled Asian modernisms to redefine what modernism *is*. A prime example of this approach can be found in Peng Hsiao-yen's work on what she calls "transcultural modernity" in Shanghai, Tokyo and Paris during the 1930s. Hsiao-yen suggests that the genre of neo-sensationalism, as it moved from Europe to Japan to China, occasioned the rethinking of modernism by temporal, regional, national.[3] Hsiao-yen Peng's emphasis on shifting temporal frames of modernism within comparative literary history is of particular interest. If one stays within the standard periodized parameters of modernism as a designation for early-twentieth-century American and European experimental writing (including stream of consciousness narrative, typographical novelty, free verse, and multilingual poetics), Asian modernisms tend to figure only marginally. Once extended to Asia, however, modernism becomes the name for slippages among modernity and modernization, nationalism and Westernization, cosmopolitanism and anti-imperialism, individualism and militant collectivism, bourgeois and proletarian culture. It also serves to designate a complex aesthetic dischronology during the interwar period, which saw the coexistence of "art for art's sake" (typified by the poetry of China's Li Jinfa and Korea's Kim Ok), realism (defined by the Chinese writers Lu Xun and Mao Dun), the Japanese "new sensibility writers" (fascinated by the avant-garde "new woman," urban spectacle and technology), pan-Asian nationalist fiction (Sato Haruo's 1938 *Son of Asia*), and anti-Western proletarian narratives (by China's Zhao Shuli or Korea's Lin Hua). This heterodox modernism does not wane the way modernism in Europe and America arguably did with the end of World War II but continues in the wake of Deng Xiaoping's 1978 reforms as an omnibus term designating the desire for "democracy; avant-garde conceptualism, humanism, structuralism; "global" imagism; and much more.

Discrepant modernisms necessitate the conversion of conventional paradigms of literary history or incite the invention of new ones altogether. As already noted, in Western literary criticism, even when the purview is World Literature, Occidental genre categories invariably function as program settings. And when non-European literatures are addressed, they are often grouped under monolithic rubrics such as "Islam" or "Asia" (a tendency criticized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Other Asias* [2008]). Dipesh Chakrabarty has gone some distance to correct for Eurochronology in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000, new edition 2007). He challenges emulative problematics in the study of non-Europe, and argues convincingly that, in the words of one reviewer, "Historical experience establishes that no country can be an unquestioned model to another country."[4] Avoiding the simplistic substitution of Asiacentricity or Afrocentricity for Eurocentricity, which rests on a caricatural logic of divided world-systems and cultural Othering, Chakrabarty proposes translational approaches that negotiate among regionally marked concepts, practices and institutions in his 2007 preface.

A translational literary history would take its cue from Chakrabarty's critique of European historicism as well as from Johannes Fabian's 1983 classic *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, which revealed the "denial of coevalness" in the historiography of comparative culture; from Edward Said's practice of "contrapuntal reading," on which basis, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), the author argues for "reading with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history and of those subjected and concealed histories against which the dominant discourse acts"; and from Ania Loomba's *Re-Orienting the English Renaissance* (2008), which contests the dominance of Western chronotopes in the early modern period. Lionel Ruffel's edited volume *What is the Contemporary?* [5] which emphasizes modernism's accommodation to colonialism and postmodernism's comfortable fit with the era of Americanization. In this context, Pascale Casanova extends Said's notion of "Greenwich Mean Time" to the concept of a nomothetic *oeuvre qui fait date*—a watershed, game-changing text—that acts as a "temporal accelerator" on non-metropolitan literary traditions. As Casanova makes clear, periodization logics are anchored to fetish dates like the birth or death of an author or the publication of a groundbreaking work. Such dates serve as pretexts for colloquia or retrospectives that are in turn constitutive of the sanctification of *lieux de mémoire*, national patrimonialization, and the cartographic survey of distributed intellectual capital. The date-driven humanities shores up post-Hegelian ways of doing aesthetic history that rely on progressivist blandishments; the "rise" and "evolution" of genres, the "emergence" in time of stylistic movements, and the "exuberance" of capital markets.

Periodization has routinely been accepted as a standing order of criticism that eschews the kinds of controversy surrounding national

literature, canon, and theory. But it, too, as Virginia Jackson has emphasized, impedes the ability to think literary history:

> Literary periods allow us to write literary history, but do they keep us from thinking about literary history? The necessary abstraction of periodization is bound to make contemporary critics nervous, and for good reason. The history of literary history is full of old-fashioned ideas: Hegelian transcendence and the progress of civilization, Darwinian social evolution, the drive toward and past the modern. Those nineteenth-century ideas had some rotten consequences in the twentieth century, so it's small wonder that most of us don't like to admit their persistence in literary critical practice.

Jackson builds on previous efforts (by Fredric Jameson, Johannes Fabian, and Edward Said, among others) to periodize otherwise. Practically speaking, this implies renewed attention to time intervals that do not conform to Greenwich Mean Time or the Gregorian calendar; examples being the French revolutionary calendar (based on decimal clock time), differential East–West calibrations of duration, and discrepant temporal orders (such as the correspondence of the Iranian 1940s with Euro-America's 1960s). These discrepant temporal measures may be defined as Untranslatables of periodicity. They orient literary history toward time studies and open up new functions for historical anachronism and *décalage*. Rey Chow, recalling that Erich Auerbach was already thinking along these lines in the 1940s, urges comparatists to mobilize non-Euro-American timelines to understand "what world literature means or has already meant in other world situations." In a complementary vein, Eric Hayot (in his *On Literary Worlds*) criticizes conventional periods for their strong bias toward national limits and "untheorized and inherited notions of totality," and exhorts recourse to "telescopic models that lead from the small to the large, rather than the reverse" (e.g., focus a course on a single year) as well as the disruption of "the period logics embedded in Realism, Romanticism and Modernism by weaning them from the master-narrative of "Modernity."[6] For her part, Kathleen Davis shows how "the Middle Ages" and "feudalism" operate as Untranslatables of periodicity within a larger politics of time. In *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time*, Davis extracts the period monikers from their clichéd use as generic terms for the unmodern, and, as it were, re-translates them historically in relation to law, politics and religion:

> At least two histories of periodization are implicated here: one that generates and protects cultural and political categories by grounding them upon a division between medieval and modern; and one that grounded Christian political order by attaching it, by way of the *anno domini* and the biblical supersession of the New Testament over the Old Testament (which is also to say Christian history over Jewish history), to a division in sacred time.

In a subsequent essay Davis employs the concept of "tycoon medievalism" to capture the temporal instability of "medieval" when applied to the architectural conceits of corporate philanthropy. Her prime example is Bucknell University's Carnegie Building, burnished by a lintel of names leading from Charlemagne and King Alfred through to several American presidents. The building establishes "an impersonal, self-perpetuating mechanism for redistributing economic capital into symbolic capital at a crucial moment in the history of U.S. labor relations."[7] In addition to signaling how capitalism relies on period anachronism as a branding device for institutions and commercial products, Davis's tycoon medievalism indicates how the anachronic time-signature is politically conscripted to graft an American plutocracy onto Europe's most legendary monarchs. Davis treats periodization categories as referents unhitched from their historical moorings, emphasizing how they function; they mis- (or re-)translate cross-temporally. Like Alexander Nagel in *Medieval Modern: Art Out of Time* and *Anachronic Renaissance* (co-edited with Christopher Wood), she experiments heuristically in *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of the "Middle Ages" outside Europe* (co-edited with Nadia Altschul) with an anachronic timeline of the Middle Ages.[8] Here, in addition to modeling non-Eurochronological re-periodization, the authors sharpen a critical regard on the "chronic" ageism inflecting historical narrative and the periodization of aesthetics. [9]

Treating conventional period metrics—centuries, decades, *zeitgeist*, style-defined eras (classical, Gothic, Baroque, etc.)—as Untranslatables of periodicity takes us back of course, to Nietzsche. His *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, or *Untimely Meditations*, sometimes translated as "unfashionable (or unmodern) observations," published between 1873 and 1876 shortly after *The Birth of Tragedy*, grew out of a rejection of *fin-de-siècle*, a distaste for being abreast of the times typical of those who suffer from historical malady. For Nietzsche, historical malady embraces all strands of historicism, from *Geistesgeschichte* (spirit as telos, absolute spirit, classless society, progress of humanity) to historical relativism. It was only through the unfashionable, or history off its hinges, that one could deprogram the future. Nietzschean efforts to untime academic historicism, particularly those notions of zeitgeist that personify the archaeological and political dating of history, line up with Marx's incalculable "time" of revolution, Freudian belatedness (*Nachträglichkeit*), Benjamin's historical compressors, the "now-time" (*Jetztzeit*) and the Outmoded, Derridean reworkings of Shakespeare's "time out of joint," Lacan and Žižek's "parallax view," Badiou's "century." In each case, politics is timed to undo prevailing logics of history.

For Badiou, untiming takes the form of *sequences* broken up by temporal intervals that disable linear history. The sequence "restoration," for example, corresponds to the long, if briefly interrupted, political reign of capitalo-parliamentarism that stretches from the Bourbon Restoration of 1814 (cementing the end of the First Republic and its vestiges under the Empire of Napoleon I) to the ongoing era of high neoliberalism. Badiou opens *The Century* with a rhetorical gesture—a rewriting of Jean Genet's preface to *Les Nègres*—that demonstrates how time-signatures, like racial categorizations, have little foundation as essentialist predicates. Genet wrote: "One evening an actor asked me to write a play for an all-black cast. But what exactly is a black? First of all, what's his color?" Badiou transposes this statement as: "A century, how many years is that? … which is the instant of exception that effaces the twentieth century? The fall of the Berlin Wall? The mapping of the genome? The launch of the Euro?" In drawing attention to the shifting frame of the centennial bracket as it exceeds, coincides with, or falls short of one hundred years, Badiou prompts reflection on how the name of an event—Berlin Wall, genome, Euro—times the political. As Bruno Bosteels has noted, there is a shift in Badiou's work from the politicization of history to a historicization of politics that "remits a purely sequential understanding of politics to its own intrinsic history." In *The Century*, short and long sequences straddle the borders of the twentieth century. The sequence 1890–1914 designates "the prologue"; a period before the Great War marked by the intensely compressed "polymorphic creativity" of Mallarmé, Einstein, Freud, Schoenberg, Lenin, Conrad, Henry James, Joyce, Proust, Frege, Husserl, Wittgenstein, Picasso, Braque, Poincaré, Cantor, Riemann, Hilbert, Pessoa, Méliès, Griffith, and Chaplin. Another sequence is the Soviet Century (1917–1990) that begins with the October Revolution and ends with the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.[10] Inside the Soviet Century, there is the smaller "totalitarian century," "timed" according to the perpetration of crimes against humanity and the state-sponsored mass extermination of humans orchestrated at the Nazi and Stalinist camps. The Totalitarian Century overlaps with, but remains distinct from, the Communist Century, measured from the time of Lenin's ascension in 1917 to the death of Mao in 1976. Badiou uses the sequence to emend epochal brackets. *The Century* wants to enable time theory to think for itself within but also beyond the strictures of historical periodization. Extrapolating here, one could say that literary history needs to open up to radical re-sequencing, through anachronic timelines, non-Eurochronic descriptions of duration, and a proliferation of new names for periods as yet unnamed, or which become discernible only as Untranslatables of periodicity.

The categories of "the contemporary" and "contemporaneity" are especially susceptible to analysis as period Untranslatables that stave off the "chronic" ageism of eras and epochs. Where and when does the contemporary begin if we are counting in years? How far back historically do we go: a decade, or only a year? When does something fall out of contemporaneity, when it no longer feels of the now-time or when temporality itself, and the styles used to measure it, are recalculated? How does the notion of a contemporary period function politically in the context of exhibitions, biennials, bookfairs, the marketing and making of art and literature? For the longest time "contemporary" art was

off-limits as an area of research for art historians. To work on contemporary art implied a shift in genre from academic scholarship to criticism, journalism, exhibition reviews, catalogues, and curatorial ventures. The received wisdom was that time had to settle to determine which works of art warranted consecration under the value-added category of the historical. Twentieth-century art history routinely stopped in 1950; it crept slowly into the '60s and '70s, and even more gingerly into the '80s and '90s. A similar reserve was discernible in literary criticism and history, with the contemporary often treated as a marginal temporality. As Alex Woloch noted in his description of a course offered at Stanford University on the problem of "a genealogy and taxonomy for critical recuperation," the "too contemporary" lines up with the "under-recognized, the forgotten, the out-of-fashion, the peripheral, the disorderly, the too difficult, the too popular, and the too old."[11]

Defined by elusive parameters of actuality, the future and the now-time, Benjamin's *Jeztzeit* is a temporal Untranslatable essential to the task of de-stigmatizing "the contemporary" as a periodized unit. Writing on the term in the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin notes, "Although the lexical form of this word existed before Walter Benjamin marked it (it is found, notably in the work of the Romantic poet Jean Paul), Benjamin was the writer who made it into both a heuristic and a philosophico-practical concept. It is not easily translatable. Benjamin seemed to have wanted to emphasize the everyday meaning of 'the now-time': its nontechnical, nonscholarly use as a common noun modernized by doubling it up as *jetzt* (now, at present) and *Zeit* (time)."[12] Reminding us that *Jeztzeit* makes its entrance in Benjamin's later work "On the Philosophy of History" (or "Theses") in 1940 as well as in notes for Notebook "N" of the *Arcades Project*, Gagnebin underscores the concept's two dimensions:

> a theoretical dimension, the critique of a spatialized, undifferentiated, and indifferent conception of temporal "unfolding," in which history becomes an infinite accumulation; and a practical and political dimension, interrupting this enumeration, blocking this avalanche (Thesis 17, *Stillstellung, stillstellen* [blockage, blocking, halting]) so as to bring about a knowing transformation of the present, which also transforms the image of the past. So even though *Jetztzeit* is close, in its brief and radiant temporality, to *Augenblick* (another frequent term in the "Theses" and which Benjamin uses in the sense of "instant"), the word no doubt borrows many of the characteristics of *kairos*: the ideas of a break, of something discontinuous, of a decisive and irreplaceable moment … It is because decisive and just political action, which happens within the time of the now, is both urgent, acute, and extremely precarious, since it has to grasp the "right moment" in midflight, that it is comparable to a messianic redemption that no theology of history or any ideology of progress could guarantee.[13]

Benjamin's "now-time" encourages us to think of "contemporaneity" as an action of politics on time. Another name for political theology, or the imagination of a futurological present tense governed by the primal fear of emergency or a sense of impending catastrophism, *Jeztzeit* complicates periodicity, and calls forth an idea of "contemporaneity" to replace the static, periodized label of "the contemporary."

Recent theories of aesthetic chronology that would seem to take Benjaminian *Jeztzeit* as a starting point include Tim Griffin's notion of "compression"; i.e. the stitching of "'several temporalities together'—ancient, mid-twentieth century, and contemporary" with reference to Yang Fudong's artwork *Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest* (2003–7). Griffin speaks of a "compression algorithm," grafted from technical devices that permit digital information to be compactly stored and speedily transferred from one format or medium to another. For Griffin, this can function as a kind of selective memory loss. A subtractive approach to information allows for temporal foreshortening or the untiming of critical and historical coordinates. Compression might be seen as a way of naming "the contemporary" as a period of the "now" that shares with postmodernism specific mnemonic techniques of distillation, condensation and suturing. Following Pine and Gilmore's *The Experience Economy*, Griffin associates compression with the sense of "being-in" and "being-out" of time associated with consumer experience.[14]

For Lionel Ruffel, following Francis Hartog's *Régimes d'historicité: présentisme et expériences du temps* [Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Temporal Experiences], "contemporaneity" is less about the jolt of the "now-time," typified by Griffin's post-postmodern aesthetics of temporal compression, and more about a kind of historicization without periodization. He connects contemporaneity (as opposed to "the contemporary") to a sense of the present that is alive to the moment, calibrated with "what's in the air" in terms of styles of living or aesthetic translations of the event. Contemporaneity distinguishes itself from "the time of the present" (in French "le temps présent") inasmuch as it is neither a conventional notion of an actual era, nor a presentism that precludes the possibility of a counterfactual or parallel universe. If there is a historical dimension to contemporaneity it is, somewhat ironically, hitched to twentieth-century fin-de-sièclism: to *dénouement* or "end of history" paradigms. Ruffel is here taking his cue from a number of philosophical works that appeared after the Wall came down and the first Gulf War ignited, all of which dealt with "le champ de la fin," or philosophical apocalypse. Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, Badiou's *D'un désastre obscur, sur la fin de la vérité de l'Etat*, Rancière's *La Mésentente*, Pascal Quignard's *Sur le jadis*, and Jean-Luc Nancy's *La Comparution* are interpreted as struggles with a transitional moment; a moment that was supposedly "postideology" and identified with new ways of being "with time" or "in-existence." Nancy's "*La Comparution*/The Compearance: from the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence,'" is particularly resonant for it evokes a state of "concurrence" with a state of "appearance," a facing down of the French juridical state of exception known as "comparution" that allows for on-the-spot judgment of a violation, leading to pretrial detention. Nancy construes "compearing" as a "co-appearing" before the world court, a way of answering for existence—and to existence. From Nancy, via Ruffel, we derive a historicized understanding of contemporaneity as the coincidence of existence and community.[15]

Nancy's ethics of coincidence, or "comparution" may be extrapolated for a new approach to periodizing in the study of world literatures. Rather than recur to Eurochronological fixities of date, chronotope, style, aesthetic movement or "ism"—all of which tether literary history to conventions of periodization—one might concentrate instead on Untranslatables of periodicity; on new and old names for temporal units that untime Eurocentric historicist frames and allow anachronic aesthetic phenomena to "compear."[16]

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1 Christopher Prendergast, "The World Republic of Letters," in *Debating World Literature*, ed. Christopher Prendergast, New York: Verso, 2004, 6.

2 Craig Clunas suggests, "The question 'What is art in China?' could really be rephrased as 'What has historically been called art in China, by whom and when?'" The French scholar Victor Segalen (1878–1919), author of a pioneering work called *The Great Statuary of China*, refused to deal at all with Buddhist sculpture in China (which forms the bulk of the surviving work in all media), on the grounds that it was "'not really Chinese,' but rather an 'alien' import from India …"; see *Art in China*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 10 and 12.

3 Peng Hsiao-yen, *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity: The Dandy, the Flâneur, and the Translator in 1930s Shanghai, Tokyo, and Paris*, New York: Routledge, 2010.

4 Wahé Balekjian, *International Constitutional Law-Journal* 2: 3, 2008, 222.

5 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993; and Ania Loomba, *Re-Orienting the English Renaissance*, Cambridge, MA: University of Cambridge Press, 2008; *What Is the Contemporary? (Qu'est-ce que le contemporain?)* Nantes: Editions Cécile Defaut, 2010. See Lionel Ruffel, Introduction: Qu'est-ce que le contemporain? 9–35 and Pascale Casanova, "Le méridien de Greenwich, réflexions sur le temps de la littérature," 113–46.

6 Virginia Jackson, "Introduction: On Periodization and its Discontents," in *On Periodization: Selected Essays from the English Institute*, American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Humanities E-Book, 2010; Rey Chow, "A Discipline of Tolerance," in *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, ed. Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 22; Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, London: Oxford University Press, 2013, 154–64.

7 Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 6; Kathleen Davis, "Tycoon Medievalism, Corporate Philanthropy and American Pedagogy," *American Literary History* 22: 4, 2010, 784.

8 See *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of the "Middle Ages" Outside Europe*, eds. Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009; Alexander Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art Out of Time*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2012; *Anachronic Renaissance*, ed. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, New York: Zone Books, 2010, 13: "The work of art when it is late, when it repeats, when it hesitates, when it remembers, but also when it protects a future or an ideal, is 'anachronic.' We introduce this term as an alternative to 'anachronistic,' a judgmental term that carries with it the historicist assumption that every event and every object has its proper location within objective and linear time." See also Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, and *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval through Modern*, ed. Patricia Clare Ingraham and Michelle R. Warren, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

9 Davis is certainly not alone in contesting the built-in ageism of conventional periodization. Her work belongs to a corpus, some of it dedicated even more exclusively to challenging the Eurocentrism of Eurochronology, that includes Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983); Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993); Peter Osborne's *Politics of Time: Modernity & the Avant-Garde* (1996); William Green's "Periodizing World History" (1998); Michael Denning's *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (2004); Adūnīs's *Sufism and Surrealism* (2005); Zhang Longxi's *Two Questions for Global Literary History* (2006); Kamran Rastegar's *Literary Modernity Between Europe and the Middle East* (2007); and R. Bin Wong's "Did China's Late Empire Have an Early Modern Era?" (2009).

10 Jean Genet, *Les Nègres*, Isère, France: Marc Barbezat, 1958 (English translation: *The Blacks: A Clown Show*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, New York: Grove Press, 1960); Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano, Polity, 2007, 1; Bruno Bosteels, "Post-Maoism: Badiou and Politics," in *positions: east asia cultures critique* 13: 3, Winter 2005, 586; "the sequence 1890–1914": Badiou, *The Century*, 17–18; the "Soviet Century": ibid., 10.

11 Alex Woloch, "Recuperative Criticism" course description, available at english.stanford.edu/courseDetail.php?course_id=3597.

12 *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, forthcoming.

13 VEP 660.

14 Tim Griffin, "Compression," in *October* 135 (Winter 2011): 8. Griffin cites here Yang Fudong in Hans-Ulrich Obrist, "1000 Words: Yang Fudong Talks about *The Seven Intellectuals,"* *Artforum* 42 (September 2003): 183.

15 Jean-Luc Nancy, "*La Comparution*/The Compearance: from the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence,'" *Political Theory* 20 (Aug 1992): 371–98.

16 Lionel Ruffel, *Le dénouement*, Lonrai: Verdier, 2005.

IV

Paranoid Globalism

> The paranoid spokesman, sees the fate of [this] conspiracy in apocalyptic terms—he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is always manning the barricades of civilization … he does not see social conflict as something to be mediated and compromised, in the manner of the working politician. Since what is at stake is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, what is necessary is not compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish. Since the enemy is thought of as being totally evil and totally unappeasable, he must be totally eliminated—if not from the world, at least from the theatre of operations to which the paranoid directs his attention. This demand for total triumph leads to the formulation of hopelessly unrealistic goals, and since these goals are not even remotely attainable, failure constantly heightens the paranoid's sense of frustration. Even partial success leaves him with the same feeling of powerlessness with which he began, and this in turn only strengthens his awareness of the vast and terrifying quality of the enemy he opposes.
>
> —Richard J. Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*

> The World. Now 5% off.
>
> —Continental Airlines advertisement

"Oneworldedness" is an Untranslatable that I have coined to refer to planetary paranoia marked by cyber-surveillance, cartographies of cartels, and webs of international relationality within and outside the nation and on the edges of legality. In its curvilinear unboundedness, the contemporary world-system resembles a one-size, supranational entity that recognizes the dominance of super-states, while training its eye on the hidden relationalism among corporate conglomerates, NGOs, underground economies, and clandestine insurgent groups. Oneworldedness is distinct from planetarity, cast by Wai Chee Dimock as a transchronological continuum of poesis that takes "the entire planet as a unit of analysis" and by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as a precapitalist territorial commons respectful of alterity. It is also different from transnationalism, assigned by Étienne Balibar to new forms of world citizenship that engender open rather than closed social polities. In Balibar's work on transnational citizenship, borders become transitional objects rather than *cordons sanitaires* of exclusion. World diaspora is affirmed within and not just outside national borders (Balibar draws here on Habermas's notion of *Weltinnenpolitik*). The hackneyed expression "citizen of the world" is granted new life, referring to "netizens" and antiglobalist, *altermondialiste* activists. And translation—treated as a lingua franca of political mediation—revokes nationalist essentialism. Building on Balibar, I have also ascribed transnationalism to a "trans to trans" comparatism that bypasses the metropole while privileging translation between "minor," or micro-minority, languages and literatures.[1] Oneworldedness, in contradistinction to these paradigms of world-systems, planetarity and transnationalism, envisages the planet as an extension of paranoid subjectivity vulnerable to persecutory fantasy, catastrophism, and monomania. Like globalization, oneworldedness traduces territorial sovereignty and often masks its identity as another name for "America." But where globalization is an amorphous term applied to economic neo-imperialism; to projections of the world as an ideologically bicameral yet fatally integrated single community; to the centrifugal pressure of dominant world languages and literatures (English, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, Russian, Arabic); to the homogeneity of culture produced under capitalism; and to an essentially *non-comparative* model of comparative literature, oneworldedness, as I am defining it, refers more narrowly to a delirious aesthetics of systematicity; to the match between cognition and globalism that is held in place by the paranoid premise that "everything is connected."

American culture obviously holds no exclusive patent on oneworldedness. Jia Zhangke's 2004 film *The World*, Okakura Tenshin's political construct of "Asia as one," the recent coinage "Chindia" to distinguish an emergent giant of global finance capital (China plus India), or Lydia Liu's suggestion that the proper name "China" could arguably be translated as one-world or empire are reminders that China's claim to oneworldedness, historically and at present, is surely as great as if not greater than America's.[2] One could even venture that Asia and the West, in their rivalry for the title to oneworldedness are obverse sides of the same coin, compounding the one-world effect by virtue of their competition for cultural hegemony.

While American literature is far from being the only national literature to privilege paranoid psychosis—think of Gogol's *The Nose*, Kafka's *The Trial*, the novel *Links* (2004) by Somalian author Nuruddin Farah, or Czech novelist Patrik Ouředník's *Europeana: A Brief History of the Twentieth Century* (2001), which compresses every historical factoid, cliché, and *idée reçue* into a single globular chronotope—paranoia consistently emerges as a preeminent topos in major works of the post–World War II American canon.[3] Taken together, Thomas Pynchon's *V* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973); Don DeLillo's *The Names* (1982), *White Noise* (1985), *Libra* (1988), *Mao II* (1991), and *Underworld* (1997); John Kennedy O'Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980); Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004); and William T. Vollmann's fictional panoplies of conquest and fear in American history (from the *Seven Dreams* project to his polemical magnum opus *Rising Up and Rising Down: Some Thoughts on Violence, Freedom, and Urgent Means* [2003]) suggest narrative articulations of oneworldedness that enshrine paranoia as the preferred trope of national allegory.[4] Pynchon remains the catalyst; his invention of a literature of conspiracy steeped in the ethos of CIA operatives, McCarthyism, cybernetics and hallucinogenic drugs takes paranoia beyond Cold War spy fiction and into the realm of a new literarity. The interior monologues of Oedipa Maas, Pynchon's addled protagonist in *The Crying of Lot 49* invariably construct paranoia as a world-system:

> Change your name to Miles, Dean, Serge and/or Leonard, baby, she advised her reflection in the half-light of that afternoon's vanity mirror. Either way, they'll call it paranoia. They. Either you have stumbled, indeed, without the aid of LSD or other indole alkaloids, onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream; onto a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty, for the official government delivery system; maybe even onto a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everything American you know, and you too sweetie. Or you are hallucinating it. Or a plot has been mounted against you, so expensive and elaborate, involving items like the forging of stamps and ancient books, constant surveillance of your movements, planting of posthorns all over San Francisco, bribing of librarians, hiring of professional actors … Or you are fantasying some such plot, in which case you are a nut Oedipa, out of your skull.

"They," used as freestanding sentence, confirms the cybernetic on/off, us/them circuit board to which paranoid thinking is hardwired,

dissolving the discrete limits of an autonomous self, abolishing mechanisms of agency, and internalizing the schizoid "ontology of the enemy" (identified by Peter Galison with reference to Norbert Weiner's cybernetic war games). Oedipa's mind no longer distinguishes where it begins or ends—whether it posits a thought or is being thought by the network of "X number of Americans." Either way, this cognitive oneworldism is exitless. As has been oft noted, Pynchon draws on theories of biofeedback, quantum mechanics, Fibonacci sequences, behaviorism, pattern recognition, artificial intelligence, black boxes, game, systems, and probability theory hatched in the '40s, '50s, and '60s by Norbert Wiener, Vannevar Bush, John von Neumann, Oscar Morgenstern, Warren Weaver, Claude Shannon, Anatol Rapoport, and Marshall McLuhan, among others. The writing of Pynchon and DeLillo, one could argue, is as much symptom of this postwar paranoid culture as its literary archive. Their work imports into literature the mesh of cognitive modeling and conspiratorial globalism that gives rise to theories of paranoid planetarity.

Pynchonesque paranoia imbued a host of films made in the '60s and '70s that cued their plot structures to patterns of narrative encirclement and psychic targeting, mushrooming out of the brains of scientists, politicians, and hapless employees. They included the original 1962 version of the *Manchurian Candidate* directed by John Frankenheimer; Alan Pakula's *The Parallax View* (1974); the Watergate classic *All the President's Men* (1976); Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) starring Gene Hackman as a wiretapper who dismantles his own apartment in a fit of debugging mania; Sydney Pollack's *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), in which Robert Redford must solve the mystery as to why everyone in his foreign embassy is being assassinated; and Peter Hyam's *Capricorn One* (1978), in which three astronauts simulate a landing on Mars to be telemetrically broadcast by NASA as part of a plot to keep a flawed space program funded. In all of these films, the world is large insofar as it is small; that is to say, it is susceptible to being shrunken to the scale of a human mind that anamorphically images the twisted byways of preemptive government intelligence operations and counter-maneuver. The films anticipate dot-com era visions of the all-controlling network society, typified by: Manuel Castells's critique of "network enterprises" (as lateral rather than vertical corporate organizational systems) and McKenzie Wark's *A Hacker Manifesto* (2004; a paean to information piracy, whose capitalism-inverting motto is "We do not own what we produce—it owns us")[5] as well as the artist Mark Lombardi's diagrams of global scandals of the 1980s and 1990s that painstakingly "follow the money" through offshore bank accounts, shell companies, and pyramid schemes.

Now, as then, paranoia assumes the guise of a delusional democracy buoyed by cascading national cataclysms: the Bay of Pigs, the Kennedy and King assassinations, Kent State, the FBI hunt for Black Panthers, the Symbionese Liberation Army and the Weather Underground radicals, Watergate, Iran–Contra, Waco, Oklahoma City, Columbine, and 9/11. As the second-term Bush administration acted in the name of an ill-founded hypothesis that American-style democracy exports readily to Islamic countries, a new form of manifest destiny emerged that built on a mandate for open-ended war justified by an unfathomably deep sense of injury, a conviction that the entire life of the world would not be enough to compensate for 9/11. A group psychosis of defense took hold defined by a Homeland Security apparatus committed to invasive forms of domestic policing; economic priorities that ensured the diversion of the world's resources to military spending; the suspension of civil liberties in Guantanamo and Iraq; top-down judicial authorizations of vote rigging; a rampant unilateralism that flouted the Geneva Conventions and the Kyoto Protocols; and the cynical use of a "war on terror" to impose "a state of emergency" that suffered few legal restraints.

Paranoia returned with a vengeance as the *ordre du jour* in the aftermath of 9/11 and in the more immediate wake of Mark Felt's revelations in spring 2005 of his role as "Deep Throat." The memory of Watergate brings back the incredible images of a Nixon White House biting its own tail: recording the very tapes that would be used to prove criminal charges and authorizing the FBI to investigate its own cover-up of the Watergate break-in. Similarly, the paradigm post-9/11 resembled that of the leaf insect described by Jacques Lacan, disguising itself as a leaf in order to hide from birds, thereby inviting predators who feast on leaves. Bush II administration policy replayed the Watergate scenario insofar as it justified its worst fears by setting up the conditions whereby those worst fears would be realized. The public was exhorted by Washington to connect the dots, to posit connections between WMDs in Iraq and the World Trade Center attacks, to see "shadowy" global networks of jihadists masking themselves as ordinary citizens, to upgrade Palestinian terrorist groups to the status of international terrorism, or to decipher what Richard A. Clarke called a "worldwide political conspiracy masquerading as a religious sect."[6] In this scheme, what people were told *is* connected is rivaled only by what they were asked to believe *is not* connected: there was apparently *no* link between oil and the Iraq invasion, *no* coincidence between electioneering politics and war, *no* cause-and-effect relationship between the media-hyped epistemology of insecurity and the abrogation of civil liberties, *no* common thread of sadism between Iraqi and U.S. treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. This logic of non-connectivity condemns *you* as paranoid if you suspect that the case for war is less than solid, and doubts *your* credibility if you fail to see that only when it comes to terrorism are all the dots connected. Ultimately though, such connect/do-not-connect injunctions rely on the same conspiratorial logic of supranational oneworldedness. This is a globalism in which there are no front lines in war, in which civilian and military cultures are interchangeable, in which quotidian gestures and words invite "surcodage" ("just some alienating word that opens up a sentence to baleful influence," in the words of one of DeLillo's characters), and in which "thinking like the enemy" (to the point of being "thought" as the enemy would think you) locks the mind into a loop of intersubjective projection that brooks no outside world.[7] In this picture, as the world expands to include everybody, it paradoxically shrinks into a claustrophobic all-inclusiveness. Paranoid oneworldedness obeys a basic law of entropy that posits that increased disorder diminishes available energy within the confines of a closed system.

Paranoia, I am suggesting, underwrites a one-worldist paradigm that differs from transnational or global ascriptions of world-systems theory in its full realization of the psychotic dimension of planetarity. Unlike Jürgen Habermas's rationalist and decidedly unpsychotic model of universal communicative reason, or Peter Singer's pragmatic, utilitarian idea of "one world" as the basic unit for ethics—built on morally enlightened calculations of how to fairly distribute the earth's common property and global environmental, economic, legal and social responsibility—paranoia as world-system signals the dark side of planetary utopianism. Planetary utopianism views the globe as an ecology of *potentia* and aims to enhance rather than ransack human languages, natural reserves, and institutions of socioeconomic justice.[8] Oneworldedness, by contrast, adheres to an ethics of remote responsibility that refuses acknowledgement of the "butterfly effect" (the chaos theory principle that tracks how desire for a product in one part of the world may be linked to a damaged ecology in another part of the world). Oneworldedness imagines the planet as subject to "the system" and wants to disable plans of escape. It fails the optimists (left or right) by endorsing the idea that there are legitimate reasons to be paranoid in a world bent on civilizational self-destruction. More important still, it matches the circular form of the globe—imagined as a smooth surface allowing the unimpeded flow of capital, information and language—with the tautological truism that theory *is* paranoia; an intellectual entrapment in logic that is mimetic of the object of analysis. As Leo Bersani has observed: "The theoretician distrusts the theorizing activity of paranoia—as if the 'truth' of paranoia might turn out to be that theory is always a paranoid symptom."[9]

No one better grasped the political implications of this symptom than Jacques Derrida. In his diagnosis of the "autoimmunity" syndrome in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003), Derrida discerned "an implacable law" that "regulates every *autoimmunitary process*. "As we know," he wrote, "an autoimmunitary process is that strange behavior where a living being, in quasi-*suicidal* fashion, 'itself ' works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself *against* its 'own' immunity." He maintained further:

> What will never let itself be forgotten is thus the perverse effect of the autoimmunitary itself. For we now know that repression in both its psychoanalytical sense and its political sense—whether it be through the police, the military, or the economy—ends up producing, reproducing,

> and regenerating the very thing it seeks to disarm.[10]

The autoimmune complex describes a systemic self-attack that remains inexplicable unless one accepts the logic of death as a preprogrammed call for the life cycle of a body to end, or unless one accepts the paranoid reasoning that stipulates that the subject is targeted by mechanisms of an inevitable global catastrophism. Paranoia captures, in these terms, the systematicity of world-systems; their *folie raisonnante*, or rationalism of systematized delusion.[11] Very much a symptom of what it subjects to critique, paranoia theory, might be said to refer to a delusional model of subjective recognition that apprehends itself in global schemata.

Derrida's autoimmune syndrome draws on a long history of paranoia theory with roots in Freud's 1911 case study of Judge Schreber (entitled "Psycho-Analytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia [Dementia Paranoides]");" Gatian de Clérambault's notion of erotomania (encapsulated in the phrase "The Queen of England Loves Me"); Georges Bataille's gloss of Salvador Dali's 1929 painting *The Lugubrious Game*; Jacques Lacan's 1932 thesis *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (based on the case of his Saint-Anne patient Aimée, who imagined persecutory women in the place of the feminine imago); and Melanie Klein's "paranoid position" built upon the primal aggression of bad objects. Exhibiting a structural logic that is circular, auto-referential, internally self-verifying, and fixed by an Archimedean point both within and outside of its generic set, paranoia reinforces unipolar thought, specifically, a model of oneness as allness. If God is another name for intellectual unipolarity, the paranoid theorist becomes God by devising a system of omniscience capable of binding everything into coherence, thereby rendering discrepant orders of signs mutually intelligible or pan-translatable.

In his seminar of 1955 on the psychoses, Lacan posed the question: "Must all thought necessarily perceive that it's thinking of what it is thinking?" The delusional structure of thought—giving rise to endless mirroring—defines not only the paranoid character of knowledge but also the condition of subjective rivalry within intellectual globality; the subject's jealousy of an alienating object—thought—that threatens to subsume or englobe it entirely. Commenting on one of his schemes of psychosis, representing a relay between "two egos" (the small *o* and small *o* prime) that disrupts the subject's communication with the big Other, Lacan implies that paranoia is a problem of "speaking to oneself with one's own ego"; or, in Aristotle's terms, "thinking with one's soul." It is as if the circuitry connecting voids blocks access to the world or stands in for what passes as the world-system. Alain Badiou articulates this model of mind in philosophical terms as "an operator of torsion" conceptually derived from Spinoza's "closed ontology." Using the concept of the "ultra-One" to anchor the ontology of the multiple; and positing being as subtraction from the jurisdiction of the One, Badiou formulates an impersonal mathematical ontology that brings us back to crucial questions posed by Lacan in his Seminar III:

> Where in the signifier is the person? How does a discourse hang together? Up to what point can a discourse that seems personal bear, on the level of the signifier alone, a sufficient number of traces of impersonalization for the subject not to recognize it as his own?

Lacan was bent on locating that turning point of impersonalization. He spends an entire week

> looking for something in the area of the personal pronoun that would give you an image in French of the difference between *je, I*, and *moi, me*, in order to explain to you how the subject can lose mastery of them, if not contact with them in psychosis.

This "elusive something" may be the knot, or "resistant nucleus" of paranoia that marks the psychotic origins of the subject. In an extended gloss on Schreber's case, Lacan calls the nucleus a "quilting point" and associates it with fear of the father:

> Everything radiates out from and is organized around this signifier, similar to these little lines of force that an upholstery button forms on the surface of material. It's the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively.

Lacan also described paranoia as an untranslatability effect, an experience of speaking in a foreign language that one does not understand. "If it's ever possible for someone to speak in a language that he is totally ignorant of, we can say that the psychotic subject is ignorant of the language he speaks."[12] There is something distinctly conspiratorial in this idea of a subject speaking in tongues, out of range of self-translation, located in the foreign country of him or herself.

Oneworldedness as a subject position depends on the kind of self-estrangement that Lacan most famously associated with the mirror stage. Heavily indebted to Henri Wallon, the theory of the mirror stage came to light in 1936 as an extension of Lacan's 1932 paranoia thesis. Shuli Barzilai has observed that

> the basis of all interhuman relations, according to Lacan, is a paranoid identification with the specular counterpart. "All human knowledge," Lacan wrote in Seminar III, "stems from the dialectic of jealousy, which is a primordial manifestation of communication." Mining the homonymic play between "tuer" (to kill) and "tu es," or "thou art," Lacan claimed that "In all imaginary identification, the *tu es, thou art*, ends in the destruction of the other, and vice versa, because this destruction is simply there … in what we shall call *thouness*."

"Paranoia," says Barzilai, glossing Seminar III, "is the certain outcome of the mirror stage." For Jean-Michel Rabaté, this "outcome" becomes the basis for "Lacan's paranoid modernity," grounded in "a system of signs … that betray the creative function of desire underpinning their production"; signs that compel the subject to put himself "under the domination of the sadistic superego through an expected punishment but also with a view of getting rid of an idealized image of oneself projected in another person." It is important to retain, then, that the Lacanian subject is posited in terms of a destructive, persecutory misrecognition of itself; a combination of wounded narcissism and masochistic submission to the symbolic order that propels subjective ontology to the brink of psychosis. Forged at a moment in the 1930s in which Lacan and his teacher Alexander Kojève were planning to co-author a philosophical account of the rise of political dictatorship in Europe, the theory of the mirror stage preserves the trace of specular punishment, of psychic aggression in the formation of the I. The mutation of delusional persecution into a world-system is performed like conceptual high art in Lacan's seminar on "The Purloined Letter." Here, Lacan suggests that paranoia grows out of the *insistence* of the signifying chain that explains away the inconsistencies of experience.[13] Taking off from Heidegger's poetics of ontological disclosure, Lacan suggests that *Dasein*'s reason for existence lies in the subject's ability to identify with the "reason" of the symbolic. He reads Poe as an instruction manual in how to think like the symbolic, or rather, in how to decipher the system by which the symbolic thinks you. The *true subject* of Poe's tale, Lacan suggests, is the training it provides in thinking oneself into the place of the Other. Using techniques of mimetic ratiocination, the subject brings to term the latent paranoia of subjectivity; its *autruicherie* (a multiple homonymic play on *autrui* and *chérie*, or other-darling; *tricherie*, meaning deception and duperie; and *autriche*, referring to an ostrich). Autruicherie shows the subject "trapped in the typically imaginary situation of seeing that he is not seen" and complements Lacan's notion of dehiscence; the process whereby subjectivity is sucked out and transmuted into the environmental surround through psychasthenic mimesis (modeled after Roger Callois's entomological theory of camouflage).

In DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997), one could say that acronyms function as subjective camouflage according to the Lacanian model. "You can't fight a war without acronyms," says one of his characters. "And where do these compressed words come from? They come from remote levels of development, from technicians and bombheads in their computer universe." Like white noise, which provides a seemingly anodyne acoustic backdrop to everyday life, acronyms and advertisements encrypt ominous subliminal messages that direct consciousness from some non-location. So, in *Underworld*, the slogan "Better Things for Better Living … Through Chemistry" limns an invisible directional

impelling the DuPont chemical company into alignment with an underground terrorist group from the '60s that commandeered a radio station in order to publicize a fertilizer bomb recipe made from farm-supply nitrate. Recalling the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing on the Alfred Murrah Federal Building orchestrated by Timothy McVeigh and his accomplice Terry Nichols, *Underworld* plots the coordinates of oneworldedness on a temporal stratum; emphasizing the historical predictors that connect the Dow Jones Industrial Average, '60s counterculture, and the Oklahoma City attack. "I look at the Lucky Strike logotype and I think target," says *Underworld's* protagonist, a waste manager who has learned about the loops of capitalism and history, and subject and environment, from a CEO who figured out that because "true feeling flows upward from the streets, fully accessible to corporate adaptation," he could harness the "rhetoric of aggrieved minorities to prevent legislation that would hurt our business."[14]

In contrast to literary transnationalism—identified by Wai Chee Dimock with the plurilingual dissemination of codes, genres, styles or ideas across the borders of time and territorial sovereignty—oneworldedness might be described as a relatively intractable literary monoculture that travels through the world absorbing difference. DeLillo's first novel, *Americana* (1971), both illustrates and ironically exposes how a group of "trendexers"—young advertising executives—invent a monoculture that can be marketed to the country and the world at large. Seated in slick office towers on Madison Avenue, New York's advertising and media firms of the 1960s produce generic America for the slice-of-life commercial: "A recognizable scene in a suburban home anywhere in the USA." DeLillo is particularly alert to the way "American" asserts itself as a monoculture through an idiom of speech, or a habit of self-marketing, or an attitude of low-grade paranoia hovering like a pollution layer over the landscape. *Underworld* opens: "He speaks in your voice, American, and there's a shine in his eye that's halfway hopeful."[15]

DeLillo follows Pynchon in affirming the Americanness of literary oneworldedness: both, one could say, in writing paranoia theory *as* literature and in translating paranoia into an exportable national literary form. Literary paranoia is undoubtedly most effective when not overtly themed, but Pynchon consistently breaks this rule. Bersani notes that DeLillo's characters "repeatedly refer to themselves as paranoid. There is the hitch: since when do paranoids label themselves paranoid?" In *The Crying of Lot 49*, a Beatles wannabe rock group in Southern California calls itself The Paranoids, Oedipa Maas psychoanalyzes herself as a paranoid (too much kirsch in the fondue at the Tupperware party is adduced as the explanation for why she has been named executor of Pierce Inveterarity's estate), and a shrink named Dr. Hilarius threatens his staff with a gun, stating that he never took LSD because he prefers "to remain in relative paranoia, where at least I know who I am and who the others are." While these caricatural treatments of paranoid society are highly amusing, it is in the fabric of figural language that paranoia is most ingeniously embedded. In the opening paragraph of *The Crying of Lot 49*, a slammed hotel door in Mexico is put into relation with an obscure western-facing slope of Cornell University's library, this with a bar of Bartók's music, and this with a bust of Jay Gould. Here, and symptomatically throughout the book, systematicity is engendered by defying the odds against it. Radically *ungleich* elements are coerced into kinship, mobilizing the voids of non-comparability that resist metaphor's *forçage*. Pynchon frequently inverts these voids into solids that serve as visual connectors in a panorama: Take the sprawl of San Narciso for example: "Like many named places in California it was less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts—census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei, all overlaid with access roads to its own freeway."[16] What is paranoid here is the doubling of cognition and world-making. A conceptual cluster or generic set is taken apart—laid out as disparate components—and snapped back into place like file leavings by a magnet. The magnet is paranoid thinking, which assigns logistical purpose and relation to random effluvia.

Pynchon reinforces paranoid relationality through verbal equations that manipulate orders of information. Urban sprawl equals capitalism equals drugs. In Oedipa's mind, the inside circuit card of a transistor radio becomes part of the same loop as "the ordered swirl of houses and streets," which

> from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity as the circuit card had. Though she knew even less about radios than about Southern Californians, there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate.

The "intention to communicate" anchors oneworldedness in the transcendent systematicity of a higher order of programmed intelligence. When Oedipa drives to a motel called "Echo Courts" featuring a sign with the lewd image of a nymph that reminds her of her own image, she becomes aware of a "concealed blower system that kept the nymph's gauze chiton in constant agitation." Fascinated by the spectacle, she stands in the parking lot "watching the artificial windstorm overhead toss gauze in five-foot excursions. Remembering her idea about a slow whirlwind, words she couldn't hear." This animistic technology acts as the universal programmer of the subject; a self-referential paranoia machine that (mis)recognizes everything as an omen or fateful piece of intelligence. Later in the novel, Oedipa extends this paranoid technology of subject formation to cognition and the workings of metaphor:

> She knew, because she had held him, that he suffered DT's. Behind the initials was a metaphor, a delirium tremens, a trembling unfurrowing of the mind's ploughshare. The saint whose water can light lamps, the clairvoyant whose lapse in recall is the breath of God, the true paranoid for whom all is organized in spheres joyful or threatening around the central pulse of himself, the dreamer whose puns probe the fetid shafts and tunnels of truth all act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from. The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, outside, lost.[17]

In over-interpreting the significance of the abbreviation for delirium tremens, Pynchon's character paves the way for DeLillo's obsession with the occult value of signifiers within ordinary language. DeLillo builds oneworldedness out of brand names and trademark logos, what the literary philologist Leo Spitzer treated as "linguistic innovations" in reference to product labels like Sunkist or Kodak that acquire the status of new nouns. When the supermarket loudspeaker in *White Noise* announces "Kleenex Softique, your truck's blocking the entrance," Kleenex Softique, like the brand monikers "Dacron, Orlon, Lycra Spandex"; the commercial mantra "Coke is it"; or the name "Elvis" all demonstrate totemic value as carriers of "psychic data." A toxic storm of media messages commingles with the environmental rays and fumes "closely woven into the basic state of things" (asbestos, microchips, chlorine, insulation). They send stimuli to the cerebral cortex, which cause strange feedback; as when (in *Underworld*), a sniper, in reaction to "voices" picked up on TV, shoots randomly at strangers. Frank Lentricchia, writing on DeLillo's *Libra* argues in this vein that the novel "does not finger a conspiracy as much as it incarnates a cultural scene of action in the electronic society within which assassination is one of the extreme but logical expressions of the course of daily life." In *White Noise*, even the bank PIN serves as a passkey into "the networks, the circuits, the streams, the harmonies." Where *White Noise* documents the discharging of covert information like acid rain over popular consciousness, DeLillo's *The Names* (1982) treats acronyms like wormholes that open up one systemic universe to another. Letters become the Babelian cipher of a geographically diffused Hellenism that spills over the historical, territorial boundaries of Greece to negotiate "cultural rates of exchange in a globalized market" and to affiance possible worlds of espionage and political intrigue.[18] A terrorist cell whose members are bonded in their pledge to eliminate tourists whose alphabetic initials match those of Greek or Middle Eastern villages, is thus linked—by signifier alone—to the CIA and its dummy risk management company.[19] In *Underworld*, the same conceit of paranoid reading is applied to the famous birthmark on Gorbachev's forehead, which is scrutinized as a compass to future military hot spots:

> "You should train an eye on the mark on this Gorbachev's head, to see if it changes shape."
> "Changes shape? It's always been there."

"You know this?"
"What, you think it recently appeared?"
"You know this? It's always been there?'"
"It's a birthmark," Brian said.
"Excuse me but that's the official biography. I'll tell you what I think. I think if I had a sensitive government job I would be photographing Gorbachev from outer space every minute of the day that he's not wearing a hat to check the shape of the birthmark if it's changing. Because it's Latvia right now. But it could be Siberia in the morning, where they're emptying out their jails."
He looked at his cigar.
"Reality doesn't happen until you analyze the dots."
Then he got to his feet with a certain effort.
"And when the cold war goes out of business, you won't be able to look at some woman in the street and have a what-do-you-call-it kind of fantasy the way you do today."
"Erotic. But what's the connection?"
"You don't know the connection? You don't know that every privilege in your life and every thought in your mind depends on the ability of the two great powers to hang a threat over the planet?"[20]

According to the conspiratorial logic of "connect the dots," global leaders serve as pivots that swivel the superpowers into position as a single national entity. Oneworldedness, in this guise, results from the collapsing of dual empires into one world-system. United by a common planetary threat, we glimpse a super-state that might be dubbed the "Soviet States of America" or the "People's Republic of U.S.A." This is precisely what DeLillo suggests in *Mao II* by the book's fixation on the Warhol silkscreens of Chairman Mao, or the Coke II signs plastered over Beirut, whose intense red color establishes uncanny links to posters from the Cultural Revolution. Communism and capitalism, democracy and terrorism, totalitarianism and religion, cults and family values—these bipolar systems are assimilated into one template.[21] The Moonies and baseball become adjacent sides of an ideal of "world family. "They call us a cult" says *Mao II*'s Karen reproachfully as she lapses into a chant intended to bring "everyone deeper into oneness," but even after she has been deprogrammed, her search for oneness remains intractable; displaced into her devotion to a writer whose radical political sympathies have forced him underground.[22]

DeLillo shows the peculiarly American way in which the yearning for e pluribus unum, or a common world culture, is culturally expressed. Not by chance does he place the scene of a Moonie mass wedding in a baseball stadium bathed in "American sunlight," or, in *Underworld*, select the World Trade Center as a vulnerable site of national hubris "rising at the southern rim, the towers siamesed when you see them from this angle, joined at the waist by a transit crane." With eery prescience, developed into a signature style of prophetic realism, DeLillo figures the Towers as an almighty needle-dial of New York's fatal destiny:

> The World Trade Center was under construction, already towering, twin-towering, with cranes tilted at the summits and work elevators sliding up the flanks. She saw it almost everywhere she went. She ate a meal and drank a glass of wine and walked to the rail or ledge and there it usually was, bulked up at the funneled end of the island, and a man stood next to her one evening, early, drinks on the roof of a gallery building—about sixty, she thought, portly and jowled but also sleek in a way, assured and contained and hard-polished, a substantial sort, European.
> "I think of it as one, not two," she said. "Even though there are clearly two towers. It's a single entity, isn't it?"[23]

As seen through the eyes of the artist Klara Sax, the World Trade Center emblematizes the reciprocal model of the gaze associated with the fear of an "I" that sees itself as Other in the Other's reflective screen. This *dédoublement* is underscored by the neologisms "twin-towering" and "siamesed," suggesting a paradoxical oneness in two-ness, or generic multiplicity. DeLillo's numbers, like his letters, are decipherable within the confines of a national epic that both challenges and confirms the paranoid imaginary of a distinctly American oneworldedness. In DeLillo's world-system, the underlying spirit of corporatism places on a continuum such diverse social sectors as cults, business and marketing organizations, law enforcement, and terrorism.[24]

Portrayed as "under construction," the Towers epitomize a '60s-era vision of the American world-system whose twenty-first century analogue is cyberspace. Opening *A Hacker Manifesto* with an information-age parroting of *The Communist Manifesto*, McKenzie Wark replaces modern architecture with pure abstraction as the symbolic measure of oneworldedness:

> A double spooks the world, the double of abstraction. The fortunes of states and armies, companies and communities depend on it. All contending classes, be they ruling or ruled, revere it—yet fear it. Ours is a world that ventures blindly into the new with its fingers crossed.[25]

Wark's one-world is haunted by the counter-economy of hacking. Hackers are the "specters" haunting the interlocking institutions of state, army, company, and community. The hacker class is an invisible "we," and this "we" is everywhere. "We are the abstractors of new worlds," he alleges, even if "we don't quite know who we are." Inverting formulae of possessive individualism, Wark maintains that what "we" produce owns us. The "Other" is one's own labor, it would seem, the sole conferee of self-property. Wark uses paranoia as a model of radical self-ownership rather than as a metaphor for the mirror function of cyberspace. It is this second type of appropriation that one finds, say, in Žižek's commentary on von Schelling's 1813 essay "Ages of the World," in which he argues:

> It thus seems that cyberspace effectively realizes the paranoiac fantasy elaborated by Schreber, the German judge whose memoirs were analyzed by Freud: the "wired universe" is psychotic insofar as it seems to materialize Schreber's hallucination of the divine rays through which God directly controls the human mind. In other words, does the externalization of the big Other in the computer not account for the inherent paranoiac dimension of the wired universe? … With reference to the mirror relationship between the dispersed "me" and my mirror image, this means that, in the wired universe of Virtual Reality, my mirror image is externalized in the machine, in the guise of a stand-in that replaces me in cyberspace, so that the body that is "mine" in "real life" is more and more reduced to an excremental remainder.[26]

Though he imagines the psychic functions of cyberspace quite differently, Wark follows Žižek in affirming the subject as "remainder" of the virtual. Cyberspace insofar as it is a space of advanced capitalism depends on the subsumption of subjective self-property, but the "vectoral," loosely and spontaneously associated organization of revolutionary hackers (the consummate manipulators of abstraction), break into the virtual data-bank and reappropriate "ownness" (Max Stirner's *Eigenheit*).[27] Quoting Žižek—"the thing can only survive as its own excess"—Wark declares with polemical fury: "The vectoralist class puts its snout into the trough of the surplus on the basis of an ever more abstract, and hence more flexible, form of property than the pastoralist or the capitalist class." Wark's army of invisible guerillas acts in the name of a "collective becoming" with full exercise of "virtual powers." The hacker's objective is to trigger capitalism's autoimmunity syndrome (such that it programs its own end), while ensuring that information and deprivatized property circulate freely on the World Wide Web. The *Cyber.com/munist::Manifesto*, authored by Richard Barbook but framed as the work of a collective whose link directs to The Hypermedia Research Centre at Britain's University of Westminster, activates the cyber-revolutionary program in its anti-media conglomerate politics. In as succinct a way as one can imagine, the manifesto lays out a code of ethics for a new world order in which gift replaces commodity, disclosure replaces enclosure, piracy replaces copyright, fluidity replaces fixity, process replaces product, open source replaces proprietary, free download replaces digital encryption, the latest remix replaces the original recording, abundance replaces scarcity, friendship replaces alienation, post-humans replace New Soviet Man, network communities replace market competition, and cyber-communism replaces e-commerce. The manifesto qualifies, to paraphrase Yates Yeadon McKee, as a "neosituationist experiment in alternatives to neoliberal capitalism linked to an expanded network of activist counter-publicity … including gift-giving as a tactic to defamiliarize the logic of the

market."[28]

Anti-market cyber-communism emerges as the tain of capitalism's paranoid mirror; both are world-systems that are everywhere and nowhere reliant on their formal invisibility to mobilize paranoid projections as a social imaginary. It is a credit to the acuity of the artist Mark Lombardi that he devised ways of making visible this highly elusive relationality of the virtual world, mapping unseen economies that contour the globe. In a series of diagrams (assembled in his 2003 "Global Networks" retrospective at the Drawing Center in New York), based on information and statistics mined from public databases, Lombardi transforms corporate and political scandals into cartographies of conspiracy. He charts capital flow using a system of delicate skeins, arrows, and hubs that indicate the paths of illicit money transfers, laundering operations, and offshore accounting. The Bank of Credit and Commerce International is thus revealed in a compromising web of connectedness to the Saudi Bank of Paris, Osama Bin Laden, the Houston Main Bank, and George H. W. Bush. Whether it is Meyer Lansky's financial network circa 1960–78, Oliver North's Iran–Contra operation of 1984–86, the Keating savings and loan debacle of 1978–90, or the Harken Energy scam of 1979–90, Lombardi's maps of corporate kleptocracy clearly illustrate how all the dots are connected in ways that were always suspected but rarely worked out in such detail. Little surprise, then, that FBI representatives appeared at the opening of his posthumous retrospective and expressed their incredulity that an artist with access only to information in the public domain, and working without a computerized database, could have plotted the scandals with such accuracy. Rumors also flew that the artist's apparent suicide was actually a murder motivated by any number of possible parties whose illicit finances he had exposed. The circulation of money shows the theft of your property (and by extension, your self-property) within a paranoid world-system. Lombardi, as it were, "capitalizes" Lacanian paranoid subjective destitution as a global schemata, and in the process, shows the "truth" of paranoid fears of hostile takeover by some nameless, boundless Other. His drawings could be visual captions to parts of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, as when the Shell Oil Corporation is described as having "no real country, no side in any war, no specific face or heritage; tapping instead out of that global stratum, most deeply laid, from which all the appearances of corporate ownership really spring." The diagrams are just as applicable to DeLillo's *Underworld*, particularly parts of the epilogue (appropriately titled "Das Kapital") in which we find such phrases as: "Capital burns off the nuance in a culture. Foreign investment, global markets, corporate acquisitions, the flow of information through transnational media, the attenuating influence of money that's electronic and sex that's cyberspaced."[29] DeLillo ironically appropriates the corporate lingo of "capital flows" and "transnational links," subtly preempting the language a critic might use to describe the genre of cyber-spatial oneworldedness into which American fiction has graduated. In *Underworld*, DeLillo would seem to update his "old economy" of paranoia-inducing trademark acronyms (represented by the allusion to "L.S./M.F.T.: Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco") with the new Internet name domain economy. As if securing his own place as inaugurator of this new national form of the novel, DeLillo introduces the character type of the netizen, a taciturn teenage computer addict named Jeff who is described as a "lurker":

> He visits sites but does not post. He gathers the waves and rays. He adds components and functions and sits before a spreading mass of compatible hardware. The real miracle is the Web, the Net, where everybody is everywhere at once, and he is there among them, unseen.

Jeff emerges as the prime suspect in the murder of a twelve-year-old runaway, habituée of a homeless community in New York known as The Wall. But Jeff the Netizen could just as easily escape suspicion under the possible alias of Sister Alma Edgar, a nun dedicated to dispensing food and medicine to The Wall's populace. She herself passes as a doppelgänger of J. Edgar Hoover, and like Jeff she moves through society in and as an invisible habit:

> In her veil and habit she was basically a face, or a face and scrubbed hands. Here in cyberspace she has shed all that steam-ironed fabric. She is not naked exactly but she is open—exposed to every connection you can make on the world wide web.
>
> There is no space or time out here, or in here, or wherever she is. There are only connections. Everything is connected. All human knowledge gathered and linked, hyperlinked, this site leading to that, this fact referenced to that, a keystroke, a mouse-click, a password—world without end, amen.
>
> But she is in cyberspace, not heaven, and she feels the grip of systems. This is why she is so uneasy. There is a presence here, a thing implied, something vast and bright. She senses the paranoia of the web, the net.[30]

DeLillo mines the most sinister connotations of the open-source feature of the Net to render cyberspace a menacing form of paranoid planetarity. Like Pynchon, he uses networks and information technology to confect a narrative prototype of oneworldedness that doubles as the nation form of the late-century American novel.

Many authors and artists have devised ways to register late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century oneworldedness. Some have used the episteme of technological literacy to write cyberspace as a sci-fi, post-national, subcultural epic (Samuel Delaney); some have used the computer's link feature to experiment with hypertext (Robert Coover); and others have aesthetically repurposed the medium of programming code (John Klima, Mark Amerika). DeLillo and Pynchon, however, were the trailblazers in devisingfictive worlds adorned with psychic allegories of everyday life in the military-industrial-academic complex, and governed by patterns of legal and illegal corporate relationality. The particular kind of planetarity imagined by Pynchon, DeLillo, and later Wark and Lombardi, prompts us to read as novels or aesthetic diagrams the financial and political webs of connectedness unfurling in the news on a daily basis. In the early 2000s, these webs included: a strand of the world-system of nuclear politics, which included China, North Korea, Japan, America, and Iran; the strand involving Al Qaeda and the politics of oil that featured Saudi Arabia, America, France, Britain, Spain, Germany, France, Afghanistan, and Israel; the political strand that saw oil wars and the gamed world-system of the energy economy that involved Enron, the California energy crisis, Halliburton, Iraq, and Vice President Dick Cheney; a strand including Texas redistricting, Tom DeLay, Rabbi Daniel Lapin, the Bush lobbyist Jack Abramson, Native American Casinos, the Americans for Tax Reform PAC, and the Northern Mariana Islands (Lobby-gate); and a strand that consisted of the Ohio Bureau of Worker's Compensation, the Bush campaign contributor and rare coin dealer Tom Noe, and the MDL Capital Hedge Fund ("Coingate"). These conspiracy strings stretch around the globe, ceaselessly updating themselves in the form of ever more outrageous deals, and joining together far-flung ganglia to form a world-system anchored by the politics of paranoia.

The particular kind of paranoid planetarity imagined by Pynchon and DeLillo—a prophetic realism organized thematically around what Timothy Melley has termed "an empire of conspiracy"—prompts further critical reflection on the status of "big" comparative paradigms in the humanities (epic, tragedy, realism, modernism, postmodernism) that achieve hegemonic heft by lending themselves to international translation.[31] Such paradigms, even when they are critical of what they represent, ironically come to embody national imaginaries that are then imposed on the world at large. What makes the fiction of Pynchon and DeLillo so intriguing as an illustrationof literary oneworldedness is that it has become exemplary of the postwar, and now post-9/11 American literary world-system. It is work that exports a singularly American style of one-world thinking even as it revels in taking apart the commercial manipulation of the global psyche by American consumer capitalism. Product placement and brand advertising, treated as purveyors of mind control and as constitutive elements of paranoid plot structure, have only served, ironically enough, to consolidate the symbolic capital of American literary postmodernity.

Writing about Pynchon in a 2005 issue of *Bookforum*, DeLillo remarked:

> The scale of his work, large in geography and unafraid of major subjects, helped us locate our fiction not only in small anonymous corners, human and ever-essential, but *out there* as well, in the sprawl of high imagination and collective dreams.[32]

What I have tried to suggest is that the world-system mapped by Pynchon and DeLillo's psychogeographical "out there" coincides with an American paradigm of oneworldedness hatched in the 1960s at the zenith of Cold War paranoia. It is this American-style pattern of delusional democracy (given new impetus by the second Bush Administration and the Obama-era Republican congressional majority's consistent derailment of efforts to reduce poverty, pollution, disease, economic equality, and global standards of justice) that, in the view of philosopher Peter Singer, obstructs the possibility of an ethical one-world. Singer's world citizens, abstracted from history and nation, would be bound together by a common dedication to distributive justice on a planetary scale.

In a complementary vein, Étienne Balibar seeks to redeem oneworldedness through an ethic of transnational citizenship that would bolster international law, soften borders as zones of hospitality, and pluralize politics by wresting the right to representation from the class of elites. In Balibar's framework, "transnationalize" is an active verb connoting munificent planetarity. It would apportion (within actually existing nations) the right to citizenship and economic welfare in equal measure to all humans. To transnationalize American culture in these terms means using paranoia politically to weaken the system of delusional democracy that aligns American monoculturalism, unipolar thought and unilateralist politics.

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1 Wai Chee Dimock, "Literature for the Planet," *PMLA* 116: 1, January 2001, 175; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 101; translation revoking nationalist essentialism: Étienne Balibar, *We the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, trans. James Swenson, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004; for my ascription of transnationalism, see my *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

2 Okakura Tenshin, as cited by Dong Bingyue in his paper "Sato Haruo's 'Imagination of Asia,'" delivered at the conference "Comparative Modernisms: Empire, Aesthetics and History," Tsinghua University, Beijing August 4, 2005. See also Lydia Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World-Making*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

3 Nuruddin Farah, *Links*, New York: Riverhead Books, 2004, and Patrik Ou edník, *Europeana: A Brief History of the Twentieth Century*, trans. Gerald Turner, London: Dalkey Archive, 2005.

4 Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, William S. Burroughs, Philip K. Dick, Joseph Heller, Ralph Ellison, and Joan Didion are among the legions of American writers who also warrant inclusion in the canon of American paranoid fiction.

5 Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, 1965, repr., New York: Harper Collins, 1990, 140–1; Peter Galison, "The Ontology of the Enemy: Norbert Weiner and the Cybernetic Vision," *Critical Inquiry* 21: 1, Autumn 1994, 228–66; Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: The Rise of the Network Society*, vol. 1, London: Blackwell, 1996; McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004; see section "abstraction: 004), np.

6 Raban, in a review of Richard A. Clarke's exposé bestseller *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), writes: "Clarke, connecting every dot (even such faint ones as those that might link Terry Nichols, the Oklahoma City bomber, with Ramzi Youssef and/or Khalid Sheikh Mohammed), pieces together a fearsome but limited picture of the organization that he calls 'a worldwide political conspiracy masquerading as a religious sect.'" As cited by Jonathan Raban in the *New York Review of Books* 52: 1, June 2005, 24.

7 See Tom LeClair, *Inside the Loop: Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987; citation from Don DeLillo, *Mao II*, New York: Viking, 1991, 77.

8 Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002. Singer does not think nations should have a major role in ethical calculations of what is owed to others. Positing "one atmosphere," "one economy," "one law," and "one community," Singer would like to see a reinforced United Nations, or some international body that recognizes the rights of extra-national as well as national subjects, become the arbiter of universal standards of fairness and decency with respect to wealth distribution and environmental and labor conditions.

9 Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990, 181.

10 Jacques Derrida, quoted in Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003, 94; ibid., 99.

11 "Chronic psychosis characterized by more or less systemized delusion, with a predominance of ideas of reference but with no weakening of the intellect and, generally speaking, no tendency towards deterioration"; this is the definition of paranoia according to Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis in *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 296.

12 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book 3, *The Psychoses 1955–1956*, trans. Russell Grigg, New York: W. W. Norton, 1993, 35 (*Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre III: Les psychoses, 1955–1956*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1981); Aristotle, quoted in Lacan, *Les psychoses*, 14; Alain Badiou, "Spinoza's Closed Ontology," in *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Rassier and Alberto Toscano, New York: Continuum, 2004, 84; Lacan, *Les psychoses*, 269; Lacan, *Les psychoses*, 261; "Elusive something": ibid., 3; ibid., 268; ibid., 11–12.

13 Shuli Barzilai, *Lacan and the Matter of Originsi*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, 114; (quotes from Lacan in Barzilai: *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre III: Les psychoses, 1955–1956*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1981); Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Lacan's Return to Freud," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 20; Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" trans. and ed. Jeffrey Mehlman, *Yale French Studies* 48; *French Freud: Structural Studies of Psychoanalysis*, 1972, 39; Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" 61; Jacques Lacan, "Le stade de miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique," 1949, repr., in *Ecrits* I, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966, 93.

14 Don DeLillo, *Underworld*, New York: Scribner, 1997, 606, 602–3, 119, 122.

15 DeLillo, *Americana*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, 272; DeLillo, *Underworld*, 11.

16 Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption*, 179; Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, 111, 1, 13.

17 Ibid., 14, 16, 104–5.

18 Leo Spitzer, "The Individual Factor in Linguistic Innovations" (1956), in *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin, New York: Routledge, 200, 64–73; "Kleenex Softique": Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, New York and London: Penguin Group, 1984, 36; "Coke Is It": DeLillo, *White Noise*, 37, 35; Frank Lentricchia, "*Libra* as Postmodern Critique," in *Introducing Don DeLillo*, by Frank Lentricchia, Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1991, 205; DeLillo, *White Noise*, 46; Stathis Gourgouris, "DeLillo in Greece," in *Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era*, by Stathis Gourgouris, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003: 293.

19 James Berger observes: "The cult's rebellion against the shifting Saussurean system of language takes place in the context of shifting and ambiguous economic, political, and military power relations. The novel's protagonoist, James Axton, works in Athens for a company that does 'risk assessement' to determine insurance rates for companies doing business in the Middle East. Only near the end of the novel does he discover that his company is a front for the CIA, and Axton realizes that his efforts to determine an economic order in the region's social chaos serve also to impose a new political order. What was ambiguous, shifting, uncontrollable will now be constructed and manipulated with certainty. Axton's and the CIA's creation of empire seems to be corollary to the cult's violent conquest of the alphabet…" See James Berger, "Falling Towers and Postmodern Wild Children: Oliver Sacks, Don DeLillo, and Turns Against Language," in *PMLA* 120: 2, March 2005, 1–24, 352, 341–61.

20 DeLillo, *Underworld*, 181–2.

21 The Mao/Coke/Beirut circuit is established from the perspective of a journalist named Brita on the tracks of the vanished writer Bill Gray: "Now there are signs for a new soft drink, Coke II, signs slapped on cement-block walls, and she has the crazy idea that these advertising placards herald the presence of the Maoist group. Because the lettering is so intensely red. … Brita gets another crazy idea, that these are like the big character posters of the Cultural Revolution in China—warnings and threats, calls for self-correction. Because there is a certain physical resemblance. The placards are stacked ten high in some places, up past the second storey, and they crowd each other, they edge over and proclaim, thousands of Arabic words weaving between the Roman numerals of the Coke II logo." DeLillo, *Mao II*, New York: Viking, 1991, 230.

22 DeLillo, *Mao II*, 16, 9.

23 "American sunlight": ibid., 3; DeLillo, *Underworld*, 487, 372.

24 Derrida articulates how September 11 yielded a logic of common logics permitting the alignment of worlds that are ostensibly worlds apart: "CNN and other international media outlets have penerated Chinese space, and China too, after all, has its own 'Muslim' problem. It thus became necessary to join in some way the 'antiterrorist' 'coalition.' It would be necessary to analyze, in the same vein, the motivations and interests behind all the different geopolitical or strategico-diplomatic shifts that have 'invested,' so to speak, in 'September 11.' (For example, the warming in relations between Bush and Putin, who has been given a freer hand in

Chechnya, and the very useful but very hasty identification of Palestinian terrorism with international terrorism, which now calls for a universal response.) In both cases, certain parties have an interest in presenting their adversaries not only as terrorists—which they in fact are to a certain extent—but *only* as terrorists, indeed as "*international* terrorists" who share the same logic or are part of the same network and who must thus be opposed, it is claimed, not through counterterrorism but through a 'war,' meaning of course, a 'nice, clean' war." Jacques Derrida, cited in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 110.

25 Wark, *Hacker Manifesto*, 001.

26 Wark, *Hacker Manifesto*, 002, 003; "Ages of the World" (*Die Weltalter*); Slavoj Žižek, *The Abyss of Freedom. Ages of the World*, Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997, 66.

27 Stirner, a critic of the left-wing Hegelians and target of rebuttal by Karl Marx, introduced the concept of ownness in *Einzige und sein Eigentum*, a book published in 1844. See *The Ego and its Own*, trans. Steven Byington, ed. David Leopold, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 141–54.

28 Wark, *Hacker Manifesto*, 175; "Wark's army of invisible guerillas": ibid., 340; Richard Barbook, "The Cyber.Com/munist::Manifesto," http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/theory-cybercommunistmanifesto.html; Yates Yeadon McKee, "Disagreeable Objects: Ethical Impassability in Alia Hasan-Khan's *Gift*," unpublished paper, delivered at The Whitney Museum of Art Critical Studies Program Symposium, May 26, 2005, Whitney Museum of Art.

29 FBI representatives appearing at retrospective: As reported by Catherine de Zegher, director of The Drawing Center, New York City; Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, New York: Bantam Books, 1973, 283, cited by Bersani, *Culture of Redemption*, 182; DeLillo, *Underworld*, 785.

30 DeLillo, *Underworld*, 808, 824–5.

31 Timothy Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000.

32 Don DeLillo, contribution to "Pynchon Now," *Bookforum*, Summer 2005, 30.

V

Checkpoints and Sovereign Borders

Emily Jacir's 2003 billboard "TRANSLATE ALLAH" like her cancelled project *Stazione* for the 2009 Venice Biennial (that would have identified the city's vaporetto stops in Arabic), or a photograph in her Brooklyn studio of a Marlboro ad in the West Bank floating above Israeli tanks on a Palestinian street (a sign of what one critic calls "supranational agora branding"), plays off the technique of inserting visual checkpoints and language barriers into public spaces where they are least expected.[1] The piece carries the force of an imperative: "Allah" should be translated as "God" because "God" is the correct, standard English translation of the word. By leaving the term untranslated, Jacir implies, the American media have effectively isolated (and Othered) it as an Arabic word used only by Muslims to refer to God. This obscures the fact that for over five hundred years before Muhammad, Jewish Arabs and Christian Arabs in the Arab world called God by the name of "Allah." It also ignores the fact that for centuries and still today there are millions of Arab Christians who call God "Allah" in their prayers, bibles, writings and practices of worship. "TRANSLATE ALLAH" flushes out Islamophobia and uses language as a site-specific medium limning the volatile bounds of translational interdiction, the obligation to translate or not to translate and the politics of offense.

This example sets the scene for a critique of the way in which translation theory has used "border-crossing" as a prime metaphor of general equivalence, ready meaning-exchange, and interdisciplinarity. My own delineations of a "translation zone" implied an emphasis-shift in literary studies from discrete languages contained within perimeters of standardized usage to plurilingual process; that is to say, languages-in-translation, pidgins, creoles, idiomatic sampling, loan-words, calques, code-switching, and the burgeoning ciphers of finance capitalism, which notably include "translatese" and "netlish." The politics of borders was fully activated in my book *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, published in 2006, especially where I analyzed ways in which language becomes weaponized during situations of war and conflictual cultural nationalism. And yet, in the intervening time, I have noticed that "border-crossing" has become such an all-purpose, ubiquitous way of talking about translation that its purchase on the politics of actual borders—whether linguistic or territorial—has been attenuated. Prompted by recent work focusing on how sovereign legitimacy is tested by the architecture of walls, checkpoints, transit stations, and virtual barricades of surveillance—Jeremy Harding's *The Uninvited: Refugees at the Rich Man's Gate*, Eyal Weizman's *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* and *The Least of All Possible Evils*, Wendy Brown's *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*—I want to recall the *force de frappe* of the state in translation theory, and, with that, the physical borders of sovereignty more generally.[2] Work by a number of artists has proved crucial to understanding how a translational checkpoint may be mobilized as a kind of "antiborder border."

In 2007 and 2009, Khaled Jarrar, an artist from Jenin, installed *At the Checkpoint*, a project consisting of photographs of everyday life in Palestine arrayed on the fences of the Huwarra and Qalandia checkpoints in the occupied West Bank.[3] Making explicit reference to "Checkpoint Charlie," Jarrar drew a contrast between checkpoints that have become defunct or repurposed as tourist sites and those, like the ones in occupied territories and border-zones, that remain actively militarized, surveillant turnstiles of human triage.

The rituals of being checked at the border; of not having permission to cross the line; and of risking subjection to interrogation, harassment, and incarceration were taken up in a subsequent work called *Live and Work in Palestine* included in the 7th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, which ran from April 27 to July 1, 2012. Using the logo of the Palestinian sunbird, Jarrar fashioned a "State of Palestine" passport seal (in English, Arabic and Hebrew). He proceeded to invite people at the Ramallah Central Bus Station to have their passports stamped, much as they might do with touristic passport stamps offered at Machu Picchu or the Tower of Pisa. "I wanted to welcome people, as a Palestinian, to Palestine," Jarrar said. The project's riskiness was enhanced in September 2011 in the weeks leading up to the Palestinian statehood bid at the United Nations when a number of travelers who opted for the stamp (among them ten Israeli citizens) were detained at Israel's airports.[4]

The stamp functioned as a mobile checkpoint, challenging the legitimacy of Israeli border stations in the West Bank as well as the refusal to grant Palestinian statehood. As Simon Faulkner notes:

> In her discussion of the Israeli checkpoint system, Ariella Azoulay has suggested that to suppress the possibility of a proper Palestinian border the occupation regime has created multiple points of division that often have the appearance of a border. Thus she observes that "the border passes wherever a Palestinian body stands." … Every time a Palestinian seeks to travel, Israel takes advantage of the opportunity to reassert its sovereignty. There where he would like to live his life, an ad hoc border-marker is posited—not a borderline but a border-point, a "spot." … Jarrar's project mimics and at the same time inverts this system of "border-points", by setting up border-points of his own that enable the assertion of a phantom Palestinian sovereignty. Wherever he or his ambassadors decide to stamp passports is where the border is. If the checkpoint is the oppressive manifestation of Israeli sovereignty over Palestinians and Palestinian land that also asserts the antiborder condition that is the occupation, then Jarrar's project contests this sovereignty and its denial of a proper border.[5]

If there is no Palestinian state, there can be no border, and yet, in this project, there *is* a checkpoint. As Ronen Shamir has observed, there is a "paradoxical antiborder logic" in play; a condition of "inclusive exclusion" that defines the Palestinian checkpoint as an assertion of phantom sovereignty. This becomes apparent in a work by Jarrar that uses the names "Palestine," "Palestina" and "Palestinian territory" in multiple languages and alphabets as visual elements of a map that translates a non-state into existence. In arrogating to himself the power of a sovereign state, Jarrar, by his own admission, "wanted to provoke the whole idea of the state" and to make people think about how a logo works to enable government control, policing, and the functioning of national state apparatuses.[6] How this concretization of the state works its way into questions of legally targeted translation (as in cases of a denied right to translation in situations of deportation or judicial defense), or the cultural and religious exigencies of translational interdictions, is an area of translation theory rife with possibility.

In its foregrounding of the checkpoint, Jarrar's work raises the issue of how legal, territorial markers are used figuratively in translation theory, just as the keyword "translation" is broadly applied as a metaphor for non- or extra-linguistic transference, migration, and the traffic in information, things, and commodities. Generally, I find it worrisome when translation is used so loosely. That said, its philology—inclusive of the Greek words *hermêneuin* and *metapherein;* the Latin words *transferre, convertere, traducere;* and the German words *übertragen,*

übersetzen, überlieferung, all freighted with associations of transport, passage, and transmission—lends itself to border-crossing scenarios. Such scenarios have been crucial to the great standard bearers of cultural translation, from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* (2004) and *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (2012).[7] This last book invokes "border cultures" in relation to structures of internal colonization (applicable in Spivak's examples to First Nation peoples, Chicanos, and African-Americans living within U.S. borders) and as a wedge against the "easy traffic in ethnicity" characteristic of the American "dream of interculturalism."[8]

Border-speak spilled into the parlance of literary studies as actual national borders were increasingly weaponized and surveilled post-9/11 yet rendered fungible by the economic instruments and institutions of global finance capital. In the world of super-states, "borderlessness" became an operator, sometimes yoked theoretically to Deleuzian/Guattarian "spaces of flow" (often strangely detourned from nomadology to become the perfect watchword for information and currency trading), or dignified as a term for the cosmopolitical polity; a model that Étienne Balibar has qualified as the "European triple point (of heresy)"—a Europe of East, West and South made up of overlapping territorial sheets and cultural and linguistic layers (*nappes qui se recouvrent*).[9] For Balibar, the triple-point implies highly politicized instances of non-compliance with the old cultural nationalisms of nation-states.

Balibar is the last political theorist that one would readily affiliate with symptomatic "border-think." This said, his revival of the medieval *droit de cité*—roughly speaking, a primordial right of access to the city-state—was taken into critical discourses of "hospitality" and "open borders" in ways that only implicitly referred to the administrative entities regulating ports of call at official checkpoints. So here is one of my main arguments: This idea of fluid borders—concretized by NAFTA, Shengen, the Eurozone—"forgets" the checkpoint in promoting the border. And it is this soft, hospitable border that made its way most frequently into literary cartography. Wai Chee Dimock, for example, would make the case for casting American literature no longer as a self-governing, autonomous, sovereign domain but as an entity closer to a municipality or network, something resembling a Habermasian global civil society or postnational constellation. "American" is thus defined by diverse languages and literary forms organized into sets or aggregates of sets. In place of territorial limitrophes, there are shapes and configurations, environments equipped with porous semiotic skins. These are articulated ecologically and abstractly: as "nesting" recursive structures, reversible landscapes, convex or concave patterns, bulges and burrows. Dimock uses the term "heterarchy" to designate reversible hierarchy, divergent but coexistent patterns of relation, feedback loops, and complex systems that break out of predetermined patterns. Her paradigm of "deep time" is characterized by telescoped time and nonspecific space. Dimock opts for wildly transtemporal and transcontinental genres, discernible as fractals of comparison. A Mandelbrotian fractal, she asserts,

> is a set of points that cannot be plotted as one, two, or three dimensions. It is a geometry of nonintegers, a geometry of what loops around, what breaks off, what is jagged, what comes only in percentages … Unlike the Euclidean objects—squares, circles, and triangles, with their clean resolution—the shapes that interest Mandelbrot are shapes with serried outlines: the wispy puffs of clouds, the lacy fronds of ferns, the pocked and porous surface of the sponge, the coiled dimensions inside a ball of twine.

Dimock's epic is an omnivorous, translational fractal: "a linguistic sponge, springing up in contact zones, it is super-responsive to its environment, picking up all those non-Greek words …" Generally speaking, Dimock's fractals, as enlisted for comparative work in *Through Other Continents*, seem impervious to national borders. In *Shades of the Planet*, a collective volume edited by Dimock that also forms part of her bid to transnationalize American literature, she and fellow contributor Rachel Adams have recourse to Walter Mignolo's notion of "border gnosis." Mignolo, for his part, coins the expression with the express purpose of rectifying the erasure of difference wrought by unidirectional colonial translation. Mignolo grafts the expression from Valentin Y. Mudimbe's concept of "African gnosis" as developed in his 1988 touchstone *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*. It designates a way of thinking about knowledge conflicts typical of borderlands, be they epistemological, ethical, secular or religious. Such conflicts are assumed to be connected to actual fences and walls that bifurcate nations, aggress landscape, and divide community. But Mignolo never focuses on the material structures of the state when enjoining the powerful metaphorics of the border. As the danger of "crossing" supersedes the violence of "grounding" in his elaboration of border gnosis, Mignolo adumbrates not an area to be studied but "a kind of thinking beyond the social sciences and positivistic philosophy, a kind of thinking that moves along the diversity of the historical process itself."[10] Historical process is acknowledged epistemologically in his larger scheme of "de-colonialism," but translation as a practice engaged in by border police at checkpoint stations or relied upon in court cases adjudicating immigration and deportation is nowhere referenced.

Whether it is an icon like "Checkpoint Charlie," that fully loaded specter of the Cold War state; generic station buildings set to monitor input, output flows of people; or a fence of the kind that divides Nogales, Mexico from Nogales, Arizona (which illustrates the uncanny double sovereignty of a single town), the checkpoint particularizes political ground. It is not just a topological "neighborhood" nor the general term for a logic of ontological scission, nor a cosmological sky-rim eliding the space-bar between life and transfinitude, nor the kind of topographic divider typically found at virtually any kind of border. It is, rather, an apparatus of state function dedicated to divisive acts of profiling and selectionism. As Karim Mattar and David Fieni have argued:

> The checkpoint functions not only to control the flow of migrants, illicit goods, and insurgents/terrorists, but also to divide contiguous lands and to reproduce politically and legally encoded distinctions between "us" and "them." Thus performing sovereignty, the checkpoint appears to be symptomatic of fears of catastrophe, whether economic, political, or social, in various national and global contexts.[11]

The checkpoint in this ascription is used as a figure of performative sovereignty inseparable from the politics of catastrophism; a catastrophism of national non-recognition and subjectivation by a contiguous hegemonic power.

The Catalan artist Antoni Muntadas has used language in translation as a medium that makes visible invisible zoning laws of circulation and mobility, allowing us to appreciate how translation is instrumentalized in domestic round-ups and border control as well as international espionage, where it is now a routine feature of spyware and cyberwar. In his work *On Translation: Die Stadt* (1999–2004), a white delivery truck emblazoned with the logo "On Translation" and beneath it the word for "city" in Catalan, French and German, is photographically logged in transit around Barcelona, Lille and Graz, all known as capitals of culture. The shots of the whirring vehicle—which was equipped with a camera and thus doubled as a filmmaking apparatus and mobile movie theater—not only reveals the extent to which translation is a process that is happening all the time and everywhere but also the uncanny effect induced by perceiving the discrepancies among *ciutat, ville* and *Stadt. Die Stadt* translates into English as "the city," but it doubles acoustically as *der Staat*, with attendant associations of the state as a police force patrolling citizens. And this draws attention to the significance of the truck as a rogue vehicle whose functions might include ferrying cargos of contraband and foreign migrants. *Die Stadt* from this perspective draws attention to the double standard in wealthy countries whereby multiculturalism is lauded while illegal residents are harassed and deported.

In zoning territory and mediating the right to travel across state lines, translation is both a metaphor for border control and a practice availed of by state agents to determine the legal standing of persons at the gate. A number of projects riveted on the Israel/Palestine crisis mobilize points of tension between border tropes and physical borders with respect to the politics of partition. As Danielle Drori suggests, the problem may be symptomatically overdetermined to some degree by the fact that the Hebrew word for "language," *safa*, signifies not only "lip" (an idea much glossed by Derrida in his commentary on Celan's poem, "Shibboleth") but also "edge," "rim," and "riverbank." In physics and mathematics, the Hebrew *tna'ey safa* refers to the boundaries (or more precisely the resolution conditions) of a mathematical problem. *Safa*, Drori argues, is a border in the restricted sense of a threshold, delineating a beginning or ending of something. While not

interchangeable with *gvul*, the precise term in Hebrew for "border" (qua line of separation), *safa* and *gvul* belong to a semantic cluster in which notions of language, cognitive delineation, border and territorial boundary bleed into each other.[12] *Yesh Gvul*, roughly translated as "there is a limit" or "the border exists" became the name of a movement initiated by Israeli reservists who refused to invade Lebanon at the outbreak of war in 1982. Their name reclaims and regrounds the border as the semantic currency of anti-occupation; *gvul* in this instance is coded politically as a pendant to the group's dictate: "refuse to serve," which led to many of their number being court-martialled and imprisoned.

The semiotic fluidity of borders becomes especially problematic in the context of Israeli border policy, which is characterized according to Helga Tawil-Souri by a "contradictory logic … of not having stated borders but wanting to enforce and defend them."[13] This "there but not there" character of the political border is undercut by the checkpoint, clearly visible in the landscape and in the urban mutations that it spawns: sliced neighborhoods, packer containers, cement blocs, leftovers of vanished villages, unplanned, featureless faubourgs, and rag-tag communities. These areas serve as evidence of biopolitical governmentality and resist the abstractions of border rhetoric [14] It is precisely for this reason that Helga Tawil-Souri makes the rather strange case for preserving the checkpoint as a "low-technical-political border" defined by color-coded ID cards and biometric tests administered face-to-face by the guards. Hi-tech borders, in her view, are mechanisms of "frictionless control" that sanitize the act of occupation, privatize the business of surveillance, and substitute ground-based detainment with telephonic enclosure (as in the curtailment of Gaza's access to bandwidth and Internet flow)—all of which blunt perception of government responsibility.[15]

In *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, Eyal Weizman insists that the checkpoint preserves its referential status as infrastructure even as it is inflated metaphorically as a "translation" of state sovereignty at the border. Of the one-way mirror installed after Oslo in the Allenby Bridge Checkpoint Terminal, he says:

> It is in fact a kind of translation: … more than the mere apparatus of control—it functioned also as an international border of sorts. In fact, not only did the mirror demarcate a border, but in its positioning and function it created a new conceptual border to the concept of sovereignty.

Throughout *Hollow Land*, walls are treated as a language with its own vernacular, including "separation walls," "barriers," "blockades," "closures," "road blocks," "checkpoints," "sterile areas," "special security zones," "closed military areas," and "killing zones." How a wall is named depends on which side of the wall one lives:

> The discontinuous lines of fences, ditches, concrete walls and high-tech sensors—referred to by the Israeli government as the "seam-line obstacle," by the general Israeli public as the "separation fence," and by those Israelis and Palestinians opposing it as the Wall or sometimes as the "Apartheid Wall"—are only the most visible and mediatized barriers built in a frenzy of fortification construction that has pockmarked the entire West Bank since the beginning of the Oslo Process in 1993, with the aim of separating Palestinians from Israelis at every opportunity.[16]

The lexicon expands theoretically to include "prosthetic sovereignty," an architecture of surveilled cartography; "elastic geography" (movable boundary lines and porous barriers defined by the tunnels designed to move contraband goods and material); and "political plastic" (or "politics in matter"), which designates the crowds of actors at the frontier, from military personnel, settlers, cellular network providers, and state planners to activists, NGOs,humanitarian organizations, armed resistance groups, and media entities. This form of "plastic," unofficial checkpoint becomes the riveting subject of Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi's documentary film *5 Broken Cameras* (2011). A barbed-wire fence near the West Bank wall that expropriates over 50 percent of agricultural lands belonging to the West Bank Palestinian village of Bil'in, and imposed in order to protect an illegal Israeli settlement, becomes the site of violent, protracted protests.

In his more recent book, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, Weizman coins the term "wallfare" to signal both warfare at the Israeli/Palestinian border and the hardware and software implemented to enhance security. One particularly chilling form of wallfare is defined by the "humanitarian" minimal limit of subsistence necessary to sustain life. Calculations of this limit were discovered in an Israeli military document titled "Redlines," itself, of course, a border metaphor. These calculations were used to determine the quantities of food and fuel allowed to flow to Gaza during the siege, intensified in fall 2007. "The ability," Weizman writes, "to exercise control through the modulation of flow—in which the checkpoints and terminals within the wall function as valves and switches—has made Israel's warfare on Gaza resemble an inverse Milgram experiment."[17]

Weizman uses the word "translation" not only as a general operator referring to the conversion of systems of governance and control into diffuse, centripetal forms of spatial organization but also in a more specialized sense to describe what happened in a courtroom battle over the placement of a wall. At the center of the case was a topographic scale model that relied on aerial maps of boundaries. The model indicated where a projected security wall would sever three hundred acres of farmland from the village of Beit Sourik, located northwest of Jerusalem. In describing the court proceedings, Weizman refers to the model itself as a translation, taking his cue from Wittgenstein who had become fascinated with a model used forensically to reenact an accident in Paris involving a truck and a pram: "Wittgenstein's reflection on the way a model was able to illustrate legal language," Weizman writes, "might help shed some light on the story that follows, a story that is itself engaged *with acts of translation*, undertaken in court, from reality to its representation on a physical model, and vice versa" (my emphasis). Adopting an approach sympathetic to object agency, Weizman narrates from the viewpoint of the model, underscoring how it disturbs courtroom protocol by throwing off the scale of seats and benches, introduces informal modes of address into legal language, and turns the somber atmosphere of court proceedings into something resembling an architectural desk crit or design session.[18] Though in the end Israeli security concerns inevitably trumped Palestinian land claims in the ruling, Weizman's border war, narrated from the vantage point of a wall, is shown seeding category confusion and cognitive dissonance at every turn. The wall and its double, the scale model, function as translational actants establishing relation among discrepant orders of material objects, modes of social discourse, logical propositions, politicized cartography, and reason of state. Translation is also given pragmatic, literal force as a show of justice, or a juridical performative in the technical sense of the French expression *traduire en justice*, meaning "to bring to justice," "to prosecute."

Defined as a form of translated sovereignty performed by checkpoints, the state must contend with the elusiveness of its own morphology. Whether presented in the guise of the Hobbesian *Leviathan;* in Foucauldian biopolitics; in the "wherever," or *Wohin auch immer?*, factor inherent in surveillance and cyber-security technologies and in all-over warfare by drones; or in the status of eroding nation-states within the Eurozone (summed up in a question posed by the title of a special issue of the French journal *Critique*, translated as "O State, Where Art Thou? Are You There?"),[19] the state is pictured as tenuous and everywhere diffused. Every person becomes a potential checkpoint in the "war on terror," a body-scan medium, a transporter of cellular data, a first responder, a civilian backup to law enforcement. In the era of cyber-surveillance, checkpoints can be as anodyne as a Facebook wall, a paywall, or a document fingerprint, or as menacing as a citizen's self-authorization to apply a stand-your-ground law. Border guards actively embody "check-pointization," a process set in motion when "a person of interest" moves into the crosshairs of a raised gun.[20] Soldiers corporealize the checkpoint, as do agents of parastates—militias, vigilantes, warlords, guerilla armies, bandits and pirates—who enable groups with no sovereign standing to act like a state.

Sovereign fear flares at the checkpoint, itself a kind of gunpoint of juridical encounter. It goes without saying that when the checkpoint is sited in a global hotspot or when the traveler happens to be a migrant or suspected terrorist, the threat factor escalates exponentially.

In Annemarie Jacir's feature-length film *Salt of This Sea* (2008), a Brooklyn-born Palestinian-American named Soraya, en route to visit her ancestral home in Jaffa, is similarly subjected to protracted interrogation and a strip search in the airport. Virtually every scene in the

movie is dramatically structured as a checkpoint, an obstacle course, or a gauntlet on which the characters must evaluate the vagaries of patrol cars, the distance of police helicopters, or the choice of language—English, Arabic, or Hebrew—for initiating contact. The film foregrounds Soraya mastering the art of "getting through" barriers by negotiating the minefields of translation and cultural untranslatability.[21]

States legitimate themselves through official or commonly spoken languages, so it is interesting to see which languages are used at Israeli checkpoints in this film as well. English, the language of British colonialism and American imperialism in the Middle East,is the lingua franca that the border speaks, irrespective of the fact that Hebrew is the national language. Soraya deploys her American accent to obtain security clearance at banks in order to defuse the suspicions of soldiers who have picked up her mates. Arabic, on the other hand, leads to Soraya's reawakening as a Palestinian. She discovers the *nakbah* at the scale of prosaic encounters; small acts of sitting around and arguing with newly discovered Palestinian relatives who have internalized walls and checkpoints as psychic states of occupation and daily humiliation.

Checkpoints are sites of push-back and resistance in the seminal novel *Checkpoint* (2004) by Palestinian author, activist and former Knesset member Azmi Bishara. As in Annemarie Jacir's films, the checkpoint defines a world unto itself and an archipelago dominated by guards (the "masters of the checkpoint") and galvanized by a young girl who crosses the border every day to attend school. "The word, *mahtrom*, a Hebrew term for checkpoint taken into Arabic, comes to signify two worlds fused in political disequilibrium."[22] Published in the year in which construction of Israel's walls and electric fences was massively ramped up, Bishara's novel depicts a landscape so cut up by barriers and so neutralized by the brownish-grey color of cement blocs and stones that space-time delineations recede. The checkpoints rise up as solo architectural players on a featureless horizon.

It is this destituted scape that is rigorously depicted by the Palestinian artist Taysir Batniji, whose *Watchtowers* series was included in the 12th Istanbul Biennial in 2012. Simulating Bernd and Hilla Becher's typological studies of clocktowers and water-towers, Batniji substitutes Israeli watchtowers, creating a landscape of state surveillance out of the visual language of photorealism and removing the political neutrality of the checkpoint as naturalized industrial architecture. Batniji's modest exercise in appropriation art participates in a grander scheme of things in what Rema Hammami calls "the moral economy of checkpoints." Hammami describes checkpoint actions on the border where people use their bodies as coagulants of assembly that jam the ports of ingress and egress installed by the Israeli state. There is a defiant wish fulfillment communicated by these gestures of embodied blockade, and they recall a remarkable magical realist scene of fulfilled wishes in Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention*, made in 2002 before the wall was erected.

The film is constructed around long takes of a man and a woman sitting in a car waiting; endlessly watching the checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem as if it were the movie of their lives.[23] Suddenly there is a break-out moment in which the woman brazenly crosses over without being "checked." Attired in high style, she turns the tarmac into a fashion runway, daring the soldiers to shoot as she saunters past their raised guns. Her gaze—supernaturally empowered like a weapon of mind control—causes the tower to collapse.

In each of these projects by artists, architects and writers, we see the translation zone defined not as a porous boundary facilitating supranational comity and regimes of general equivalence but as a threshold of untranslatability and political blockade. In bringing back the checkpoint to undercut the way in which translation studies has flaccidly appropriated metaphors of border-crossing, the aim has been to insist on the persistence of the function of the state police within the field of language politics. It may be a time of waning sovereignty insofar as nation-states are trumped by liquid capital and the global dissemination of non-aligned standing armies, but checkpoints, whether mobile bodies or stationary landmarks, produce a logic of anti-sovereign occupation contoured by walls of non-transitivity and untranslatability.

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1 Tom Vanderbilt, "Openings: Emily Jacir," *Artforum*, February 2004.

2 See Apter, "Everything Is Translatable," in *The Translation Zone*, 226–32; Jeremy Harding, *The Uninvited: Refugees at the Rich Man's Gate*, London: Profile Books: London Review of Books, 2000; Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, London: Verso, 2007; Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza*, London: Verso, 2011; Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, New York: Zone Books, 2010.

3 Gil Hochberg notes: "At the Checkpoint" took place *at* the checkpoint: originally at the Huwarra checkpoint (from noon to approximately 4 PM on Saturday, February 3, 2007) and, two years later, following a similar model, at the Qalandia checkpoint (during the summer of 2009). Gil Hochberg, "Inside and Outside the Frame: The Making of Spectatorship Communities," in "Visual Occupations: Violence and Visibility at a Conflict Zone," book manuscript (Durham: Duke University Press, Forthcoming).

4 Interview, Khaled Jarrar and Alistair George, November 21, 2011, "Stamping Palestine into Passports," palsolidarity.org/.

5 "Contesting the Antiborder Condition: Khaled Jarrer's Live and Work in Palestine Project," Simon's Teaching Blog, http://www.simonsteachingblog.wordpress.com.

6 Emily Gogolak, "Khaled Jarrar Stamps His Authority," *Rolling Stone*, February 5, 2012, rollingstone.com.

7 Spivak's opening chapter titled "Crossing Borders" focuses on the difficulty of mapping comparative literature as a discipline: "Without the support of the humanities," she writes, "Area Studies can still only transgress frontiers, in the name of crossing borders; and without a transformed area studies, Comparative Literature remains imprisoned within the borders it will not cross." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, 385.

8 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012, 147 and 168.

9 Étienne Balibar, "The Borders of Europe," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, 225.

10 Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, 76, 82; Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000, 3, 68, 69.

11 Karim Mattar and David Fieni, seminar description for the panel "The Global Checkpoint: 'Rights' of Passage, Performances of Sovereignty," American Comparative Literature Association Conference, March 29–April 1, Brown University, Providence, RI.

12 Danielle Drori, "'Your country, it says, migrates all over, like language': The Idea of the Antiborder Border," unpublished paper.

13 Helga Tawil-Souri, "Uneven Borders, Colored (Im)mobilities: ID Cards in Palestine/Israel," *Geopolitics* 17: 2, 2012, 2–3.

14 It is for this reason that Helga Tawil-Souri ironically "mourns" the loss of old-style Qalandia when she revisits it in 2011. Gone is the ragtag community that had grown up around it—the "merchants who still loiter around but seem more like beggars, the bus drivers and even the soldiers behind their bulletproof glass, mirrors and databases." Reduced to a tangle of stone slabs and garbage, Qalandia no longer functions to the degree that it once did as a volcanic marker of "the shared experience of tension over spatiality and mobility" and the "constant sense of unbelonging in our host countries, or the continued forced exile in our own backyards." See her article "Qalandia: An Autopsy," *Jerusalem Quaterly* 45, 2011, 73.

15 Tawil-Souri, "Uneven Borders, Colored (Im)mobilities: ID Cards in Palestine/ Israel," *Geopolitics* 17: 2, 2012, 2–3; Tawil-Souri, "Digital Occupation: Gaza's High-Tech Enclosure," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41: 2 Winter 2012, 28.

16 Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, London: Verso, 2007, 144, 145–6.

17 Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza*, London: Verso, 2011, 87.

18 Ibid., 65, 72.

19 "État, es-tu là?," special issue, *Critique* 780, May 2012.

20 "The sovereign's proxy manufactures meaning out of his encounter with the Palestinian at the checkpoint," writes Ariella Azoulay; see her *The Civil Contract of Photography*, New York: Zone Books, 2008, 468.

21 Lawrence Abu Hamdan's project "Aural Contract: The Freedom of Speech Itself," on exhibition at London's Showroom gallery in February/March 2012, also works with the idea of "checkpointing" within language. His focus is on acts of juridical listening in interviews of asylum seekers. He works with tapes of interviews by border agents or their private proxies who test for authenticity of accent and diction.

22 Azmi Bishara, *Checkpoint*, trans. Rachid Akel, Arles: Actes Sud, 2004 (translation from French my own).

23 This reference to “watching” as a check to the checkpoint recalls Machsomwatch, an organization of Israeli women activists, who, since 2001, have conducted “daily observations” at major crossings, out-of-the-way routes, and military courts.

Part Two
Doing Things with Untranslatables

I

Keywords 1: "Cyclopaedia"

> I owe the discovery of Uqbar to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopedia. The mirror troubled the depths of a corridor in a country house on Gaona Street in Ramos Mejía; the encyclopedia is fallaciously called *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* (New York, 1917) and is a literal but delinquent reprint of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1902.
>
> —Jorge Luis Borges, *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*

Both a history of philosophy and a massive translation exercise, Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* stems the tide of unilateralist, one-world literary practice. It offers an instrument for "philosophizing in languages," which, though relying on nominalist entry terms, derails the sedimentation of meanings that congeal within the names of concepts. By revealing the history of mistranslation and misfired speech-acts in the history of philosophical terms, it disestablishes verbal monoliths and idea myths. In its attention to the historically shifting ideologies embedded in words and emphasis on linguistic encounters in actual situations, the *Vocabulaire* invites comparison with Raymond Williams's *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, a cherry-picked collection of English words ("anarchism," "bureaucracy," "collective," "consumer," "creative," "democracy," "dialectic," "doctrinaire," "elite," "equality," "liberal," "management," "materialism," "progressive," "radical," "reactionary," "sociology," "subjective," "taste," "unemployment," and so forth), distinguished by their class valence, independence from "proper meaning," and susceptibility to controversy and misunderstanding. Sparked by his recognition that since World War II the word "culture" had gyred wildly between its "teashop" use (as a word for social superiority as defined by money, class, position and behavior) and its "way of life" use, as both a synonym for intellectual and artistic production and an anthropological attitude toward everyday practices, Williams was especially sensitive to untranslatability within a common language, so much so that I have borrowed his examples of "keywords" in selecting case studies of Untranslatables in subsequent chapters.[1]

Cassin's *Vocabulaire* problematizes the concern of what to call the keyword as itself a genre. It exhibits affinities at different points with Williams's keywords and Reinhart Koselleck's *Geschichtiliche Grundbegriffe*, a dictionary of political and social Concept-History. As a work coming out of France, it harks back to Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1702) and to Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encylopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751–66); in the latter case not because it models the *Encyclopédie*'s wildly eclectic topical juxtapositions—electricity, Africans, Machiavellianism, sex, monarchy, man, stocking manufacture—or embellishes its concept entries with *planches* and extended discussions of science, craft and technology. Rather, like its predecessor, the *Vocabulaire* is interested in using translation to extend what philosophy does. For Howard Caygill, the *Encyclopédie* and the *Vocabulaire* share the endeavor of radical philosophy:

> In his study of the dissemination of Spinozist ideas—*Radical Enlightenment*—Jonathan Israel described the early Enlightenment dictionary as a vector for radical philosophy, "a philosophical engine of war which massively invaded the libraries, public and private, of the whole continent."[2]

Diderot and D'Alembert's project was vast in scale (thirty-two volumes, seventy thousand articles), but the *Vocabulaire* can in key respects be seen as a continuation of the *Encyclopédie*. The *Encyclopédie* began its life as a translation (a French rendering of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia: or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* [1728], itself heavily based on translations of French dictionaries and treatises), and the *Vocabulaire* was similarly built up out of translated material. Both projects were Europe-centered despite a worldly purview. Both were imbued with Frenchness though nationally unbounded in their production and reception. Both jostled competitively with British philosophical traditions, narrating (though not always intentionally) a story about the dueling prospects both of idealism and materialism and of metaphysics and pragmatism. Both projects confronted the burden of the past in the guises of Greek philosophy, Roman law and Biblical theology. Both created conditions favorable to the conceptual unexpected. Both functioned as advocacy documents in favor of conscripting philosophy in the struggle against fanaticism, intolerance, censorship, dogmatism, arbitrary sovereignty, enslavement, coercion, injustice and inequality. Both flaunted their programmed obsolescence in pointing ahead to future knowledge platforms, interactive formats, and modes of dissemination. And both imagined themselves as self-correcting research engines revising their way, Wiki-style, into relevance for generations to come.

Cassin and her editorial *équipe* acknowledged that they had the *Encyclopédie* in mind as a counter-model when they initially charted the *Vocabulaire*. Where D'Alembert had cast the plurality of languages as an obstacle to a universalist, philosophic history, Cassin (in the sophistic vein) and her colleagues embraced the messiness of linguistic multiplicity and conceptual pluralism. "What really suits us philosophers is the plural," she wrote,

> The *Dictionary of Untranslatable Terms* does not pretend to offer "the" perfect translation to any untranslatable, rather, it clarifies the contradictions and places them face-to-face in reflection; it is a pluralist and comparative work in its non-enclosing gesture, rather more Borgesian or Oulipian—"the modern form of fantasy is erudition" Borges tells us—than destinal and Heideggerian.[3]

Interestingly, one of the best definitions of untranslatability in line with Cassin's usage crops up in Diderot's entry for the word "Encyclopédie." Diderot allows that, while the aim of an encyclopedia is to deliver a precise definition on whose meaning all users universally concur, the reality is otherwise. Assigning attributes and qualities, he admits is no common skill:

> A universal dictionary is an opus which proposes to fix the meaning of the terms of a language, by defining those which can be defined, through a short, meticulous, clear, and precise enumeration or the qualities of ideas attached to them. The only good definitions are those that group the essential attributes of the thing designated by the word. But is just anyone capable of knowing and exposing these attributes? Is the art of defining as common as that? Are we not all, more or less, in the same situation as children who apply, with the greatest precision, innumerable terms in the place of which they would be utterly incapable of substituting the correct collection of qualities of ideas they represent? Whence, how many unforeseen difficulties, when it comes to setting down the meaning of the commonest expressions? We constantly experience the fact that the ones we least understand are also those we use the most. What is the reason for this strange phenomenon? It is that we are forever in the situation of pronouncing that a thing is *such;* almost never in the necessity of determining what it is to *be such*. Our most frequent judgments fall

> on specific objects, and the general usage of the language and experience suffices to guide us. We merely repeat what we have heard all our lives.[4]

Diderot's exemplary Untranslatable is an ordinary speech-act or term of common usage whose signification is supposedly unambiguous but which is anything but. In such cases, the gap between the word for a thing and the qualia referentially associated with it is greatest with respect to words whose meaning we think we know. The Untranslatable comes into focus as that x-factor that disqualifies presumptive knowability in matters of linguistic definition.

If the entry on "Encyclopédie" in the *Encyclopédie* identifies the Untranslatable with a restriction imposed by language on access to meaning, or to knowledge of a thing as such (*ce que c'est qu'être tel*), it also brings to the fore the problem of its own self-naming as a generic form. Chambers's neologism "Cyclopaedia" weighs heavily. What did he intend by this term, which he defended against accusations that it was a crime of nomenclature? It was at once a new form (comparable to Hook's *Micrographia* or Wolfius's *Aerometria*), and a very particular kind of dictionary if we go by the work's full descriptive title: *Cyclopaedia, or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences: Containing the Definitions of the Terms, and Accounts of the Things Signify'd Thereby, in the Several Arts, both Liberal and Mechanical, and the Several Sciences, Human and Divine: the Figures, Kinds, Properties, Productions, Preparations, and Uses, of Things Natural and Artificial; the Rise, Progress, and State of Things Ecclesiastical, Civil, Military, and Commercial: with the Several Systems, Sects, Opinions, etc.; among Philosophers, Divines, Mathematicians, Physicians, Antiquaries, Criticks, etc.: The Whole Intended as a Course of Ancient and Modern Learning*. Martine Groult maintains that what distinguished "Cyclopaedia," as Chambers defined it, was an organicist model of mutually reinforcing part/whole relations and an overarching "view of knowledge" (a "cyclopian" dimension connoting the all-seeing eye).[5] Chambers's use of the term "stamen" confirmed a germinative ecology of knowledge-production. Each word was to grow in the manner of a God-given originary particle within the parameters of its disciplinary space. For the Encylopedists, by contrast, the divine originary particle was replaced by a human-centered system of intellection animated by interactivity of disciplines and knowledge-forms.

The Encyclopedia was designed then to supersede the Cyclopaedia, leading to its retirement as an outmoded model of knowledge production. But this move did not obviate classificatory indeterminacy: For "encyclopedia" and "dictionary" both figure in the title: *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire universel des arts et des sciences*. Cassin's *Vocabulaire* would exhibit a comparable instability, equivocating in the title between calling itself a vocabulary and a dictionary. In deciding how to render the book's title in English, a decision was taken to go with *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. The substitution of "lexicon" for "vocabulary" was intended to foreground the active process, in living languages, whereby new words are "entered into the lexicon." But it it did nothing to resolve the issue of generic identity. How was this work expressly *not* an encyclopedia? Was the duck–rabbit construct *Vocabulaire-Dictionnaire* a signal to readers that they should *not* think of the work as an "encyclopedia" of philosophy even though the text contained inventory that was encyclopedic in organizational structure, scope, and depth? Were dictionary and vocabulary wholly interchangeable? A dictionary is broadly defined as a reference book containing an alphabetical list of words with information about them, while a vocabulary, in addition to being the generic term for sets of words that people are familiar with in a language is similarly used as a term to describe alphabetized and explained word ensembles, usually for a pedagogical purpose relating to a special field. But a quick survey of titles sheds little light on their difference: Google turned up vocabularies of "faith," "thinking," "culture and society," "massacre and genocide," "golf," and so forth, as well as dictionaries of "Buddhism," "Urdu," "philosophy," "scientific quotations," "period Russian names," and "dentistry." Very broadly speaking, it appeared that vocabulary emphasized something more conceptual, whereas "dictionary" underscored technical reference, but there seemed to be no rigorous distinction holding between them. This instability around naming the motherbook of all definitions was unnerving, pointing up the strangeness of the object in question, its peculiarity as the form of the drive to *allness*. As Diderot famously described it: "The purpose of an encyclopedia is to collect knowledge disseminated around the globe."[6] There was also D'Alembert's equally celebrated pendant statement in the *Discours préliminaire*:

> As an Encyclopedia, it is to set forth as well as possible the order and connection of the parts of human knowledge. As a *Reasoned Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Trades*, it is to contain the general principles that form the basis of each science and each art, liberal or mechanical, and the most essential facts that make up the body and substance of each.[7]

D'Alembert's anamorphic projection of global knowledge as "shaped extension" joins Roland Barthes' description of the *Encyclopédie* as a "technological organ" dedicated to transmission, amplification and relay. "The Encyclopedic image," he wrote in his essay on the *planches*, "constitutes a structure of *information* … we find prophetically formulated the very principle of cybernetic ensembles; the plate, image of the machine, is indeed in its way a brain; we introduce substance into it and set up the 'program'…"[8] So, here we have what is by now the commonplace positioning of the *Encyclopédie* as ancestor to the World Wide Web, Google ("Our mission is to organize all the information in the world"), and, more recently, the Internet Relay Chat Channel; constantly uploading from below, calibrating data waves, leaking information, and facilitating social networks.

Much has already been written and there remains much more to be said about the *Encyclopédie* as the original cybernetic tool and prime object of all media. Yves Citton, among others, has noted how the system of cross-references (*renvois*) induced not only a kind of *indisciplinarity* in prompting translateral reading and a broken attention span but also provided a pragmatic means of evading censorship. In the "Encyclopédie" article, Diderot alluded to the way in which the renvois operated as a semaphore system directing readers without ready detection to entries that overturned "ridiculous opinions" and pointed the way to the *Encyclopédie*'s rationalist, irreligious precepts. "It is the art of tacitly deducing the boldest consequences," Diderot wrote. "If such confirming and refuting references are foreseen well in advance, and skillfully prepared, they will give an *encyclopedia* the character which a good dictionary ought to possess: that of changing the common mode of thinking."[9]

Though the *Encyclopédie* may be considered the ancestor to WikiLeaks in its contestation of government media control, it arguably censored traces of its own genesis as a translation of Chambers's *Cyclopaedia;* redacting content willy-nilly and attributing to French authors plagiarized or barely paraphrased material. The fact that the guiding lights of the *Encyclopédie* often did their best to disavow their own text's origin as a translation also attests to a complex translation history that shows up the influence of nationalism even in professedly internationalist projects. Diderot, for example, in his own entry on the term "Encyclopédie," dilated on the inferiority of the English original. Chambers, he alleged,

> limited himself to compilation from our dictionaries and the analysis of a small number of works, invented nothing, and stuck strictly to what was known, everything being equally interesting or indifferent to him, having neither a preference for any topic, nor favorable or unfavorable time for work, save that of a migraine or spleen, he was a laborer who plowed his furrow, shallow, but even and straight.… Chambers' articles are fairly regularly distributed; but they are empty. Ours are full, but irregular. If Chambers had filled his up, I have no doubt his organization would have suffered.

His depiction of the *Cyclopaedia* as intellectually undiscriminating and derivative of French dictionaries uses the myth of French brilliance to obscure the *Encyclopédie*'s debt to the English original. Diderot went on to convert the *Encyclopédie's* formal disabilities—"Nous sommes alternativement nains et géants, colosses et pygmées; droits, bien faits et proportionnés, bossus, boiteux et contrefaits" [we are by turns dwarves and giants, colossuses and pygmies; standing straight, nicely built and well proportioned; hunchbacked, lame and deformed] into a

virtue. John Lough notes that despite grand claims to a complete revision of Chambers, there were entries thatmade virtually no alterations to Chambers's original as if fulfilling (though with "cyclopaedia" and "encyclopedia" in reverse position) Borges's characterization of the *Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* of 1917 as a "literal but delinquint reprint" of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1902 in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." The preface to the *Encyclopédie*'s second volume announced with great fanfare, for example, that Buffon had contributed the "Nature" article, but closer inspection of the articles on "Nature (Philos)" and "Nature, Lois de la" revealed little more than a direct translation of Chambers.[10]

Translation is haunted by the anxiety that it is unoriginal or illicitly appropriated intellectual property. The legal definition listed under the "Translation" entry in the *Encyclopédie* underscores the withdrawal of property from its place: "the Act of transferring or removing a thing from one Place to another."[11] Further on, translators are treated as analogous to criminals (with help from the old saw "Traduttore, Traditore"): "Translators frequently endeavor to execute themselves at the Expense of their Language; and ask Pardon for it, as if it were not rich and copious enough to express all the force and Beauties of the Original."[12] Translational crime is identified with the translator's tendency to blame the original language for shortcomings that are the translator's own. In this context, it is interesting then that Diderot uses the word "plagiat" with reference to Chambers, as if by impugning his original and going on the offensive he might erase any memory of the *Encyclopédie*'s debt to its English source text. He lamented: "Que de temps perdu à traduire de mauvaises choses! que de dépenses pour se procurer un plagiat continuel!"[How much time was lost translating bad things! What expenditure, from which to direct nothing more than continual plagiarism!"][13] Here, "plagiat" signifies a travesty of enlightened learnedness, but ultimately, I think, it is an assertion of prerogative, an effort to stake an ownership claim on the intellectual estates of the encyclopedia. By disputing Chambers's assertion that the French models for his encyclopedia—among them those of Abbé Furetière, Trévoux, Savary, Chauvin, and Bayle—had been made "subservient to his purpose," Diderot restored the French to first position.

Fast-forwarding to the *Vocabulaire*, we still find evidence of such nationalist rivalries. In his entry on "Français," Alain Badiou defaults to national language myths, especially when he insists that for Descartes, Bergson, Sartre, Deleuze, and Lacan to philosophize is inseparable from the mother tongue. Unlike German, whose truth, Badiou holds, is attained through verbal and syntactic unraveling, French syntax is transparent to truth. Like Adamic language, it lends itself to logical formalism, axioms, maxims, and universal principles. Above all, for Badiou, French is conducive to the politicization of expression; unseating predicates through the play of substitutions and the art of the imperious question (what Lacan called the "denunciatory enunciation").[14] In the end, Badiou's entry emerges as less critical of French and Frenchness than Voltaire's entry on the same subject in the *Encyclopédie*. The effect of this display of national pride in the brilliance of the French language is only exacerbated when one turns to the *Vocabulaire* entry devoted to "Anglais" (written by two French authors), which concentrates on "the English language or the genius of the ordinary."[15]

The nationalism card not only strengthened Diderot and D'Alembert's bid to the crown for permission to publish free of censorship, it also allowed them to champion an Enlightenment vision of encyclopedism. And while this vision was arguably more concerned with translating the values of a group of "Brights"—secular humanism over and against theocracy, fanaticism, and religious dogma—into forms of legitimate *savoir* than it was about translating an English original, the insistence on the *un*originality of Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* attests to anxieties of influence on the part of *Encyclopédie* editors. It was as if they sensed there would always be an English *Cyclopaedia* lurking behind the scenes in the pages of the *Encyclopédie*. Similarly, one could say, the specter of Anglophone "Globish" haunts the *Vocabulaire* and underwrites its efforts to correct for the hegemony of Anglo-American philosophy in the teaching of philosophy.

Ultimately, what the *Encyclopédie* and the *Vocabulaire* share, beyond their competition with Anglophone models, is a translation-symptom attached to their unstable nominalism: Are they encyclopedias? Dictionaries? Vocabularies? Lexicons? Caygill, introducing the *Vocabulaire* to English readers in the journal *Radical Philosophy* not long after it came out in French, noted the curious

> absence of an entry on the philosophical dictionary itself, crucial not only as a site for the debate and codification of philosophical idioms but also as a vector for the teaching and dissemination of philosophy… The subentry on lexicography in the entry on "Logos" is too general to help, unless of course the entire *Vocabulaire* be considered as a vast entry on this very question.[16]

Perhaps the best English translation of the *Vocabulaire* would be none other than "Cyclopaedia," retrieved from Chambers and assigned new purpose as a name for the Untranslatable animating and exhausting the encyclopedic form.

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1 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 11, 17; Williams's sensitivity to untranslatability: ibid., 12.

2 Howard Caygill, "From Abstraction to *Wunch*: The *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies," Radical Philosophy* 138, July/August 2006, 10.

3 Barbara Cassin, "Philosophising in Languages," trans. Yves Gilonne, *Nottingham French Studies* 49 No. 2 (Summer 2010): 18 (Original text: from a paper titled "Violence de la traduction: Traduire l'intraduisible," presented at the 22nd *Assises de la traduction littéraire* in Arles, 2005).

4 ("Un vocabulaire universel est un ouvrage dans lequel on se propose de fixer la signification des termes d'une langue, en définissant ceux qui peuvent être définis, par une énumération courte, exacte, claire & précise, ou des qualités ou des idées qu'on y attache. Il n'y a de bonnes définitions que celles qui rassemblent les attributs essentiels de la chose désignée par le mot. Mais a-t-il été accordé à tout le monde de connoître & d'exposer ces attributs? L'art de bien définir est—il un art si commun? Ne sommes nous pas tous, plus ou moins, dans le cas même des enfans, qui appliquent avec une extrème précision, une infinité de termes à la place desquels il leur seroit absolument impossible de substituer la vraie collection de qualités ou d'idées qu'ils représentent? De là, combien de difficultés imprévues, quand il s'agit de fixer le sens des expressions les plus communes? On éprouve à tout moment que celles qu'on entend le moins, sont aussi celles dont on se sert le plus. Quelle est la raison de cet étrange phénomène? C'est que nous sommes sans cesse dans l'occasion de prononcer qu'une chose est *telle;* presque jamais dans la nécessité de déterminer ce que c'est qu'*être tel*. Nos jugemens les plus fréquens tombent sur des objets particuliers, & le grand usage de la langue & du monde suffit pour nous diriger. Nous ne faisons que répéter ce que nous avons entendu.") Denis Diderot, "Encyclopedia," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & D'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Philip Stewart, Ann Arbor, MI: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2002. Original French text: Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, orig. ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, 5:635–648A (Paris, 1755); republication: University of Chicago: ARTFL *Encyclopédie Projet*, Spring 2010 Online edition, Robert Morrissey (ed).

5 Martine Groult, "De la *Cyclopaedia* de Chambers à l'Encyclopédie: Les renvois de la traduction," in *Corpus* 51 (2006): 122–5. My discussion of Chambers here is greatly indebted to Groult's expert work on the *Encyclopédie*.

6 Denis Diderot, "Encyclopedia," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & D'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Philip Stewart, Ann Arbor, MI: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2002. (Original French text: "En effet, le but d'une *Encyclopédie* est de rassembler les connoissances éparses sur la surface de la terre; d'en exposer le système général aux hommes avec qui nous vivons, & de le transmettre aux hommes qui viendront après nous." "Encyclopédie," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 5, Paris, 1755.) As Daniel Brewer points out, both D'Alembert and Diderot refer to the *Encyclopédie* as a "mappemonde" or world map. Brewer, *The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 22.

7 Jean le Rond D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse," in *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & D'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Richard N. Schwab and Walter E. Rex. Ann Arbor, MI: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2009. (Original French version: "Discours Préliminaire," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 1, Paris: Briasson, 1755.)

8 Roland Barthes, "The Plates of the *Encyclopedia*," in *New Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980, 29, 33.

9 *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & D'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Philip Stewart, Ann Arbor, MI: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of

Michigan Library, 2002. (Original French text: “C’est l’art de déduire tacitement les conséquences les plus fortes. Si ces renvois de confirmation & de réfutation sont prévus de loin, & préparés avec adresse, ils donneront à une *Encyclopédie* le caractere que doit avoir un bon dictionnaire; ce caractere est de changer la façon commune de penser.” Diderot, “Encyclopédie,” *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 5, Paris: Briasson, 1755.)

10 Philip Stewart, Ann Arbor, MI: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2002. “C’était un laboureur qui traçait son sillon superficial, mais égal et droit … Les articles de Chambers sont assez régulièrement distribués, mais ils sont vides; les nôtres sont pleins, mais irréguliers.” Diderot, “Encyclopédie,” *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire*, V.64Ir/b-64IV/a. as cited by John Lough, *The Encyclopédie*, London: Longman, 1971, 70. English translation my own. Lough notes, with regard to the citation form, that Diderot’s article “Encyclopédie” “is foliated not paginated, hence the references which follow are to folios (r=recto, v=verso). It is obvious that it was composed in a hurry at the last moment and that the printer had to fit it into the volume as best he could,” 69. (5: 642): “Alternativement nains & géants, colosses & pigmées; droits, bienfaits & proportionnés; bossus, boiteux & contrefaits,” Lough, 46).

11 “L’action de transférer une personne ou une chose, d’un lieu dans un autre.” Diderot, “Encyclopédie,” *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire* 6: 555.

12 (Souvent les traducteurs tâchent de s’excuser aux dépens de la langue dans laquelle ils traduisent, & demandent grâce pour cette langue, comme si elle n’étoit pas assez riche & copieuse pour exprimer toute la force & toutes les beautés de l’original. Diderot, “Encyclopédie,” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire* 16: 544)

13 Diderot, “Encylopédie,” op. cit. [V.654r/a]) as cited by Lough, *Encyclopédie* op. cit. 71. Translation my own.

14 Cassin, *Vocabulaire européen*, 465–6, 471.

15 “La Langue anglaise ou le génie de l’ordinaire,” 87.

16 Howard Caygill, “From Abstraction to *Wunch*: The *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies,” Radical Philosophy* 138, July/August 2006, 10.

II

Keywords 2: "Peace"

The encyclopedic episteme in Enlightenment Europe treated translation as both a fulcrum of knowledge production and as a constitutive component of diplomacy. This Enlightenment legacy remains palpable. Translation is a given in Kantian conceptions of what contemporary policy experts call the "liberal security community" and its Habermasian correlative, the communicative utopia.[1] This is international community based on the presumption of common interest; mutual recognition; democratic freedom; agreed-upon rules and institutional structures; and disinterested, universal principles of political right. In this world picture, untranslatability poses a threat to the liberal security community insofar as it may be identified with inaccessible, unsecurable knowledge. Though all knowledge, like all language, is ultimately unsecurable, international diplomacy is, notwithstanding, predicated on a rationalist assumption of high levels of securability.

Comparative literature has often functioned as the humanities arm of Enlightenment diplomacy. It has been dedicated to producing complexly cultured, linguistically proficient citizens of the world who foster global understanding and the pragmatic conviction that universal consensus—or what Kant called "pacific federation"—is achievable through an enhanced linguistic commons. While there is much to commend in this vision, I would argue that it promotes not only a false sense of security, but, more problematically still, a rationalist, realist ideology of securitization. Realist securitism is invoked to justify excessive management of the Untranslatable; from wiretapping and Internet censorship to the use of information intercepts and other cyber-defense strategies. These techniques belong to larger institutional systems that ostensibly protect the democratic peace through information regulation, including the supervision of "aliens" through border protocols, satellite surveillance, and GPS tracking and the calculation of economic, political, and actuarial risk.

In seeking to "desecure" comparative literature as a discipline, John T. Hamilton proposes a "radical philology." In *Security: Politics, Humanity and the Philology of Care*, Hamilton shows how the very word "security" stages an indisciplined spectacle: "With ease and spectacular amenability, *security* floats from one region of interest to the next, invading conceptual neighborhoods, arousing field-specific suspicions, ever conjuring fresh scenarios of concern." He goes on to say:

> Theories of interpretation that fix assured methods and codes for understanding, systems that aim to establish a transcendental ground of being or truth, techniques for creating inner tranquillity and constancy, psychoanalytic economies that constitute self-consciousness or safeguard the ego's integration of unconscious drives—all are justifiably conceived as differing types of security projects. These correlations are not empty analogies … Although poised to be an alternative to a purely political approach, a philological investigation can still complement political choices, even if only by complicating them, at the very least because philology would curtail the speed that ideologies, institutions, and power structures require for their efficacy. A philological disposition halts the ready slide into all manners of acquiescence. It prevents the headlong rush into those established conventions of truth that are presented as beyond debate and instead raises problems and questions of meaning at the very moment of meaning formation, that is, before meaning has become ossified and proffered as second nature. Oscillating persistently between languages, cultures, and discursive histories, philology tarries upon the liminal zones, at the very thresholds of translation, inquiring into the conditions of translatability itself.

Though it may be objected that Hamilton is zoning "the conditions of translatability" outside the pale of the political, he soon makes clear that what he is really proposing is not a positioning of the political against translatability but rather a shift of the security topic from "the general senses of defense, containment, and civil order" to a broad "semantic cluster" inclusive of "safety and salvation, calculation and probability, certification and validation, fixing and binding, privacy and confidentiality.[2] Hamilton's concern, then, becomes one of marshaling philology in the name of untested configurations: Homeland Security with security blanket; "false sense of security" with "defense mechanism"; Securities and Exchange Commission with surveillant architecture; "peace of mind" with child safety-lock … Investigating where these and related terms bleed into each other reveals how security has become the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century watchword of choice, a control-term for every aspect of private and political life.

Working philologically in a free style informed by Hamilton's example, I tracked the word "peace" as one of those risk-inducing Untranslatables that complicates security within the world literary federation of inter-nations. Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* ["Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project"[3]], published in the wake of the 1795 Treaty of Basel between France and Prussia, and sometimes translated as "Toward Eternal Peace," contains translational ambiguities and multiple possible interpretations in its very title. Since the force of the preposition *zu* can mean either, literally "motion towards," or figuratively "on a particular subject," "*Zum ewigen Frieden*" can mean either "On Perpetual (Eternal) Peace" or "On the Way Towards Eternal Peace. The essay offers an obvious point of departure for analyzing the riskiness of an Untranslatable, despite having suffered from a surfeit of interpretation. It frames the word "peace" in relation to ongoing debates around stasis, faction, and civil war. It highlights temporal and cosmological dimensions of what peace might mean (a politics of eternity or infinitude?), and it raises the question of what peace-brokering aims to achieve if its purview is restricted to the world of humans.[4]

The phrase *ewiger Friede*, controversially rendered in English as "perpetual peace," refers back to the Abbé de Saint-Pierre's *A Project for Settling on Everlasting Peace in Europe* (1712).[5] What comes to the fore in comparing the German, French and English is a translation loop, in which semantic and acoustic nuances lost in one language are displaced to or recuperated in another. In this case, the Abbé's *perpetuelle*, in its guise as the English word "everlasting," draws closer to Kant's *ewigen*, while the English translation of Kant's *ewig* by "perpetual" recoups Saint-Pierre's original French word *perpetuelle*.

Why does this matter? Because the way we translate the qualifier *ewigen* has consequences for interpreting Kantian peace and the lexical circuits of synonyms and word-worlds that derive from it. As it oscillates between political preservation and spiritual everlastingness, *ewig*, like its pendant term *heileg* (to make holy, to make blessed), sounds a distinctly ecclesiastic note typical of liturgical expressions like "peace everlasting" (*pax perpetua*) or the "everlasting Father." (In the Vulgate: *Pater futuri saeculi*, "Father of future ages," Isaiah 9:6[6]). *Ewig* in this sense is a word destined to culminate in the Christian belief in eternal bliss (*Seligkeit*). In his writings, Kant plumbs the theological dimension of "eternity," but he employs it in a darker way, to provoke an encounter with the prospect of temporal abyss. In "The End of All

Things,"[7] published a year before "Perpetual Peace," he begins with the image of a dying man hurtling toward eternity; a scene of *Dasein*'s grand exit from *Zeit*:

> It is a common expression, especially when speaking piously, for a dying man to say that he is *passing from time into eternity* (*er gehe aus der Zeit in die Ewigkeit*).[8] In fact, this expression would mean nothing if by "eternity" one were to understand the infinite passage of time; (*wenn hier unter der Ewigkeit eine ins Unendliche fortgehende Zeit verstanden werden sollte*); for then man would surely never emerge from time, but would always only pass from one moment of time to another. Thus, by this expression must be meant the *end of all time* (*ein Ende aller Zeit*) in man's uninterrupted survival, though we nonetheless mean by this duration (of his existence considered as a quantity) a quantity (*duratio noumenon*) that is utterly incomparable to time … This thought contains something a bit horrifying, for it leads to an abyss, from which there is no possible return for whosoever falls into it."[9]

Kant cites Albrecht von Haller's *Imperfect Poems on Eternity*—"With strong arms Eternity/holds fast in that stern place/him who leaves nothing behind"[10]—as if to underscore the paradox of holding fast to nothing. It would appear that Kant was hoping to suspend the correlationist assumption that one can only access knowledge through correlates of thought and being. Pushing the bounds of speculative cognition, Kant imagines supersensuous (*übersinnliche*) beings that "do not stand under conditions of time." *Ewigkeit* in this context becomes weirdly compatible with an End of Days scenario that is not so much a millenarian account of Judgment Day as it is a Houdini-like exercise in eluding the chokehold of Time on Being. The modifier *ewig* operates as a placeholder for the imponderability of eternity, or timelessness, or finitude. It is perhaps this sense of a "final end" that was announced in Kant's earliest reflections on perpetual peace, recorded in an article written by his colleague Johann Schultz in the 1784 issue of *Gothaischen Gelehrte Zeitungen*:

> A favorite idea of Professor Kant is that the final end of the human race is the attainment of the most perfect political constitution, and he wishes that a philosophical historian would undertake to provide us in this respect with a history of humanity, and to show how far humanity in different ages has approached this final end or distanced itself from it, and what is still to be done to attain it.[11]

If we go back to the standard translation of *ewiger Friede* as "perpetual peace," the word peace is framed from the perspective of property (as when a holder of a lease or title lays claim to a property "in perpetuity"). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "perpetual," in a rare usage, can designate "a perpetual position, possession, or right of ownership." To have peace in perpetuity would then be comparable to possessing a right to own some piece of peace; to have a stake in it, as one might in a trust, or testate, or commodity future. Kant's notion of "cosmopolitan right" (*das Weltbürgerrecht*), while it doesn't directly mine this proprietary dimension of the perpetual, contains the phrase *den Völken der Erde*—"the Earth's peoples"—a phrase that implicitly assigns Earth the position of proprietor-in-chief. As Kant says in a much quoted sentence from the essay: "Because a (narrower or wider) community widely prevails among the Earth's peoples; a transgression of rights in one place in the world is felt everywhere."[12] Cosmopolitan right would seem then to be predicated on the Earth's prior unconditional claim to all peoples. The ownership paradigm is thereby converted into one in which the rights of nations and the claims of superstates have been deprivatized.

In each of these examples, what is revealed is the extent to which the meaning of *Friede* shifts according to how one translates *ewig;* that is, whether stress is laid on eternity, everlasting, or perpetual. *Friede* as a freestanding term derives from the Indo-Germanic *fridu*, denoting a "protected, fenced-in area," and cognate with the adjective *frei* (free), insofar as freedom is understood as the state of well-being under protection. The term *Friede* therefore fluctuates between *Einfriedung* (enclosure, hedge) and *Freiheit* (freedom), as well as the *Friedhof* (cemetary). *Friede* ensures well-being and judicial order in the community; to be *zufrieden* is to be calm, content, satisfied. There is likely a connection here with the Hebrew *šālōm*, or with the Arabic *salaam*, whose common root *sa-li-ma* denotes safety, welfare, prosperity, and, more generally, intactness in person or wholeness as thing.

The Anglo-Saxon derivation of peace tells a different story. The English word "peace" comes from the Latin *pax*, and while the Latin term builds on a post-classical semantic reserve encompassing welfare and prosperity, English usage historically privileges the notions of diplomacy inherent in the Latin *pax*, which is the nominalized form of the verb *pacisci* (to strike a bargain, to enter into a contract or covenant). Indebted to the Anglo-Norman and Old French *paix*, the Latin underscores civic relations and freedom from civil unrest. A semantic trail starts to emerge, wending its way through amity, concord, pact or settlement; the enforcement of public order; *securitas*, defined as the protection to a nation or people guaranteed by a monarch; and peaceful relations among fellow citizens. As in Kant's notion of cosmopolitan right, peace is valued as a form of negative liberty—a freedom from conflict, a mode of stasis.[13] Cosmopolitan right is that which settles for a "negative surrogate"—"an enduring, ever-expanding *federation* that prevents war and curbs the tendency of that hostile inclination to defy the law" in lieu of an unattainably "positive idea of a *world republic*."[14]

Peace is related theoretically to the problem of *stasis*, which in Greek paradoxically enough denotes not the absence of war but rather faction, civil war, political standing. As Moses I. Finley in his "Athenian Demagogues" informs us:

> Faction is a conventional English translation of the Greek *stasis*, one of the most remarkable words to be found in any language. Its root sense is "placing," "setting," or "stature," "station." Its range of political meanings can be best illustrated by merely stringing out the definitions to be found in the lexicon: "party," "party formed for seditious purposes," "faction," "sedition," "discord," "division," "dissent," and, finally, a well-attested meaning which the lexicon incomprehensibly omits, namely "civil war" or "revolution." Unlike "demagogue," *stasis* is a very common word in literature, and its connotation is regularly pejorative.

Finley notes too that though stasis refers etymologically only to a position,

> when used in a political context [it] takes on the nastiest overtones. A political position, a partisan position—that is the inescapable implication—is a bad thing, leading to sedition, civil war, and the disruption of the social fabric … Whatever the explanation, it lies not in philology but in Greek society itself.

Finley is referring here to the nature of the Greek polis, which, as Moshe Berent maintains,

> was not a State, but rather what anthropologists call a stateless community … a relatively unstratified egalitarian community characterized by the absence of public coercive apparatuses.… The fear of stasis was directly related to the absence of public means to check seditious factions or to deal with divisions that might be the outcome of having political standings. However, the absence of central authority, social hierarchy and kinship identity, gave room for individual deliberation and made politics indispensable. Thus the Greeks are said to have invented politics in an ethical mode, that is, in a mode that seeks to curb "political standings" through morality, education and self-restraint.[15]

Concentrating on the Greek word "stasis" in its root signification *sta-* (from *histánai*, or to make stand), we can begin to grasp how stasis underscores the *stand*-off between equal factions that produces equilibrium or, in political terms, peace. Spinoza's *Political Treatise* (1677) stipulated the necessity of having two equilibrated commonwealths (or "contracting powers") as a precondition of the right to a lasting peace. And in an update of this Spinozist model, Curtis Allen ascertains that in order to perpetuate, peace must achieve "an *absolute zero* endothermic reaction to conflict, the absolute excess of lack, nullified freedom."[16] We could take this zero-conflict absolute of nullified freedom as a fancy way of saying death, but it could be alternately construed as an unending contest of affects and intensities outside the law (TIQQUN's definition of "communism" in its *Introduction to Civil War* [2010]); as a cosmopolitical notion of the limit, defined (as Peter

Szendy would have it) not by the space of truce between wars but by a regulatory idea that assumes the form of a perpetually receding horizon-line; and as a philosophical keyword denoting an *eternity* of translations for the word "peace" in the world's languages.[17]

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1 See Michael C. Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security*, London: Routledge, 2007.

2 John T. Hamilton, *Security: Politics, Humanity, and the Philology of Care*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013, 9, 20–1 and 13.

3 "*Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf*."

4 Ulrich Beck's risk theory is flawed, according to Bruno Latour, because for him, "Issues of war and peace involve only humans, each endowed with the same psychology, each knowing a language translatable into every other language, and each possessed of only slightly contradictory representations of what-there-is." Bruno Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmpolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck," *Common Knowledge* 10: 31, Fall 2004, 454. Latour faults Beckian peace terms for obscuring what Isabelle Stenghers calls "the malady of tolerance": "Peace settlements are not, as Stengers emphasizes, between men of good will who have left their gods (their narrow attachments) behind but between men of ill will possessed by super- and sub-humans of ill will. A settlement reached too soon is, realistically, a grave danger. Stengers might even add that the longer it takes to reach agreement, the better (hence her daring to utter the phrase 'malady of tolerance.'" Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitiques*, vol. 7, *Pour en finir avec la tolerance*, Paris: La Découverte: 1997, 456.

5 *Projet pour rendre la paix perpetuelle en Europe*.

6 See King James Bible, Isaiah 9:6: "The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

7 "*Das Ende aller Dinge*"

8 Immanuel Kant, "Das Ende aller Dinge" (1794) in *Gesammelte Schriften, Akademie Ausgabe*, 23 vols (Berlin: Reimer/de Gruyter, 1900ff.), 8: 327 [The End of All Things," in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey Indianopolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1983, 93.

9 Immanuel Kant, "The End of All Things," in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1983, 93.

10 "*Ihn aber hält am emsten Orte Der nichts zurücke lässt Die Ewigkeit mit starken Armen fest*"

11 Underscoring the paradox of holding fast to nothing: Albrecht von Haller, *Unvollkommenes Gedicht über die Ewigkeit*, 1736, as cited by Kant, "End of All Things," 93; Kant, "End of All Things," 93; as cited by Allen W. Wood in his essay "Kant's Project for Perpetual Peace," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, 74.

12 Kant, "The End of All Things," 119.

13 ibid., 117–18.

14 For a discussion of Kant's turn to the "negative surrogate" to the world republic (on realist grounds that it would conflict with conventional notions of the right of nations or the idea of state sovereignty), see Helga Varden, "International and Cosmopolitan Political Obligations," in *Coercion and the State*, ed. David A. Reidy and Walter J. Riker, New York: Springer, 2008, 247–50.

15 Moses I. Finley, "Athenian Demagogues," in *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, Mason Welch Gross Lectureship Series, 1985, 44, 45; Moshe Berent, "Stasis, or the Greek Invention of Politics," in *History of Political Thought* 19: 3, 1998, 331.

16 Curtis Allen, "Spinoza and the Dynamics of Political Reposition and Disposition." curtisallensite.com.

17 "Car la paix selon Kant, la véritable paix qui ne serait donc pas qu'une simple trêve entre deux guerres, la paix *perpétuelle* est en effet une idée régulatrice qui ne fait que reculer à l'horizon à mesure qu'on croit s'en approacher, comme si elle ne pouvait être pensée *qu'à la limite*." Peter Szendy, *Kant chez les extraterrestres: Philosofictions cosmopolitiques*, Paris: Minuit, 2011, 11.

III

Keywords 3: "Fado" and "Saudade"

Samuel Weber, in focusing on how the suffix *barkeit*—which he translates into English as "abilities"—operates in Walter Benjamin's pivotal concepts of *ubersetz-barkeit* (translatability), *reproduzierbarkeit* (reproducibility), and *kritisier-barkeit* (criticizability), provides a crucial framework for thinking about untranslatability. In the spirit of the *barkeit* series, I would add *unübersetz-barkeit* to refer to that which impedes translational fluency yet enables critical faculties nonetheless. One of the interesting functions such a notion can perform is to illuminate how a nationally marked Untranslatable (a philosophical mythology, in Barthes' sense; as in France, the mythology of liberty; in the United States, the mythology of happiness; and in Germany, the mythology of *sehnsucht*) operates as a bête noire: a philosophical fetish that serves as a rallying point of national pride or slips into becoming a cultural marketing device or touristic cliché. Two Portuguese Untranslatables, *fado* (melancholia, pleasure, ecstasy) and *saudade* (nostalgia, moral ambiguity), serve as cases because they exemplify the double function of mythmaking and critical distancing that distinguishes the Untranslatable's abilities. Also, by representing a Portuguese contribution to the history of philosophy, they interrupt the storyline in a history of philosophy that leads from Greece, to France, to Germany to Great Britain. Saudade and fado may thus be seen to challenge *Eurocentrism within Europe*, a Eurocentrism that discriminates against smaller nations by favoring critical lexicons that hail from dominant ones. If there is now general recognition that we need to redress the lack of non-European philosophy in the history of philosophy, less attention has been paid to including philosophical lexicons hailing from smaller European cultures and languages. So, consider this chapter an argument for making fado and saudade "-abled" terms of comparative philosophy and literary criticism. Finally, both terms demonstrate the complexity of national tropes in the context of new regionalisms that seek to strategically position a country like Portugal as a global player. In this case, fado and saudade lend symbolic capital to an oceanic regionalism drawing on myths of Atlantism and the Mediterranean, and nourish the construct of a greater transcontinental Lusofonia that binds the populations of Lusophone, Africa, and South America—subjects of colonialism, diaspora, and immigration—to a common Portugueseness. Bela Felman-Bianco has tracked the revival of saudade, first in the wake of the Socialist Revolution of 1974, next in the 1990s. Saudade, she maintains, shores up a "community of feelings" that "represents the new face of the Portuguese empire in times of economic globalization" and consolidates "a conciliatory nationalist ideology, defended by President Mario Soares and segments of the Socialist Party, laying stress on the incorporation of the former Atlantic project into the new European nation project." Consquently, the recreation of Portuguese national culture has rested on imperialism. The politics of high culture thus aligned with the politics of global investment foments in her view a "revived Atlantic universal vocation" that deflects attention to the politics of anti-immigration and racial/cultural division.[1] These globalist "-abilities" are, in a sense the political *liabilities* of fado and saudade's untranslatable aesthetic and philosophical properties.

Gregory Rabassa, a veteran translator of Spanish and Portuguese literature into English, illuminates the untranslatability of fado and saudade in *Fado Alexandrino*, a novel written in notoriously difficult prose by the Portuguese author António Lobo Antunes:

> The *fado* is the great popular song of Portugal. The word is said to come from the same root as fate and the songs, most especially when sung by the great Amália Rodrigues, inevitably invoke that longing or nostalgia or whatever that the Portuguese and Brazilians call *saudade* … I am still puzzled by the *alexandrino*. I can't see where the iambic pentameter fits in, nor can I see any connection with Lawrence Durrell's work. My best thought is that António is taking the *fado*, the raw material of his tale, and making it classical in the mode of French alexandrines.

Fado and saudade emerge as semantic national monuments; heritage markers of Portuguese's belatedness as a national language, baroque periodicity, intellectual mannerism, and splenetic affect. In an article on Portuguese in the *Vocabulaire*, Fernando Santoro treats fado as a name for human finitude, a measure of the maximal serving of possibilities allotted people during their time on earth. Fado, in Santoro's view, refers to the traumatized state of the Portuguese language after it was hived off into multiple idiomatic forms and dispersed across five continents. He defers to Fernando Pessoa's characterization of fado as an "intervallic episode"; a state of spiritual unmooring in the wake of God's abandonment of the Portuguese people and in advance of their return to faith.[2]

This intervallic spacing is worked into the narrative fabric of *Fado Alexandrino* through historical crosscutting, the sliding of personal pronouns between "I" and "he," and the staging of psychic disorientation. Consider, for example, the scene in which the lieutenant colonel visits his ailing wife in the hospital only to discover that her dead body has been mysteriously whisked away and replaced by that of another sick person. He thought,

> There's got to be some mistake, no office ever functions properly in Portugal, they mix up names, they mix up dates, they mix up lives, they mix up children in maternity wards, what else can I say? What's the ward? [he asked.] There isn't any ward, the diabetic answered listlessly, a patient came in today and took the deceased's place.[3]

The cliché of bureaucratic resignation—"no office ever functions properly in Portugal"—situates fado in relation to existential incomprehension: How do the living go missing? What is the ward?

In yet another passage, fado may be identified with post-traumatic stress disorder. After the lieutenant returns from Africa, he finds that, like a stroke victim, he must recover language and memory:

> Syllable by syllable, the forgotten vocabulary that they already know: that picture, that knickknack, that painting, that door over there, as if the things lacked at the same time possessed a past, painfully reconstructed in a kind of difficult archeology of the emotions.[4]

Similarly, the Marxist communications officer, picked up and tortured for revolutionary activity, suffers from amnesiac holes in his visual field: "Like a group without faces, or an unfinished drawing, or those games with numbered dots that you have to connect in order to make a figure, a profile, a landscape."[5] The traumatic interval, marked as memory loss and information deficit in these barely cognized portraits and landscapes, is also acoustically registered. As the Estado Novo starts to collapse and the radio announcer blares out "government, democracy, freedom," a panicked old-timer, intuiting that "everything had taken the shape of a strange nightmare for him, a great big lie, the world against him all of a sudden, a flood, a shipwreck, a disaster, a tremendous threat," digs his asthma spray tube into his gums to make

the sound *pffffft, pffffft, pffffft*.[6] An acoustic Untranslatable, pffffft sounds out the fado of the self-estranged colonial subject. The same idea is transmitted when speech is distorted by technology as the army delivers orders over the telephone to a rebel lieutenant colonel. "Silence and then squealing again, a kind of cooing, the mechanical coughing of a while back, the wires crackling, the nuts and bolts dissolving in a prolix mush of sounds."[7] After listening to the general tell him about the power of the navy, its guns aimed at Lisbon, the lieutenant replies: "It isn't worth wasting your Latin lesson on me, I'm not going to obey any of the orders you've given me."[8] Here, Latin, as the dead language par excellence, becomes the simile of choice for describing the babble of government military commands at the onset of the revolution.

Fado Alexandrino is a work about fado—defined thematically with reference to postcolonial trauma and dislocation and aesthetically by what we have called, following Pessoa, intervallic technique, by which we refer to eruptions of untranslatability registered as unintelligible sounds, evacuated words, emptied images and incomprehensible interpellations. In Lobo Antunes's *The Return of the Caravels*, we could say that it is the related concept of saudade that works as a nodal system, opening up critical approaches for literary theory and philosophy alike.

Antunes's titles are places where the limits of translation are especially manifest. In *The Return of the Caravels*—*As Naus* in Portuguese—what we find is the insertion of "caravel" where there was no such reference in the original title. Rabassa possibly derived the English title from the phrase *le retour des caravelles* chosen for the French translation. "Caravel," carries specific associations with Portugal's maritime prowess and refers to a small, flexible vessel invented around the time that Portuguese maritime exploits in West Africa and the Atlantic Ocean took off in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Distinguished by its lateen sails, which added speed, the caravel became the prototype for the larger-scaled *caravela redonda*, which were fighting ships known as *Portuguese Man o'War* deployed to patrol Portugal's trade corridors to Brazil and the East Indies. The caravel represented the mariner's navigational skill matched to advanced technologies of ship building. The galleon *São João Baptista* nicknamed "Botafogo"—whose 1552 shipwreck was commemorated in Luís Vaz de Camões's account of Vasco da Gama's voyage to India in the epic *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusíads*)—was just this kind of model warcraft machine. As Margaret Cohen notes in *The Novel and the Sea*, such ships and their mariners inspired the genre of the "craft romance." "Long after craft disappeared," she writes, "the icons of maritime modernity would return to figure practices at the frontier of capitalist risk."

In Antunes's novel, the caravel is no longer just the proto-capitalist transporter of slaves and *fétissos* nor is it the contemporary mover of diamonds and petroleum. It emerges as a figure of haunted postcolonial modernity typified by the *retornados*, those legions of settler-colonials dispatched by FRELIMO, UNITA, and a host of other insurrectional groups that ensured the belated end of Portugal's African empire. Helena Carvalhão Buescu (commenting on Lobos Antunes's reworking of *The Lusíads*) emphasizes the *retornado*'s territorial dislocation: "A strange condition, in which a territory only seems possible if viewed from *another* territory, which is also the territory of the other."[9] Like the *retornado* who becomes a shadow of his former self when relocated to Portugal, the caravel stands as a hollowed-out specter of former imperial glory: "In Africa, strewn with stone markers, the remains of caravels, and the armor of dead conquerors, screech owls plant themselves in the middle of clearings and let the cars run over them …"[10] Then, we have Diogo Cão, the water company inspector, who spends his days tracking the Tagus nymphs and fantasizing in his alcoholic haze that he is Henry the Navigator. In one scene, he is transmogrified into a caravel: each part of the ship's technology becomes an extension of his own heaving anatomy as he achieves sexual climax with his prostitute-caretaker. Most often, the caravel's association with the backward, longing gaze of the *retornado* makes it a trigger of saudade:

> The poet pictured a horde of consumptives in hospital uniforms, crouching in the midst of dunes, waiting for a laughable monarch who would rise up out of the waters accompanied by his defeated army. Ever since he'd returned from Africa, even the flow of time had seemed absurd to him, and he still hadn't got used to the slow quince-jelly summer sunsets or the lack of grass with its avid insect rustle, and he would move about the city as if on a planet created by the mechanics of imagination, keeping informed through items in the newspapers that were as enigmatic as the singing of whales.[11]

Seaborne hallucinations bind this vision of historical anachronism and psychic disorientation to the condition commonly called fugue, *wandertrieb*, or traveler's disease. The philosopher Ian Hacking describes it nosologically, linking it to multiple personality disorder in his *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (1995) and *Mad Travellers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illness* (1998). Hacking offers the Anglo-analytic correlative (grounded in the philosophy of mind and cognitive psychology) to the continental philosophy of saudade, whose kindred terms in other European languages include: *κηδα* (negligence) in Greek; *acidia* (listlessness, torpor, depression) and *desiderium* (yearning) in Latin; *nostalgie* (nostalgia) in French; *sehnsucht* (longing) in German; *soledad* (loneliness) in Spanish; *anyoransa* (to find less) in Catalan; *kaiho* (involuntary solitude) in Finnish; *hiraeth* (homesickness tinged with grief) in Welsh; *mall* (sadness mixed with laughter) in Albanian; *weltschmerz* (sorrow of the world) in German; spleen (in the Baudelairean sense of ennui) in English; and *melancholia* (in the Freudian sense of a pathological incorporation of the object of mourning) in Greek.

In his entry on "saudade" for the *Vocabulaire*, Santoro gives it the run of languages, disciplines and modalities of existence:

> The object that produces *saudade* determines in each case an existential, cultural, aesthetic, religious, metaphysical position (the *saudades* for a lover, a country, a time, this or that idea …); inversely, everything, from literature to religion and politics, is capable of an interpretation modulated by *saudade*. This is the case for the diverse philosophies, in their differences of period and language: from Plato's theory of the desire for the Beautiful through reminiscence of its idea to the transcendence of metaphysics by a return to the pre-Socratic origins of thought, the whole history of philosophy can be woven and deconstructed in the shadow of this delectable melancholic passion.[12]

While saudade here risks becoming overly capacious, it recuperates specificity in cross-literary contexts. Arthur Rimbaud's "The Drunken Boat" (1871) affords an early case of French saudade, with all the crucial elements: a sea voyage, traveler's disease, and a concatenation of feelings ranging from erotic bliss, to blues, to mortal bitterness. In Louise Varèse translation (1952):

> And since then I've been bathing in the Poem
> Of star-infused and milky Sea,
> Devouring the azure greens, where, flotsam pale,
> A brooding corpse as times drifts by;
>
> Where, dyeing suddenly the blue,
> Rhythms delirious and slow in the *blaze of day*,
> *Stronger than alcohol*, vaster than your lyres,
> Ferment the bitter reds of love![13]

In Samuel Beckett translation (mid-1930s):

> Thenceforward, fused in the poem, milk of stars,
> Of the sea, I coiled through deeps of cloudless green,

Where, dimly, they come swaying down,
Rapt and sad, singly, the drowned;

Where, under *sky's haemorrhage*, slowly tossing
In thuds of fever, *arch-alcohol* of song,
Pumping over the blues in sudden stains,
The bitter redness of love ferment.[14]
[My italics.]

Samuel Beckett translated the poem at an early stage in his career (though it was only published years later in 1976). His choice of "sky's haemorrhage" for "rutilements du jour" (rendered in Louise Varèse's version as "blaze of day") and his curious bricolaged term "arch-alcohol" for "plus fortes que l'alcool" (stronger than alcohol) have been sharply criticized as examples of aberrant translation. But we could say that Beckett was alive to the *saudade-effect* and wanted to communicate its Rimbaldian deregulation of the senses through the practice of *translating untranslatably;* by which I mean using a kind of over-translation that embraces wild infidelity to the original and pushes the envelope of translatability.

Identifying saudade with the full "-abilities" of untranslatability, instead of reserving it for restricted use as the name of a Portuguese Untranslatable, assigns the term a special critical function in comparative literature. It becomes a term for translation-wobble—the difficulty encountered by both writers and their translators in rendering passages that express complexes of emotion. Consider, for example, a famous passage in *Madame Bovary* in which Flaubert grappled with the literary pitfalls of verbalizing longing, or German romantic *Sehnsucht*. Rodolphe, growing tired of Emma, hears her wild declarations of passion as clichés uttered countless times before by his ex-mistresses:

> On en devait rabattre, pensait-il, les discours exagérés cachant les affections médiocres: comme si la plénitude de l'âme ne débordait pas quelquefois par les métaphores les plus vides, puisque personne, jamais, ne peut donner l'exact mesure de ses besoins, ni de ses conceptions ni de ses douleurs, et que la parole humaine est comme un chaudron fêlé où nous battons des mélodies à faire danser les ours, quand on voudrait attendrir les étoiles.

In Lydia Davis's translation:

> One had to discount, he thought, exaggerated speeches that concealed mediocre affections; as if the fullness of the soul did not sometimes overflow in the emptiest of metaphors, since none of us can ever express the exact measure of our needs, or our ideas, or our sorrows, and human speech is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, when we long to move the stars to pity.

The cracked kettle (*chaudron fêlé*) resembles the "cracked bell" (*la cloche fêlée*) of Baudelaire's spleen-poem, which contains the saudade-steeped line: "Moi, mon âme est fêlée, et lorsqu'en ses ennuis …" (adroitly rendered in English by Edna St. Vincent Millay as "My soul is cracked across by care"). The allusion to crack-up stands out against the treacly finale in the Flaubert extract: "When we long to move the stars to pity." This sentimental phrase might have been less cloying if the translator had opted for a Beckett-style aberrant translation: "As when one tenderizes the stars," thereby producing the fancifully strong metaphor: "My soul is tenderized meat!" Such a translation, monstrous though it may be, seems in keeping with the text if one follows Rivka Galchen's remarks on Lydia Davis's new translation of *Madame Bovary*. She argues that Flaubert was confronting the

> problem of trying to find a noncanned way to talk about the fullness of the human soul that might be expressed *even* in canned speech and by the plight of Davis, who, in order to be true to the even-more-impossible-than-usual-to-translate-faithfully passage, has to similarly make her way through expressions received and not, and a language that needs to find something lyrical through use of its clunkier words."[15]

Galchen articulates what might be thought of as the *saudade-syndrome*, whereby one struggles, at one and the same time, to signify the fullness of the human soul *and* preserve critical distance from its hackneyed expression.

The saudade-syndrome in comparative literature has a lot of travel in it despite being a local national genre. Antonio Tabucchi, well-known as a writer who channels Fernando Pessoa, is one who has explicitly "saudadized" Italian literature. Stories like "The Backwards Game" (a gloss of Pessoa's poem "The Tobacco Shop"), "The Last Three Days of Fernando Pessoa," and "Dream of Fernando Pessoa, Poet and Pretender" are steeped in Pessoan irreality, fleetingness, disorientation and ironic metaphysics.[16] *Requiem: A Hallucination* (1991), Tabucchi's only novel written in Portuguese, stages a meeting with a Pessoa-like character referred to as "the Guest."[17] It is set up as both a homage to and parody of Pessoan "disquiet" as well as an exercise in what he calls the "re-elaboration of mourning" based on the translation of saudade into a narrative form of spectral recall. The spectral extends to the way in which Italian haunts Tabucchi's Portuguese. "Eu," the novel's narrator, is an Italian who speaks Portuguese fluently but preserves traces of his status as a non-native speaker (he overuses, for example, the Portuguese conditional rather than the more-common imperfect tense). By contrast, when the Portuguese characters speak, they drop this tic and show off the author's mastery of Portuguese by brandishing idioms and insider phrases. The contrast between "Portugueses" creates a slightly seasick style reinforcing saudade as a trope of maritime linguistic dislocation.

Tracking saudade as a literary Untranslatable, one soon encounters its Turkish correlative *hüzün*, associated by Orhan Pamuk with a sense of "worldly failure, listlessness, and spiritual suffering," with the postcolonial melancholia of Istanbul after the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, and with a cluster of feelings that, in Pamuk's writing, approximate something Proustian: "Offering no clarity, veiling reality instead, hüzün brings us comfort, softening the view like the condensation on a window when a teakettle has been spouting steam on a winter's day." Given their shared semantic territory, it is likely that saudade originally derived from hüzün, which passed through the Portuguese-Arabic inheritance. Hüzün, writes Pamuk,

> has an Arabic root; when it appears in the Koran (as *huzn* in two verses and *hazen* in three others) it means much the same thing as the contemporary Turkish word. The Prophet Muhammad referred to the year in which he lost both his wife Hatice and his uncle, Ebu Talip, as *Senettul huzn, the year of melancholy;* this confirms that the word is meant to convey a feeling of deep spiritual loss.[18]

For Pamuk, *hüzün*'s abilities as a literary Untranslatable are only enhanced in philosophy:

> But if *hüzün* begins its life as a word for loss and the spiritual agony and grief attending it, my own readings indicate a small philosophical fault line developing over the next few centuries of Islamic history. With time, we see the emergence of two very different *hüzüns*, each evoking a distinct philosophical tradition.

The first refers to when "we have invested too much in worldly pleasures and material gain." The second meaning arises out of Sufi mysticism, "the spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close enough to Allah, because we cannot do enough for Allah in this world." Saudade is similarly drawn into philosophical orbit by Santoro, who maintains that it

> became, for philosophical speculation, an experience of the human condition that was particularly suitable for expressing its relationship to

> temporality, finitude, and the infinite … Pleasure and anxiety: the result is a displaced melancholic state that aspires to move beyond the finitude of the moment and the errancy of distance.

The identification of saudade as a philosophy of transfinitude gains further traction when its etymology is fully mined. According to John T. Hamilton's expert digest:

> The Latin noun *solitas*, the state of being alone or set apart, is understood as imposing distance from what is longed for and therefore the desire to overcome that distance. Latin vocabulary provides many examples that emphasize the basic senses of apartness and detachment implicit in the prefix *sē*-and the adjective *solus*, for example: *secessio* "withdrawal, separation" (< *se* + *cedo*, "go, move"); *secretus* "that which has been set aside or put away" (< *se* + *cerno*, "distinguish, mark off"); *seductio* "a leading or drawing aside" (< *se* + *duco*, "lead"); and *separatio* "a setting apart" (< *se* + *paro*, "prepare, arrange, order"). To be *sober* means to be removed from wine (< *se* + *ebrius*, "sated with drink, drunk"); and to be sluggish (*socors*) is to be without spirit (< *se* + cor, "heart"). In the grammatical economy of the prepositional phrase, we could say that the ablative object governed by *se* has been removed, taken from one mental or physical place and put somewhere else.
>
> Analogous to the prefix *se* is the preposition *sine* (without), which also governs the ablative. The earlier adverbial sense of *sine* reaches back to the Indo-European root **s(u) (d/n)* "by itself, without," which inscribes the Latin *sine* morpheme into an entire group of Indo-European terms denoting "severance" or "removal," including Old Indic *sanutár* "far away, off to the side," Greek *aneu* "without," and even expressions for the number *nine*, which in the Indo-European decimal system signifies "one taken away." The link to the ablative already introduces a removal or withdrawal *from*, insofar as the primary force of the ablative case is one of separation (*ablativus* < *ablatus* "taken from"), which is generally used to express syntactic relations of privation, source, cause, agency or comparison. (The syntagma *sine cura* recalls *secur*a, which vividly conjures a scene in which *care* (*cura*) has been taken away.) In addition to *sine*, this family of words gives us the Latin *vanus* ("empty"), which is cognate not only with the German *ohne* "without" but also with the noun *Wahn*—the term that denotes a mental "delusion," but alludes more precisely to being "empty in mind," to suffering a mental condition in which reason has been "taken away" or "removed." Moreover, in German, the suffix *—fried* may denote "removal or *freedom* from" as in the name Richard Wagner selected for his residence in Bayreuth: *Wahnfried*, a kaleidoscopic terminus that not only pays homage to the German author of the Tristan legend (Gottfried von Strassburg), but also evokes "freedom or peaceful protection from delusion [*Wahn*]," or, given the analysis above: a dizzying "removal from removal."
>
> Finally, the Gothic *sundro* "alone" yields the German *sondern*—both the conjunction ("but rather") and the verb ("to separate")—as well as the old preposition *sonder* ("without"), which today is still heard in some particular expressions like *sonder Zahl* (for *zahllos* "countless") and *sondergleichen* ("unparalleled"). In English, we have the adverb *asunder* as well as the adjective *sundry*, which stems directly from the Old English *syndrig* ("private, separate").[19]

Philology provides material support for interpreting saudade as a philosophy of transfinitude: that is to say, as a theory of spacing and separation (the interstices between life and death); of severance from this world; of the relinquishment of metaphysical security; of an emptying out of the present; of preparation for transportation to an unknown elsewhere; and of altered mental states. "Trans" and "trance" share the same root: the Latin *transīre*—*trans* (across, over) plus *ire* (to go)—which carries the meanings of to cross and to transit and transition but also to die, in the sense of to go over to the other side of life, or to pass away, to cease. The French *transe*, meaning to fright, to swoon, and *transir*, meaning to shiver or experience chill, to carry the mortal freeze of the death drive into registers of somatic tremor. Transfinitude subsumes, on the one hand, the religious meaning of *translatio* (to be translated, is to ascend to heaven without dying; the Nicene Fathers discuss the translation of bishops from one see to another; and, for the medievals, sacred relics are translated in being moved) and on the other, Freud's theories of thought transference, telepathy, and occultism.[20]

Transfinitude is moreover a key concept in the recent philosophies of speculative materialism and speculative realism, both of which have been characterized by their interest in thought-experiments indifferent to anthropocentric consciousness. Here, we are dealing with a philosophy concerned to tackle the correlationist problem, that of how to uncouple thinking from being. Correlationism argues that we can only access knowledge through correlates of thought and being. What lies beyond this correlation is unknowable, barred access. It was Hermann Cohen, following Salomon Maimon, who argued that the given is produced by infinitesimals of sensation, capable of rationalization. Cognition is thus understood as an imperative directed toward an infinite, with God standing in for the cognitive summa toward which human reason strives. Quentin Meillassoux takes issue with this Kantian, reason-based model of cognitive finitude; he challenges the claim that conceivable possibilities constitute a totality, and contests "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other." Using terms like "ancestrality," or the "arche-fossil," in his 2008 book *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, he poses the question: "How are we to understand the meaning of scientific statements about a manifestation of the world which is supposed to be anterior to any human form of the relation to the world?" Meillassoux contends that there are "properties of time that are indifferent to our existence," and proposes a conception of the ontical that refers to "an entity which is essentially contingent, yet capable of existing in a world devoid of humanity—regardless of whether this entity is a world, a law, or an object." For Meillassoux, the transfinite denotes a "temporality delivered from real necessity"; a "detotalization of number" (the totality of the thinkable); and an absolute outside or elsewhere:

> For it could be that contemporary philosophers have lost the *great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which was not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is, existing in itself regardless of whether we are thinking of it or not; that outside which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory—of being entirely elsewhere.[21]

In a complementary vein, Graham Harman in his book *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (2005) offers a version of the anticorrelationist argument that targets human-centered phenomenology:

> Husserl had already noticed that intentional objects are never directly accessible. But objectless sensuality is also not directly accessible, so that we find ourselves immersed in something midway between the two. Levinas and Merleau-Ponty paid special attention to this ether of qualities without objects in which humans forever bathe. Lingis … with his discussion of levels, hinted at a certain realist twist to carnal phenomenology; the level is not something permanently fixed between humans and world, but there are varying levels within the world. Human consciousness is not what establishes these levels, as if it alone introduced a sensual medium into the world—instead, it simply navigates the levels like a freelance submarine or zeppelin. In this way, the fleshly medium of loose qualities is placed everywhere in the world. It is allowed to spread between all of the objects of the world rather than being confined to the single tear-jerking rift that separates people from all that is not people.

And, in a subsequent book, *Prince of Networks*, which explicates and builds on the work of Bruno Latour, Harman imagines a continuum in which "all entities are on the same ontological footing: everything is an object, whether it be a mailbox, electromagnetic radiation, curved spacetime, the Commonwealth of Nations, or a propositional attitude; all things, whether physical or fictional, are equally objects." This pan-psychism becomes part of a discipline he calls speculative psychology, dedicated to investigating the "cosmic layers of psyche" and to "ferreting out the specific psychic reality of earthworms, dust, armies, chalk, and stone." Harman's pan-psychic, object-oriented ontology finds its literary complement in Italo Calvino's short fictions in *Le cosmicomiche* (*Cosmicomics*, in William Weaver's English translation). In "The Spiral," for example, we enter the "consciousness" of a mollusk. Qualities and sensual mediums detach from each other and recombine: stripings and forms exist "independently of any relationship to visibility"; thoughts are severed from brains, vibrations find kindred vibrations, and "distinct individualities" become "shared relations … an indiscriminate abandon, slapdash, a kind of—who's next?—collective ecstasy?"[22] This vitalist fantasia in seawater makes for an interesting contrast with the saudade-infused articulations of trans-finitude prevalent in Pessoa's *Livro do Desassossego* and which tend toward existential phenomenology:

> But there's something else … In these languid and empty hours, a sadness felt by my entire being rises from my soul to my mind—a bitter

> awareness that everything is a sensation of mine and at the same time something external, something not in my power to change. Ah, how often my own dreams have raised up before me as things, not to replace reality but to declare themselves its equals, in so far as I scorn them and they exist apart from me, like the tram now turning the corner of the end of the street.[23]

At first reading, the emphasis on "my entire being" would seem to affirm a humanist focus that sits at a far remove from Harman's object ontology or Calvino's experiment in thinking as a mollusk. Yet, if we look more closely, Pessoa's parallel reality posits an equalized "relationality" (*seus pares*) among self, dream, and tram that approaches Harman, especially to Harman's appropriation of A. N. Whitehead's process philosophy, in which (as the editors of *The Speculative Turn* put it) "the relation between human and world is merely a special case of any relation at all."[24]

In treating saudade as another name for trans- or postfinitude, I have consciously shifted from its local usage as a term connoting human sentiment, idealism and religious transcendence to an ascription of materialist metaphysics. Saudade is translated, then, in the image of a trans-function that marshals pathetic fallacies in order to think like an object. The concern has been not to erase saudade's rich aesthetic history in comparative literature (where it resonates fully with representations of maritime melancholia, fugue, or the untranslatability of longing into language) but rather to extend its "–abilities" as a philosophical Untranslatable.

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1 Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's –abilities*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008; Bela Feldman-Bianco, "Empire, Postcoloniality and Diasporas: The Portuguese Case," Papers: Revista de sociologia 85, June 2007, 44; Feldman-Bianco, "The State, Saudade and the Dialectics of Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization" Coimbra, Portugal: CES Office, 1995, 49, 51; "revived Atlantic universal vocation": ibid., 52, 54.

2 Gregory Rabassa, *If This Be Treason*, New York: New Directions, 2005, 143; Fernando Santoro, "Portuguais," in *Vocabulaire*, 969.

3 English translation: António Lobos Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, trans. Gregory Rabassa, New York: Grove Press, 1990, 21. (Original Portuguese text: "Lamento informá-lo, meu caro amigo, mas a sua esposa faleceu e o corpo abandonou já o Instituto, a família removeu-o logo após a autópsia, conforme anotação aqui anexa. Pensou Deve ser engano de certeza, nunca nenhuma secretaria funcionou bem em Portugal, trocam os nomes, trocam as datas, trocam as vidas, trocam os filhos nas maternidades, quanto mais. Qual é o serviço?, perguntou ele. Não há servço nenhum, respondeu preguiçosamente o diabético, entrou hoje uma doente para o lugar da finada." António Lobo Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, Lisbon: Publicações dom Quixote, 1983, 38.

4 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 38. (Original Portuguese text: "Sílaba a sílaba o esquecido vocabulário que já sabem; este quadro, este bibelot, esta pintura, aquela porta, como se as coisas carecessem e possuíssem ao mesmo tempo um passado, penosamente reconstituído numa espécie de arqueologia difícil das emoções." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 60.)

5 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 123. (Original Portuguese text: "Como um retrato de grupo sem caras, ou um desenho incompleto, ou aqueles jogos de pontinhos numerados que é necessário unir para formar um boneco, um perfil, uma paisagem." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 181.)

6 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 121. (Original Portuguese text: "Porque tudo se lhe afigurava um pesadelo esquisito, uma mentira formidável, o mundo de repente ao contrario, um dilúvio, um naufrágio, um cataclismo…" Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 220–1.)

7 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 169. (Original Portuguese text: "Um silêncio e depois de novo guinchos, uma espécie de arrulhos, a tosse mecânica de á pouco, os fios a crepitarem, chapas e parafusos dissolvidos numa papa prolixa de sons." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 246.)

8 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 170. (Original Portuguese text: "Não merece a pena gastar o seu latim comigo, não vou cumprir nenhuma das ordens que me deu." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 247.)

9 Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010, 15–16, 66; Helena Carvalhão Buescu, "Time Displaced: Post-Colonial Experience in António Lobo Antunes," *European Review* 13: 2, April/May 2005, 262.

10 António Lobo Antunes, *The Return of the Caravels*, trans. Gregory Rabassa, New York: Grove Press, 2002, 16…(Original Portuguese text: "Em Africa, semeada de padrões, de destroços de caravela e de armaduras de conquistadores finados, os mochos plantavam-se no centro das picadas e deixavam que os carros os astropelassem." António Lobo Antunes, *As naus*, Lisboa: Publicações dom Quixote/Círculo de Leitores, 1988, 28.)

11 Ibid., 203. (Original Portuguese text: "O poeta imaginou uma horda de tísicos em uniforme hospitalar, acocorados na neblina das dunas, à espera de um monarca risível que se elevaria das águas na companhia do seu exército vencido. Desde que regressara de Africa que até o fluir do tempo se lhe afigurava absurdo, e não se conformara ainda com os demorados crepúsculos de calda de marmelo do verão, a ausência de capim e o seu restolhar ávido de insectos, e movia-se na cidade como num planeta criado pelo mecanismo da imaginação, informado por notícias de jornal tão enigmáticas como arrulhos de baleia." Antunes, *As naus*, 240.)

12 Fernando Santoro, "Saudade," in *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, trans. Steven Rendall, 1117.

13 Louise Varèse, "The Drunken Boat," in *A Season in Hell and The Drunken Boat*, 95. (Original French text: "Et, dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le poème / De la Mer infusé d'astres et lactescent / Dévorant les azurs verts où, flottaison blême / Et ravie, un noyé pensif, parfois, descend; / Où, teignant tout à coup les bleuités, délires / Et rythmes lents sous les rutilements du jour, / Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que vos lyres." Arthur Rimbaud, "Le bateau ivre," in *A Season in Hell and The Drunken Boat*, trans. Louise Varèse, New York: New Directions, 1961, 9).

14 Samuel Beckett, *Drunken Boat*, Reading, UK: Whiteknights, 1976, 27.

15 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1986, 259; Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Lydia Davis, New York: Viking, 2010, 167; "When we long to move the stars to pity." ("Quand on voudrait attendrir les étoiles."); Rivka Galchen, "*Madame Bovary*, c'est toi!" *Bookforum* 17: 5, February/March 2011, 23.

16 In "The Tobacco Shop," Pessoa speaks of "A liberation from all speculation/And an awareness that metaphysics is a consquence of not feeling very well."

17 Antonio Tabucchi, *Requiem: A Hallucination*, trans. Margaret Jull Costa, New York: New Directions, 2002.

18 Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, 90.

19 Ibid., 90; ibid., 90; ibid., 90; Santoro, "Saudade," 1115; "the Latin noun *solitas* …": John T. Hamilton, email to me, February 14, 2011.

20 Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 38.

21 Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier, London: Continuum, 2008, 5, 112, 121, 127, 101, 103 and 7.

22 Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*, Peru, IL: Carus, 2005, 91; Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, Melbourne: re-press, 2009, 213; Italo Calvino, *Cosmicomics*, trans. William Weaver, London: Harcourt, 1968, 141, 142, and 145, respectively.

23 Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. Richard Zenith, London: Penguin, 2001, 14. (Original Portuguese text: "Mas há mais alguma coisa … Nessas horas lentas e vazias, sobe-me da alma à mente uma tristeza de todo o ser, a amargura de tudo ser ao mesmo tempo uma sensação minha e uma coisa externa, que não está em meu poder alterar. Ah, quantas vezes os meus próprios sonhos se me erguem em coisas, não para me substituírem a realidade, mas para se me confessarem seus pares em eu os não querer, em me surgirem de fora, como o eléctrico que dá a volta na curva extrema da rua." Fernando Pessoa, *O Livro do Desassossego*, ed. Richard Zenith, Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1998, Fragment 4, 48.)

24 Levi R. Bryant, Nick Srnicek, Graham Harman, ed., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, Melbourne: re-press, 2011, 8.

IV

Keywords 4: "Sex" and "Gender"

Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 landmark *Le deuxième sexe*, considered through the lens of philosophical translation, provides a compelling point of departure for the analysis of "sex" and "gender" as keywords in trans-Atlantic feminist theory. Instead of criticizing *Le deuxième sexe*, as many American readers have been wont to do, for its adoption of the difficult lexicons of Marxist alienation; Kojèvian Hegelianism; French Heideggerianism; the phenomenological experientialism of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre; and Lacanian misrecognition and structuralist accounts of kinship and myth, we should newly appreciate how the book inaugurated the gendering of ontology, a tendency whose extensive history in philosophical feminism is very much ongoing, especially in the work of Catherine Malabou.[1]

Beauvoir's translation of philosophy into a language of first-wave feminism is most apparent in *Le deuxième sexe*, where we find conceptions of the subject, existence, being, self-consciousness, freedom, negation, alterity, perception and the dialectics of power imbricated with the problems of sexual difference, sexual equality, sexed positions, feminist sex, gender plasticity and sexual translation. And, though the text was obviously written prior to the time when terms like "genre," "gender," and "sex" had cycled into modern feminist parlance, the way in which it pressed *sexe* into service as a multiuse term prepared the way for thinking about it as a philosophical Untranslatable that lends itself to the *contresens*, a translation that reverses the logic or meaning of the original sentence. Increasingly, we see the *contresens* shaking up sex and gender politics; erupting, for example, in the "translation war" that followed the 2009 publication of the new English translation of The *Second Sex* by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, and surfacing, as more of a symptom than a sticking point, in a skirmish that broke out at the height of the Dominique Strauss-Kahn affair. In this latter case, the French sociologist Irène Théry accused the American historian Joan Wallach Scott of a French linguistic mistake (which led to misreading Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée* as a story of the lady's submission to the shephard when it was in fact the shephard who submitted to the lady) and of committing a gross *contresens*. She claimed that Scott performed the *contresens* after alleging that Théry's defense of *féminisme à la française* (which made a place for "seduction" unfettered by norms of political correctness) was conciliatory toward sexism and an abrogation of democratic sexual citizenship.[2]

Beyond the volleys anchored by allegations of translation errors, the gender Untranslatable emerged as a theoretical catalyst for a Mellon research project spearheaded by Judith Butler provisionally titled "Remainders: Feminist Translations in Geopolitical Time." A commitment was made to subject to critique translation's operative principles of *equivalence, substitutability* and *replacement*, which it claimed had become pegged imperialistically to metrics of modernity within European languages and space-time coordinates:

> In both multicultural and intersectional analysis, there is an assumption that equivalence can be asserted among cultural categories or identities, and yet clearly, that equivalence can only be established if a successful mode of substitution is available, and so, a mode of translation that is tied to an ideal of effective and complete substitution.
>
> In both contexts, the idea is that translation works, which means that substitutability wins and something is fully left behind, and something new is fully installed in its place. What happens if the traces of what is lost cannot be erased from what comes into being, and which reside or persist in the newer version? At stake is how one time comes to inhabit another time, and how one place is transposed onto another. I am not committed to inhabitation and transposition as the technical terms for this process, but it seems to me that the politics of translation has to reconfigure the spatial and temporal coordinates of the globe in order to establish a critical relation to both cultural imperialism and to those "alternatives" that fail to contest its logic. The point is not to find the "structure" of translation itself, but consider the disruption of presumptive global place and time that it can effect.[3]

At stake is the need to question the idea that *translation works*, that *substitutability wins*, and that *something new can be fully installed in the place of something else*. Remainders are thus politically marshaled, like so many leftovers of nonequivalence that resist subsumption. Now, while Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* does not second guess in any obvious way these imperatives to philosophize through and against translation, it qualifies as an epochal experiment in the translation of philosophy into feminism and as a test case for philosophical translation (it has been published in forty languages and counting). Both problematics become intertwined and concretized in debates arising from the work's first English publication in 1953 in abridged form by H. M. Parshley.

Parshley's translation has been a longstanding concern of Beauvoir scholars, among them Michèle Le Dœuff, Elizabeth Fallaize, Margaret Simons, Nancy Bauer, Eva Lundgren-Gothlin and Toril Moi. In an essay published in *Signs* in 2002 titled "While We Wait," Moi underscored four types of systematic error in the translation. Parshley, she notes, (1) "turns terms for existence into terms for essence"; (2) "tends to take words for subjectivity (*sujet, subjectivité*), to mean the 'unsystematic,' 'personal,' or 'not objective'"; (3) "completely fails to recognize Beauvoir's pervasive references to Hegel"; and (4) "has no idea that Beauvoir's central concept of 'alienation' (*aliénation*) is a philosophical term taken from Hegel and Lacan, he therefore makes her important theory of the production of women's subjectivity under patriarchy invisible in English." Drawing on Eva Lungren-Gothlin's *Sex and Existence*, she examines the particular challenges to translation posed by the word *Dasein*, which the French philosopher Henry Corbin translated as *réalité humaine*. According to Moi,

> When Beauvoir writes *réalité féminine* and puts it in quotation marks, she is first of all alluding to Corbin's *réalité humaine* and, second, introducing a subtle understanding of sexed existence to a concept that Sartre and Heidegger thought of as universal.[4]

In her review of the new English translation by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier in the *London Review of Books* (February 2010), Moi impressed on readers how much rides philosophically on Beauvoir's word choice:

> Throughout *The Second Sex* Borde and Malovany-Chevallier confuse "woman" and "the woman," and "man" and "the man": *le mythe de la femme* is sometimes translated as "the myth of woman" and sometimes as "the myth of the woman," as if there were no difference; *la femme* becomes "women" and "a woman" on the same page. Even the most famous sentence in *The Second Sex* is affected. Parshley translated "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient" as "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Borde and Malovany-Chevallier write: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." This is an elementary grammatical mistake. French does not use the indefinite article after *être* ("be") and *devenir* ("become"),

> but no such rule exists in English. (*Comment devenir traducteur?* must be translated as "How to become a translator?") This error makes Beauvoir sound as if she were committed to a theory of women's difference. But Beauvoir's point isn't that a baby girl grows up to become woman; she becomes *a* woman, one among many, and in no way the incarnation of Woman, a concept Beauvoir discards as a patriarchal "myth" in the first part of her book. "I am woman hear me roar" has no place in Beauvoir's feminism.

Moi conjures away the specter of an essentialist Beauvoir summoned by the questionable translation of this famous phrase and others like it that she considers problematic. She lays down the gauntlet in calling for a different kind of translational practice. Whether this would entail a scholarly apparatus of explanation (footnotes, a glossary, parenthetical alternative terms) or diction and style that reflect Beauvoir's political and phenomenological usage more accurately, Moi makes clear that any translation must be attuned to the philosophical DNA of *The Second Sex*, especially if it intends to deliver Beauvoir's "coherent and deeply original philosophy of sexed subjectivity, one that never degenerates into a general theory of 'femininity' or 'difference.'"[5]

Let me take up this issue of sexed subjectivity, using a translational approach. Beauvoir's sexing of *Dasein*—could we translate it more accurately as *feminine being-there?*—was consequential since it departed from the gender impersonalism of the ego that Sartre had assumed in his books *Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* As the subject of ontology is phenomenalized in the form of being itself, Sartre positioned it as the receptacle of the famous *l'être-en-soi-pour-soi* (being-in-and-for-itself), abstracted from gendered embodiment. This is being intended toward itself; aware that the instantiating consciousness of existence is grounded in self-negation; evacuated of motivational psychology and the freer for it. Beauvoir's woman subject was also marked by negation: the subtractive, tenuous status of her existence rang out on the first page of the first volume of *The Second Sex* when she wrote, "We no longer know if women still exist, whether they will continue to exist, or whether their continued existence is desirable or not." But one could also say that her existential prerogatives, which included doing, loving, and being together, were gender situational in a way that Sartre's were not. Moreover, in adapting Sartrean constructs of reciprocal recognition and productive work, and especially of *Mitsein* (a co-transcending of subjects rather than a subject in a state of being transcended), Beauvoir emancipated the "second sex" from the nullifying consequences of egoic inferiority, social objectification, barred access to the public sphere, civil inequality and an ontological identification with immanence and phallic lack. For translators, communicating where and how Beauvoir adhered to Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre when she talked about being and existence and where she departed from them poses a difficult task but a truly interesting one. Consider this phrase of Beauvoir's: "La femme est un existant à qui on demande de se faire objet; en tant que sujet elle a une sensualité aggressive qui ne s'assouvit pas sur le corps masculin." As translated by Parshley: "Woman is an existent who is called upon to make herself object; as subject she has an aggressive element in her sensuality which is not satisfied on the male body: hence the conflicts that her eroticism must somehow overcome." As translated by Borde and Malovany-Chevallier: "Woman is an existent who is asked to make herself object; as subject she has an aggressive sensuality that does not find satisfaction in the masculine body; from this are born the conflicts her eroticism must overcome."[6]

One is initially struck, of course, by the way in which the feminine article of "la femme" is neutralized by the masculine article of "un existent." It is hard to read "la femme est un existant" without projecting a neutered femininity. Harder still is comprehending what an existent is, let alone a feminized one. An existent is a philosopheme referring to the complex relationship in German between *Existenz* and *Dasein*. Pascal David observes: "When Heideggerre-injected a new meaning into *Dasein* to make it signify, in *Sein und Zeit*, the existent for whom his own being is at stake, the term was already charged with history and diverse meanings: time, the duration of an existence, presence, and also life, being, existence, being-there." David traces the problem of *Dasein* back to Jacobi's "feeling of existing" (*Gefühl das Daseins*) which Rousseau called, in the fifth of his *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire*, "the feeling of existence divested of any other affection."

In the Romantic period, he notes, Schelling figured the existent as uncannily apart from *Dasein*. But by the time we get to Husserl, for whom existents are "the phenomenon," the "'what appears' of being," this separation is no longer so obvious. For Heidegger, the existent will be associated with *Dasein*'s peculiar mode of being as distinct from *vorhandensein*. As David explains it, *vorhandensein*, or "being at hand," no longer characterizes anything but the presence of the mode of things, which "are found there," by opposition to *Dasein* struggling with its "difficulty of being" and with the care that is its essence, its arche-structure."[7] Reading this back into Beauvoir's phrase, it would seem that she is identifying the feminine existent with something closer to *zuhandensein* (the readiness-to-hand of an existing entity, sometimes referred to as "tool-being") than to *Dasein*. This tool-being is not reducible to a metaphysics of objects oriented toward their own ontology, thinkable independently of human thought and being, nor is it to be collapsed into a familiar notion of feminine Otherness, amenable to objectification or disposable as a prosthetic implement of masculinity. It should be aligned, rather, with an "active and prehensive" way of being—"active, *préhensive*" are Beauvoir's terms—which is to say, specially equipped to grasp things, ideas, percepts, objects, other beings, material realities, intangible materialities, placed within reach by milieu, environment and cosmos.[8] Interestingly, the philosophical term "préhensif," marked in its use as "prehension" by Heidegger and Whitehead, vanishes without a trace in both English translations. Parshley referred to the emancipated woman as one who "wants to be active, *a taker*," while Borde and Malovany-Chevallier substitute "active and prehensile." In each case, the utility function of seizing hold or grasping (physically, intellectually), characteristic of comportment with tools or ideas, is conveyed, but what is forfeited is the philosophical import of prehension, keyed to Heidegger's *zuhanden*, or "ready-to-hand." For Heidegger, prehension is an anticipatory mode of being, an expectancy of future exploit. For Sartre, it corresponded to being's interaction with time; its "touch" of what is offered at hand in the present moment.[9]

Tunneling into the philosophical nuances of the feminine existent as a name for prehensive being, or *Dasein*'s relation to *zuhanden*, helps resolve an old dispute between Moi and Butler over the status of "instrumentality" in Beauvoir's thought.[10] Butler wrote in *Gender Trouble*: "Beauvoir proposes that the female body ought to be the situation and instrumentality of women's freedom, not a defining and limiting essence." And yet, Butler also claims, "The theory of embodiment informing Beauvoir's analysis is clearly limited by the uncritical reproduction of the Cartesian distinction between freedom and the body." According to Moi, Parshley's translation led Butler astray. "Parshley," she writes,

> may think of the body as an instrument and as a limiting factor for some inner spirit, but Beauvoir does not. She thinks of the shape of the human body as showing us in outline the kind of projects that human beings can have. This is more like Wittgenstein's "the human body is the best picture of the human soul" than it is like Descartes's mechanistic picture of body and soul.

If we introduce *zuhandensein* into the equation, we shift the terms of this debate. Instrumentality, rather than double as a term for the subject's body armor, defers to prehensive ontology, which refers to the subject's ability "to be" object-like or tool-like in a world in which inanimate objects and live beings are equalized and no longer rigidly separated in kind. Heidegger wrote of a "bringing-close" that is "not oriented towards the I-Thing encumbered with a body, but towards concernful Being-in-the-world," a being "freed up for a totality of involvements."[11]

If the objection is raised that I am turning Beauvoir excessively toward Heidegger, or into a version of an object-oriented ontologist, fair enough; but I would defend the move on the grounds that "the feminine existent" warrants philosophical extradition, especially in connection with another use of prehension that Beauvoir makes in the text. In Chapter 1 ("Childhood") of Book 2, Beauvoir evokes the "prehensive desire" incited in the child by the elasticity of maternal flesh, raising the question of prehension's relation to plasticity; and from thence, to a sexed elasticity of being: "C'est la chair féminine douce, lisse, élastique qui suscite des désirs sexuels et ces désirs sont préhensifs; c'est

d'une manière aggressive que la fille, comme le garçon, embrasse sa mère, la palpe, la caresse …" As Parshley sees it: "The soft, smooth, resilient feminine flesh is what arouses sexual desires, and these desires are prehensile; the girl, like the boy, kisses, handles, and caresses her mother in an aggressive way…" Borde and Malovany-Chevallier suggest: "It is the soft, smooth, supple feminine flesh that arouses sexual desires, and these desires are prehensile; the girl like the boy kisses, touches, and caresses her mother in an aggressive manner…"[12]

Once again, the decision of all the translators to use "prehensile" rather than "prehensive," while not necessarily inaccurate, elides the ontic dimension of the desire in question. Infants and young children are grabby, but the desire and aggression coursing through the child's prehensive gesture affirm the psychic drive as well. When the drive makes contact with the mother's elastic flesh, it is taken into her substance, sublated as mutable form. The child's drive thus assumes the shape of the mother's desire. Beauvoir had already touched on this feminine elasticity in Book 1, Part 3, Chapter 2 ("Myths"), but there it was harder to look past the clichés of male penetration, or the scripturally authorized metaphor of "woman as clay," to locate a theory of ontological plasticity:

> Une des rêveries auxquelles l'homme se complaît, c'est celle de l'imprégnation des choses par sa volonté, du modelage de leur forme, de la pénétration de leur substance: la femme est par excellence la "pâte molle" qui se laisse passivement malaxer et façonner; tout en cédant elle résiste, ce qui permet à l'action masculine de se perpétuer. Une matière trop plastique s'abolit par sa docilité; ce qu'il y a de précieux chez la femme c'est que quelque chose en elle échappe indéfiniment à toute étreinte; ainsi l'homme est maître d'une réalité qui est d'autant plus digne d'être maîtrisée qu'elle le déborde.

Parshley describes the situation as such:

> One of the daydreams in which man takes delight is that of imbuing things with his will—modeling their form, penetrating their substance. And woman is *par excellence* the "clay in his hands," which can be passively worked and shaped; in yielding she resists, thus allowing masculine activity to go on indefinitely. A too-plastic substance is soon finished and done with, because it is easy to work; but what is precious in woman is that something in her somehow eludes every embrace; thus man is master of a reality all the more worthy of being mastered in that it is constantly escaping control.

As Borde and Malovany-Chevallier translate it:

> One of the daydreams [the man] enjoys is the impregnation of things by his will, shaping [women's] form, penetrating their substance: the woman is par excellence the "clay in his hands" that passively lets itself be worked and shaped, resistant while yielding, permitting masculine activity to go on. A too-plastic material wears out by its softness; what is precious in woman is that something in her always escapes all embraces; so man is master of a reality that is all the more worthy of being mastered as it surpasses him.[13]

Here the verbs "malaxer" (to knead, to model, to massage, to soften) and "façonner" (to shape, to fashion, to mould, to manufacture) only reinforce the idea of a resistance within the malleability of plasticity that outplays male mastery. Resistance is aroused by handling: an inert, latent or *unmündig* property of substance, it is incited to become form by tactile manipulation.

In addition to taking up prehension and plasticity as metaphors of "being" in sex, Beauvoir mined the concept of "translation" to underscore the difficulties of naming gendered modalities of appearing as they inflect themselves on perception.[14] In the chapter titled "The Lesbian," she wrote: "On se représente volontiers la lesbienne coiffée d'un feutre sec, le cheveu court, et cravaté; sa virilité *serait une anomalie traduisant* un déséquilibre hormonal. Rien de plus erroné que cette confusion entre l'invertie et la virago." Neither the Parshley nor the Borde and Malovany-Chevallier texts transmit this reference to translation. In Parshley's version:

> We commonly think of the lesbian as a woman wearing a plain felt hat, short hair, and a necktie; her mannish appearance would seem to indicate some abnormality of the hormones. Nothing could be more erroneous than this confounding of the invert with the "viriloid woman."

With the word "erroneous," Parshley indirectly alludes to Beauvoir's correction of a translation error in the language of gender typology (i.e., the false equation of invert and viriloid), but the notion that sex or gender might themselves be *translational anomalies* is entirely occluded. The same problem arises in the new translation:

> People are always ready to see the lesbian as wearing a felt hat, her hair short, and a necktie; her mannishness is seen as an abnormality indicating a hormonal imbalance. Nothing could be more erroneous than this confusion of the homosexual and the virago.[15]

By substituting, as does Parshley, "abnormality" (misshapenness, malign growth) for "anomaly" (a deviation from the rule, an object that eludes classification), Borde and Malovany-Chevallier diminish how Beauvoir recuperates the anomaly as a site of untranslatability and non-heteronormativity. "Anomaly" resembles Butler's term "drag," which, as Eric Fassin argues, always carries the ambivalence of a*contresens*, a grossly misunderstood or semantically inverted term. Drag implies performing sexual ontology queerly; making perceptible Hegelian orders of subjectivation and the patriarchal symbolic that otherwise remain naturalized and unseen. When Beauvoir's translators take out the word anomaly, they dilute the force of "lesbian" as a keyword of philosophical gender trouble.

Gender Trouble invites being read in counterpoint to *The Second Sex* not only because it too has an interesting translation history (with its truly unaccountable delay between date of English publication in 1990 and the French translation in 2005), but more pointedly, because its translation heralds the interest of philosophical translation for feminist theory. Take the English term "genre," which like Greek *genos*, French *genre*, or German *Geschlecht* is an Untranslatable prime. Genre interfered with the translation of "gender" in Butler's title as the book began to appear in different languages. As Butler herself observed in an article she wrote for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*:

> Like "genus" in Swedish which implies species-being, so *Geschlecht* in German implied not only a natural kind, but a mode of natural ordering that served the purposes of the reproduction of the species. That early German translators of *Gender Trouble* chose to translate "gender" as "Geschlechtsidentität" (sexual identity) may have been an effort to move away from species discourse, or perhaps it was a way of responding to those emerging queer arguments that claimed that binary sex was understood to serve the purposes of reproducing compulsory heterosexuality (Rubin, Butler). The problem with that choice, however, was that it confused gender with sexual orientation or disposition. And part of the analytic work of understanding gender apart from biological causality and functionalism was precisely to hold open the possibility that gender appearance may not correspond to sexual disposition or orientation in predictable ways.[16]

In French, the title *Trouble dans le genre* prompts the question "What genre are you?" In English this sounds wrong, but in fact it is the right question to ask inasmuch as "genre" traverses sex/gender and nature/culture divisions. With genre, unlike with "gender," we have *genos*, kind, and species-being aligned with aesthetics, the sexing of language, and the fusion of corporeality and existence in agential positions.[17]

Eric Fassin introduces the variant "trouble-genre" to designate "the troubled state of gender in our time, or trouble in the house of gender." Gender trouble gradually merges with translational difference as such, discernible in words that defy translation: "fem" (from the butch-fem dyad that resignifies the French "femme"), "gays" (which the French translator of *Gender Trouble* punctuates as "gai.e.s" to signal the term's application to gays and lesbians in both its substantive and adjectival form), and of course "gender" and "gendered," which the French translator, for better or worse, renders "genre" and "genré." Jettisoned are alternatives like "genderisé" and "gendré," Wittig's materialist "La marque du genre," Claude Mathieu's *sexe social* (social sex), or Christine Delphy's *classes de sexe* (sex-classes).[18]

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Oliver North, *Lake Resources of Panama, and the Iran-Contra Operation* (c. 1984–86)

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Oliver North, *Lake Resources of Panama, and the Iran-Contra Operation* (detail, c. 1984–86)

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Illustration: Christine Cornell (with Eyal Weizman) 2008

Porters bringing the model into the High Court of Justice in Jerusalem, Beit Surik case (2004)

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Justice Aharon Barak examines the different routes

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Small image of fibril that appears on first page of Glissant's *Poétique de la relation*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990

© Edward Said and Jean Mohr 1986 in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky*, London: Vintage, 1994

Settlement of Ramot, near Jerusalem (1979). As the buildings neared completion, tenants were in short supply (Edward Said).

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Detail of the same building; in the background, an Arab village several kilometers away (Edward Said).

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Habitat 67, Montreal, Moshe Safdie (architect)

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Cube Houses (Kubuswoningen)

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Matta, *M'onde* (1989)

The decisionism of translation—tangible in the hypothetical alternatives that haunt the words that a translator finally selects—registers as a kind of translation-trouble that bedevils trouble-genre. A case of this double trouble is on view in Stella Sandford's critique of Geneviève Fraisse's entry on *Sexe* in the *Vocabulaire*:

> For Fraisse, it seems, "sex" and "sexual difference" are synonymous; as are "*sexe*" and *"différence sexuelle."* The English "sex" and "sexual difference" "refer to the material reality of the human"; *la différence sexuelle* is the *presupposition* of a difference between the sexes defined in a certain way, whether biologically, as in the natural sciences, or philosophically, as in *"la pensée du féminin,"* the thinking of "the feminine." Most importantly, for Fraisse, *"Différence sexuelle"* coexists in French with *"différence des sexes"* from which it is distinguished to the extent that the latter "implies the empirical recognition of the sexes without that leading to any definition of content." *"Différence des sexes,"* Fraisse writes elsewhere, is a "philosopheme." To the extent that the French "*sexe*" includes *"différence des sexes"* within its meaning, as Fraisse effectively argues that it does, it is already in some sense a theoretical concept, referring to something to be *thought* rather than a biological reality taken for

> granted. Without the philosopheme *"différence des sexes," "la différence sexuelle"* ("sexual difference," "sex difference" or the English "sex") is reduced to an empirical fact.[19]

As Sandford amusingly puts it in a subentry on "Sex" written for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*, in Fraisse's usage "the English 'sex' is a plain and stodgy pudding, the just dessert, perhaps, of an empiricist philosophical tradition." Though Fraisse, as Sandford acknowledges, is aware that the English "gender" is "a contemporary philosophical event," she ultimately dismisses it as "a *cache-sexe*", a pun signifying that sex is not thinkable within the terms of the anglophone "gender."[20]

Looking at the "Gender" article written for the *Vocabulaire* by Monique David-Ménard and Penelope Deutscher, other problems emerge despite the fact that they subscribe to a more psychoanalytically nuanced concept of sexual difference informed by drives and fantasies. Freud is invoked:

> Sexuation thus takes place in the domain of the formation of pleasure, displeasure and anxiety, from which are woven the experiences and thoughts of infants immersed in an adult world which supports them, threatens them, carries them, even while also being intrusive and alien.

So, too, is Robert Stoller (whose 1968 landmark, *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* consolidated the biological sex/socially constructed gender distinction), but there is no mention by Deutscher and David-Ménard of Lacan's theory of phallic lack, applicable to both sexes phantasmatically speaking, or of the experimental efforts by Wittig, Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray to find in language the underpinnings of a feminine Symbolic. Here too, then, the English "Gender" remains curiously under-philosophized despite the fact that both authors are fully conversant with philosophical feminism.

Even if one takes issue with the typecasting of Anglophone terms for sex and gender as empirical or non-ontological, the untranslatability factor, measurable in the non-commutation of "gender" to "genre," or "sex" to "sexe," is significant theoretically. In the case of *Gender Trouble*, these semantic differentials make it hard to follow in French Butler's argument that "to be" sexually is to be assigned in gender. "Sex"—associated too closely with bodily sex in her view—is always already a repression of gender, so the trick is to enable gender to call itself differently. In a forthcoming entry on "Gender" commissioned for the English version of the *Vocabulaire*, Butler frames the term precisely as a translation problem: to call it itself differently, gender needs to "translate" the language of unconscious articulation seated in the psychic drives:

> If gender is relayed through the overwhelming language and gestures of the adult, then it arrives first as a kind of noise, indecipherable, and in demand of translation. For now, it is most important to note that the assignment of gender arrives through the enigmatic desire of the other, a desire by which somatic life is infiltrated and which, in turn, or simultaneously, incites a set of displacements and translations that constitute the specific life of the drive or sexual desire. Is somatic life determinable outside this scene of assignment? To the extent that bodily "sex" appears as primary, this very primariness is achieved as a consequence of a repression (*refoulement*) of gender itself. Indeed, gender is in part constituted by unconscious wishes conveyed through the enigmatic assignment of gender, so that one might say that gender emerges, from early on, as an enigma for the child. And the question may well not be, "what gender am I?" but rather, "what does gender want of me?" or even, "whose desire is being carried through the assignment of gender that I have received and how can I possibly respond? Quick—give me a way to translate!"

Butler gives herself a way to translate by doing things with sex and gender Untranslatables. And one can take away from this example a general impetus toward using translation—and specifically philosophical untranslatability—to pose the problem of sexual difference to ontology. Consistently, in Butler's work, we are brought back to the problem of what it means "to be" in genre.

Catherine Malabou has also grappled with these issues, and in doing so, brings us back to Beauvoir's notion of the feminine existent as an extensive mode of being-at-hand and a reliance on metaphors of plasticity to define feminine *Dasein*. In *Changer de difference* (translated as *Changing Difference* but which also could be rendered "change of difference" or "difference-changer"), Malabou tracks the way in which Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida used "the feminine" to signify a concept of genre open to multiple modes of being. "It is by the name of *'Dasein'* that I would introduce the question of sexual difference," Derrida wrote in his seminal essay "*Geschlecht*: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference." Heidegger, he reminds us, underscored the neutrality of *Dasein* when he wrote: "For the being which constitutes the theme of this analytic, the title 'man' (*Mensch*) has not been chosen, but the neutral title *'das Dasein.'*"[21] Translating *Dasein* in terms of the untranslatable *Geschlecht*, Derrida is in search of a neutrality of sex that is "pre-differential" and "pre-dual," a sexuality "more originary than the dyad." While Malabou questions the wisdom of retaining *any* sexualization of genre, she holds on to a possible "sense" of the feminine (aporetically deployed) that would continue to embody difference and refute the radically asexuated notion of Heideggerian *Dasein*. The challenge—posed by Derrida in the "Geschlecht" essay as well as in *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question* (1987)—is how to define, in the gap between being and the existent, "a sexual difference that is ontologically pluralized" or re-neutered in such a way as to avoid effacing the feminine.

It would seem that Malabou wants to affirm feminine singularity within gendered ontology as a "matter of matter." She places herself in a continuum of feminist philosophy that includes Beauvoir's concept of embodied prehension, Luce Irigaray's work since the 1980s on material elements, Judith Butler's recent engagement with A. N. Whitehead's process philosophy, and Emma Bianchi's reclamation of the Aristotelian *hyle* (transformational substance) for a feminist anti-teleology built around aleatory capacity, changeability and en-formation. Taken together, a shift is discernible here from biological sexing and sexually differentiated "identity" (prevalent during the heyday of identity politics in gender theory), to the gendered ontology of material embodiment and theories of plasticity.

Plasticity derives from the Greek *plassein*, "to model, to mould," malleable, "having the power to bestow form, the power to mould," as in the expressions "plastic surgeon" and "plastic arts." Grimm's dictionary defined it as "that which takes or gives shape, or figure, to bodies (*körperlich … gestaltend oder gestaltet*). In Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1831), as Malabou observes in "The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic," the concept corresponds to substance's "self-determination" (*Selbstimmung*), which is to say, its filtering out of arbitrary, personal, immediate and particular content on behalf of a fully embodied Notion, a becoming of *"Dasein,"* or being-there of "Spirit."[22] Malabou recuperates plasticity's regenerative and reconstructive principles (as in cosmetic and plastic surgery), its usage in neuroscience to designate "an alteration in structure or function brought about by development, experience, or injury," and its reference to plastic explosives, bombs or similarly combustive matériel: "The word plasticity [Malabou writes, in *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*] thus unfolds its meaning between sculptural molding and conflagration, which is to say explosion. From this perspective, to talk about the plasticity of the brain means to see in it not only the creator and receiver of form but also an agency of disobedience to every constituted form, a refusal to submit to a model."[23] As a metaphor for both that which explodes the brain, and that which inoculates it against traumatic injury, plasticity affirms the indestructibility of psychic life and stanches the subsidence of will into inertia and compulsive repetition (characteristic symptoms of the death drive). The pivotal role assigned to the prophylactic violence of plasticity (which protects formal emergence against the destruction of form), relates her work on neuroscience and Hegelian dialectic to her discussion of genre in *Changing Difference*, where, it might be said, she identifies plasticity with a feminine *Dasein* that has survived the constant threat of extinction by a "Being" that has been violently gendered as Neuter.

1 Catherine Malabou, *Changer de différence: Le féminin et la question philosophique*, Paris: Galilée, 2009; *Changing Difference*, trans. Carolyn Shread, London: Polity, 2011.

2 Elsa Dorlin (author of *Sexe, genre et sexualités*) in an article of July 2, 2011 in the online journal *Mediapart*, refuses the terms of the debate, which pits a feminism "à la française" against feminism "à l'américaine." According to Dorlin, as long as we stay with the question of whether consensual seduction has a right to be protected by French republicanism, the debate, at best, will simply lead to changing the place of the players in the story to demonize the venal seductrice who seduced the seducer. She suggests that a better option would be to dispense with the rhetoric of consensual seduction altogether, especially as an expression of a French democratic heritage. Dorlin is interested in the political uses of Joan Scott's notion of "genre," conceived of as a critical instrument that historicizes power, and describes its "plasticity and reversibility" as well as its reliance on linear narratives of domination.

3 "Remainders"; collectively authored brief of Mellon seminar on gender and translation, June 2009.

4 Toril Moi, "While We Wait: The English Translation of *The Second Sex," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 27: 4, 2002: 1014–15, 1016.

5 Toril Moi, "The Adulteress Wife," *The London Review of Books* 32: 3, February 11, 2010, 17.

6 "On ne sait plus bien s'il existe encore des femmes, s'il en existera toujours, s'il faut ou non le souhaiter": Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe* I, Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 11; Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, 172; Parshley, *The Second Sex*, 406; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, *The Second Sex*, 419.

7 Pascal David, *"Dasein," Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, 285–6. trans. Stephen Rendall, English; the *Vocabulaire*, forthcoming, Princeton University Press. See, too, Jean-François Courtine's entry in the *Vocabulaire* on "Vorhanden," 1383–7.

8 Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 562.

9 According to Sartre: "Le présent, c'est ce que je touche, c'est l'outil que je peux manier, c'est ce qui agit sur moi ou ce que je peux changer" ("The present, it is that which I touch, it is the tool that I can manipulate, that which acts on me or which I can change"—my translation). Jean-Paul Sartre, "Venise, de ma fenêtre," 1953, *Situations* IV, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, 196.

10 See Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, U.S.: Carus, 2002.

11 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, New York: Routledge, 1990, 12; Toril Moi, "While We Wait," 1023; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row 1962, 142, 145.

12 The reference to elastic maternal flesh is recurrent between authors: in Beauvoir: "Sa chair a cette douceur, *cette tiède élasticité* que, petite fille, la femme a convoitée à travers la chair maternelle et, plus tard, partout dans le monde" (*Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 325); in Parshley: "The infant's flesh has that softness, that *warm elasticity*, which the woman, when she was a little girl, coveted in her mother's flesh and later, in things everywhere" (Parshley, *The Second Sex*, New York, Random House, [1952] 1989, 512); in Borde and Malovany-Chevallier: "His skin has that sweetness, that warm *elasticity* that, as a little girl, the woman coveted in her mother's flesh and, later, everywhere in the world." (Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, *The Second Sex*, New York: Knopf, 2010, 555); Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 13; Parshley, SSP, 268; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, SSBMC, 283.

13 Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 1, 282; Parshley, SSP, 176; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, SSBMC, 193.

14 I am adapting Marielle Macé's phrase "infléchir ses perceptions," which she applies to the analysis of "formes de vie" in literature: gestures, attitudes and "mental folds" that print life on perception. Marielle Macé, *Façons de lire, manières d'être*, Paris: Gallimard, 2011.

15 Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 170; Parshley, SSP, 404; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, SSBMC, 417.

16 Judith Butler, "Gender" entry, commissioned for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*, forthcoming, Princeton University Press.

17 Marc Crépon's article on "Geschlecht" in the *Vocabulaire* sheds further light on the range of associations attached to "genre." It may be cued to concepts of "race, kinship, lineage, community, generation, sex, *Menschheit, Autrui, Dasein*, gender, Humanity, *Leib*, people," and straddles important questions of "orders of belonging" and "the constitution and destination of human diversity," 505.

18 Trouble-genre: "Notre actualité 'troublée," Eric Fassin, Preface, "Trouble-genre," in Judith Butler, *Trouble dans le genre. Le féminisme et la subversion de l'identité*, trans. Cynthia Kraus, Paris: La Découverte, 2005, 18; Cynthia Kraus, "Note sur la traduction," in Judith Butler, *Trouble dans le genre*, op. cit. p. 23.

19 Stella Sandford, "Sex: A Transdisciplinary Concept," *Radical Philosophy* 165, January/February 2011, 24.

20 The *Vocabulaire*, English edition, forthcoming, Princeton University Press; Sandford, "Sex: A Transdisciplinary Concept," 25.

21 Jacques Derrida, "*Geschlecht*: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference," *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1), 1983, 68 and 69. The essay was published in French in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre*, Paris: Galilée, 1987. This was the first of three essays on *Geschlecht*. The second was entitled "Heidegger and the Hand of Man." The third was devoted to Heidegger's 1953 essay "Language in the Poem: A Placement of Georg Trakl's Poem." See, too, Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, where he refers to *Geschlecht* as "that frighteningly polysemic and practically untranslatable word (race, lineage, stock, generation, sex) in [Heidegger's] … text on Trakl from *Unterwegs zur Sprache*." In his article "Marginalia to Geschlect III," David Farrell Krell identifies Derrida's "primary problem," via Heidegger on Trakl, as "the two strokes that constitute a sexually marked *Geschlecht*, especially the second stroke, the one that induces not only *dispersion* but also *unchained individuation* and *dissension* into the duality of the sexes." *New Centennial Review* 7: 2 (2007): 178.

22 Catherine Malabou, "The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic," trans. Lisabeth During, *Hypathia* 15: 4, Fall 2000, 206.

23 Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain*?, trans. Marc Jeannerod, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, 6.

V

Keywords 5: "Monde"

… what is this philosophizing? What are we in this? Where do we want to go? Did we once just stumble into the universe by chance?[1]
—Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*

"Manifeste pour une littérature-monde en français," published in *Le Monde* on March 6, 2007, and signed by forty-four French-speaking writers, swept its readers into the mental ping-pong of "pro" versus "con" on the question of whether there should be a "World Literature in French" positioned to answer to the widely validated, postcolonially inflected model of Anglophone world literature. Two books, *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde* and *Pour une littérature-monde* offer representative samples of contradictory responses. Notable arguments in favor touch many bases. *Littérature-monde en français* represents an improved alternative to "littérature mondiale," the commonly used expression in French for world literature, in that it references specifically transcontinental literatures connected by French. Moreover, it has done away once and for all with the outmoded term "Francophone," a carrier of neocolonial, Orientalist baggage; a ghettoizing, divisive, exclusionary term in publishing and academia; and a tautology since all speakers of French are Francophone. The "world" can no longer be excluded from literature in French and should be taken fully on board by the Paris-oriented French literary establishment (Michel Le Bris's argument). The strongest literature in French isarguably being produced by extra-hexagonal writers (the manifesto was indeed partly occasioned by their high percentage of literary prizes in 2007). The World Literature perspective brings attention to less internationally exposed writers, putting them into dialogue with each other in an expanded comparative frame. The appellation World Literature in institutional academia abolishes the ontologically objectionable "us-them" dichotomy between national and "foreign" language departments. Global literary markets generate new consumers of literature with tastes, interests, and cultural literacies no longer satisfied by writing authored by or aimed principally at *les français de France*. Regional, translingual affiliations (the connection, say, between Indigenous francophone and anglophone Pacific cultures or the circum-Atlantic cultural contacts inaugurated by the slave trade) appear in sharper relief through a worldly viewfinder. The practice of creolization extends beyond language to "platforms" (curator Okwui Enwezor's coinage) of the aesthetic, putting French literature into colloquy with greater world-systems and non-literary media. The Glissantian *tout-monde* has provided a poetic and philosophical framework for thinking "world" as an anti-exoticist francophone *nomos*. World Literature is suited to an era in which the electronic dissemination of information, even in countries with restricted Internet and Web access, has transformed the economics of literary distribution and editorial gatekeeping. Secular criticism, marked by Edward Said's practice of contrapuntal reading and the politics of humanism, warrants a more developed counterpart in French studies.

Arguments contra *littérature-monde en français* cover a comparable gamut. It is criticized for being too quick to ape an Anglo-American-style comparative literature in French studies, reinforcing an Anglocentric (or worse, Globish) tendency in the human sciences worldwide and defeating the purpose of defining a French-based praxis differently. World Lit cartography obscures important divergences in the French-speaking context between post-colonial, extra-hexagonal, and continental *banlieue*/*Beur* writing, while at the same time lumping together wildly discrepant post-colonial literatures. Ambassadorial efforts to support French culture in formerly colonized territories belie attitudes of cultural imperialism, curatorial patronage, and salvage rather than commitment to the veritable renewal of French-language expression (as Alain Mabanckou has intimated). The fantasy of a decommercialized literature without borders must perforce remain oblivious to the way market capitalism works. Any French version of World Literature respectful of the Goethean/Auerbachian heritage in the humanities will perpetuate Eurocentric humanist universalism as well as a static lexicon of style, periodization, and genre defined largely by Western classics. World Literature is a cosmopolitan project better suited to privileged emigrés than to immigrant, second-generation minority cultures. World fiction uses *métissage* as yet another Occidental foil for inattention to cultural and historical particularism. World Literature inadequately takes stock of the impact of colonialism and decolonization on literary history. *Littérature-monde*, like World Literature paradigms in general, either reinforces old national, regional, and ethnic literary alignments or projects a denationalized planetary screen that ignores the deep structures of national belonging and economic interest contouring the international culture industry. World Literature remains oblivious to the systematic critique of globalized literary studies contained in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of "planetarity" (in *Death of a Discipline*). In their rush to franchise "global" campus outposts all over the world, universities seize on World Literature as a catch-all rubric for flimsy programs in the humanities that ignore rather than deepen local knowledge. World Literature is all-too-conducive to the downsizing of "foreign" language departments and furthers monolingual coverage of literatures and area studies in other languages. Even the most recent and intellectually creative attempts to remake World Literature for a future-oriented planetary pedagogy often end in a pluralist critical practice of comparison that massages neoliberalism (the regime of post-political or post-ideological aesthetics, in Christopher Bongie's ascription).

While there are clearly valid points on both sides of the aisle, and important stakes for the study and redistribution of "Frenches" within the future of comparative literature, it strikes me that the polemics summarized and played out in *Transnational French Studies* insufficiently address two concerns: First, in seeking to comparatize French literary criticism and theory, *litt-monde* partisans and detractors alike assume translatability as both a given and heuristic good, thereby devaluing the importance of non-translation and untranslatability for the politics of cultural relationality. And second, the term "world" in *littérature-monde* remains curiously under-theorized as a reserve of philosophical untranslatability and conceptual density. In fairness, Typhaine Leservot, in her essay "From *Weltliteratur* to World Literature, to *Littérature-monde*: The History of a Controversial Concept," offers a compelling genealogy casting *littérature-monde* as a "view of the world" in contrast to earlier models of World Lit that emphasize the fomenting of international canons. Mounia Benalil notes the untapped potential of Antoine Volodine's notion of what it means to "faire monde" (render the world) and calls for "a formal-thematic axis that could identify a literary grouping displaying qualities worthy of a 'world-poetics.'" And Jeanne Garane problematizes the location of "world" in *littérature-monde*, taking her cue from the title of an essay collection edited by Christophe Pradeau and Tiphaine Samoyault titled *Où est la littérature-monde*? Pondering whether Le Bris's use of the term implies a generalized *tiermondialisation* of the hexagon, Garane notes that "the relationship between *littérature-monde, littérature mondiale*, and its German and English counterparts *Weltliteratur* and 'world literature' is

made explicit neither in the manifesto … nor in the introductory essays by Jean Rouaud and Michel Le Bris.[2] These observations notwithstanding, few interventions question what a world might be. More emphasis on how philosophy has defined "monde" would contribute theoretical substance to the paradigm of *littérature-monde* and nuance debates around world literatures in every language.[3]

The historian Anthony Grafton has emphasized the world-making power of words in his analysis of the *Respublica literarum* in the early modern period.[4] Barbara Cassin, by contrast, maps worlds through philosophical philology. In the *Vocabulaire*, the German term "Welt" makes a real incursion into Greek and Roman intellectual estates. Of course, *Ur*-cognates in Greek (*kosmos*), Latin (*mundus*), and Hebrew ('*olam*) are duly represented in the modern languages—a trinity comparable to the three monotheisms. After Kant (whose dissertation written in Latin in 1770 dealt with "the notion of the world in general"), and in a line leading through Hegel and Schelling to Heidegger, *Welt* gathers momentum to the point where it would seem that German is truly the language in which the word "world" is most fully philosophized. The only other language that comes close in claiming philosophical territory is Russian, buoyed perhaps by the movements of folk revival, Slavophilia, nationalism, socialist utopia, and communism. Generally speaking, the Russian terms for world are sutured to a vision of society, as in *mir* (world, peace, village community); *svet* (world); *obscina* (primordial communism); *sobernost'* (uni-totality); *narodnost'* (adhesion of the people); *svoboda* (liberty, collective will); *samost'* (human nature); and *vseedinstvo* (uni-totality). Russian aside, what we perceive most clearly in the *Vocabulaire* is the extent to which *Welt* becomes the center of a substantial concordance comprising *Weltalter* (ages of the world), *Weltgeist* (world spirit), *Weltanschauung* (worldview), *Weltlauf* (way of the world), *Welten* (to make to the measure of the world), *Weltkenntnis* (knowledge of the world), *Mitwelt* (contemporaries), *Weltbürger* (citizen of the world), *Umwelt* (environment), *Umweltschutz* (environmental protection), *Umweltverschmutzung* (pollution), *Verweltlichung* (secularization), and *Weltliteratur*, so indelibly marked by Goethe. As strings of apposite meanings are generated, *Welt* annexes semantic approximations like *Leben* (life) or *Heimat* (homeland). The landgrab is consolidated by the success of *Welt* in drawing off earlier French usages of monde whose gamut covered diplomatic and courtly codes of conduct, success in society (*mondanité*), and the idea of plural or possible worlds associated with the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ascriptions of Fontanelle and Rousseau.

Pascal David tracks the way in which this "German adventure of world" chronicles a gradual ontologization of the term:

> Is there something like a predisposition to phenomenology or even to existentialism in the "Germanic" concept of the world? One that should be properly separated out from any strictly cosmological conception? If such is actually the case, it is nonetheless the semantic trajectory of the ancient Greek *kosmos* [χόσμος] (from Heraclitus to Saint Paul and Saint John, passing through Plato), which seems to have prefigured the splitting of meaning, to be clearly found in Kant, between a cosmological sense corresponding to the universe and a cosmo-political, anthropological, or existential sense referring to a way of relating to both the universe and the community of men. Paradoxically, Kant himself emphasized, in an anthropological perspective, how the French word *monde* had rubbed off some of its connotations on the German word *Welt* in its cosmopolitan acceptations. *Welt* is further enriched, in the philosophical vocabulary of the twentieth century, through an impersonal verb, *welten, es weltet*, a word coined by Heidegger or at least endowed with new meaning by him …
>
> It has been possible to detect a "Germanic" concept of the world underlying Heidegger's thought on the subject "because the sense in which it is to be understood is suggested by the etymology of the terms" in Germanic languages, including the German *Welt*, the English *world*, the Dutch *wereld*, Swedish *vårld*, the Danish *verden, verdensalt*, etc. The Germanic etymon is a compound word which combines an element signifying "man" (from the Latin *vir*) and a second element signifying "age" (cf. English "old"). The resulting meaning would be something like "where man finds himself as long as he is alive" ("*ce dans quoi l'homme se trouve tant qu'il est en vie*", R. Brague, *Aristote et la question du monde*, 27–8, n.37). We can note in passing that the (seventeenth-century) German word *Weltalter* "age(s) of the world" is essentially redundant, since it can be taken apart as: Ger. *wer-alt* (= "epoch", "world", "generation") + Ger. *Alter*, "age", whence: *age of ages of man*! As opposed to the cosmological concept of the world which defines a whole of whom I am but a tiny part, there is then perhaps a predisposition in the Germanic etymon leading in the direction of its phenomenological conception; that within which the human being deploys his being, according to a triple determination: cosmological, anthropological, and ontological.[5]

Welt's superimposition of temporality, existence and anthropocentrism comes into focus as Enlightenment modernity's counterpart to the Hebrew word *'olam* (whose synonyms include *Welt, aiôn*, humanity, life). Rémi Brague stresses the ontological provisionality of '*olam*; its emphasis on the subject's entrance and exit onto the scene of life:[6]

> Among the words designating the world certain designate the order of things, as with the Greek Kosmos (χόσμος) and the Latin mundus, and others accentuate the living presence of the subject. The world is that into which we are born and leave upon dying. Such is the case with the English world, the German *Welt*, and the Dutch vereld, which are etymologically the most legible in connoting the duration of the life (cf. Eng, old) of man (lat. vir; ger. wer- in Werewolf, "wolf-man", fr. "loup-garou"). The Hebraic word for world is 'olam ( ) and although it features in the Bible, it is not used in this particular sense, even in a late text such as Qohelet 3, 11. Rather, another temporal sense is communicated in which an undetermined duration informs expressions such as le-'olam (), "an undetermined future", from where we have "for always", or më-'olam () "since a period where the beginning has been ignored" from where we have "since always."

The study of *Welt* as an Untranslatable shows how bound up it is conceptually with Biblical and Enlightenment notions of time; Gnostic intuitions of the concordance of mind and universe; and the philosophical shifts from cosmological metaphysics, to Heideggerian phenomenology, and to logics of worlds (including Wittgenstein's logic of truth-conditions in philosophical grammar or Badiou's singular multiples). It also sheds light on an interesting tension, registered in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, between "having" and "knowing" the world: "In addition, the expression 'to *know*' the world and 'to *have* the world' are rather far from each other in their meaning, since one only *understands* the play that one has watched, while the other has *participated* in it."[7] Michel Foucault, in his translation of this passage, would render *Welt kennen* as "connaître le monde" and *Welt haben* as "avoir du monde," the latter translation recalling the fact that the German *Welt haben* was originally a translation of the French import. David wants to modify Foucault's translation using the French "*avoir les usages du monde*" (which takes it away from the everyday meaning of "having company" and closer to the very French notion of *savoir vivre*, or "knowing the ways of the world"). In English, we enter new thickets of untranslatability. As Christian Hubert, the English translator of David's entry, queries: "What does 'having the world' mean in English, especially when it is being contrasted with 'knowing the world'?"[8]

"Having the world," or the variation, "having world," does not really signify in English, but it is thoroughly naturalized in German within a Heideggerian conceptual landscape. In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger designates "world-forming" (*weltbilden*) as that which characterizes the human. Animals, by contrast, are "poor in world" (*Weltarmut*) and stones are "worldless" (*Weltlos*). Within this scheme, having world can be taken to mean an animal apprehension of what is being withheld (*Vernehmen*, from the cognate verb *nehmen*, connoting "to take," "to seize," or "to apprehend" with reference to the way in which the animal "is taken by things") or to refer to the couplet of mastery and servitude: "Thus man is, first, a part of the world, and second, as this part he is at once both master and servant of the world." Heidegger's singular conception of "world-having" suggests a property-drive harnessed to the acquisition of resources and the mastery of technological know-how. "Master of the universe" might be the closest colloquial "translation" of *Welt haben* in this context. "Not having world" would lead philosophically in the direction of Peter Singer, whose "just enough" notion of distributive justice encourages a non-extractive approach to the earth, or a depropertied way of existence. Alternatively, "having world" could be ramified in Rémi Brague's sense of "an open channel leading from the senses, which enable our being *in* the world, and morality, which reveals that we are not *of* the world."[9] "Having" in this instance connotes a new *in/of* relation between humans and the earth. Following Isabelle Stengers, to "have world" would be to "have *cosmos*"; which is to say, to have a cosmopolitical notion of politics that resists the "give-and-take in an exclusive human club," and

"allows objects to have lives of their own."[10] It could also be applied to Edward Said's notion of worldliness; a terrestrial humanism forged by the politics of the Palestinian right to return, and aesthetically attuned to Erich Auerbach's Dantean understanding of earthly (*irdisch*) humanism in the 1929 classic *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (translated by Ralph Manheim as *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*). Finally, "having world" might be extended to Edouard Glissant's *tout-monde*, where to be in possession of place or possessed by a spirit of place (*genius loci*) corresponds to apprehending the translated worlds of place-names.

Consider, in this regard, how Glissant performs an incantatory operation on the name of an American state in *Faulkner, Mississippi*. Sounded out in the manner of school children reciting its orthography—"miss-iss-ippi"—the French ear produces *émailless, éssailless, éssaill-pi, pi-aille*."[11] We hear echoes of *émail* (enamel); *émmailler* (to glaze, to sprinkle, to speckle); *emmailloter* (to swaddle or to bind a limb); *essaimer* (to swarm, to hive off, to emigrate); and *pi-aille*, proximate to the verb *piauler* (to whimper, to whine); or *piailler* (to squall, to squeal, to chirp); or *chialer* (to blubber). Out of the proper name springs an entire accursed history of the slaves' bondage, forced emigration, and cries of pain and tears, as well as the white South's social crack-up, documented mythically in Faulkner's sagas of malediction, secessionism, hereditary finalism, and familial dysfunction among the Compsons, Sartoris and Snopes. Homonymic names are magical, like translation, because they show how one language world divides into two. In *Faulkner, Mississippi*, one of these homonyms is the name of a plantation manor on the outskirts of Baton Rouge. It is called *Nottoway*: "It occurred to us that Nottoway must certainly have signified 'not a way,' not a path or means of egress, not a single possibility of evasion (the verb *marroner*, a creole Untranslatable used in the French original, refers to the slave's fugue."[12] Housing a curator's dream of soiled antebellum frippery that doubles as a reliquary of slave labor, "Nottoway" sits in its present-day industrialized surround as an anachronistic redoubt of tourism. What matters here though is not just the familiar *frisson* of Southern Gothic but the way in which this monument to past decadence enters the lives of slaves into the temporal world of *durée*. Glissant discovers this Bergsonian register of time in his translation of Faulkner's phrase "They endured." ("Ils enduraient. Ils endurèrent.") The declension leads him to ponder what it means to endure from within, "duraient dans," to stand, in a kind of civil disobedient posture, like the proverbial cats whose immobility and somnolence allow them to conquer eternity.[13] If Faulkner's Blacks escape death, it is because they have found durability within duration. By simply being—obstinately and obdurately—they have built a *tout-monde* that lasts forever.

If Glissant uses place-names—"Mississippi" and "Nottoway"—to translate the world of the American South into the language of Caribbean worlds, he also makes worlds out of signs that are not place-names. In one striking case, which appears in a note on the first page of *Poétique de la relation* (poetics of relation), an image "translates" slavery's geographic compass. The image resembles a rope frayed at each end, suggesting a lasso used to rope people into captivity; a bondage tie; or a noose (that low-tech technology of execution)—or a length—used to measure property on the Middle Passage. Glissant dubs the image a fibril:

> The Slave Trade as it came through the cramped doorway of the slave ship leaving a wake like that of crawling desert caravans. It looks like this: … African countries to the East; the lands of America to the West. This creature is in the image of a fibril.[14]

Technically speaking, a fibril is a fiber or cable-like string of cellulose binding plant cell walls or holding in place the cylindrical structure of spirochetes; those wiggly, worm-like bacteria most famously and ignominiously associated with syphilis. The fibril depicted here fibrillates in the manner of a vocal chord. Glissant writes, "Within the ship's space the cry of the departed was stifled, as it would be in the realm of the Plantations. This confrontation still reverberates to this day."[15]

Another philosophical cartography for "world" would have appeared if the *Vocabulaire* had extended its mandate to creolized or exogamous forms of French, not to mention non-European languages. Discussions of the difference between the Arabic words (or *a'lam*, which refers to countries of the world) and (or *dunya*, which refers to the world we live in now as opposed to the world after death); between the Swahili word *dunia* (world) and *Ulimwengu* (universe); or the Mandarin compound (or *shì*, which refers to life, age, generation, era, world, lifetime) plus *jiè* (boundary, scope, extent, circles, group, kingdom) would have added worldliness to the definition of world. The translational tension in the term *vishwa sahitya* (roughly "literatures of the world") is particularly rich. Vinay Dharwadker maintains that its range of definitions for world encompasses "world literature, universal literature, universalistic literature, and cosmopolitan literature" in contradistinction to that for *rashtriya sahitya* (roughly "national literature" in modern subcontinental languages), with *rashtra* (nation) harking back to a Sanskrit word for "territory, country, kingdom, empire, and the people or subjects of a realm."[16]

For some literary critics, the worlds of literature are mapped in a combative arena of competing literary nationalisms (Pascale Casanova) and emergent literary world-systems (as in Giuseppe Cocco's notion of Brazil's "becoming-world," dubbed "monde-Brés"). For others, the worlds of literature are thinkable as data systems based on quantitative indices of plot and style, as suggested by Franco Moretti. For others still, worlds are constituted in literature by the techniques of totalizing aesthetics: panoramic perspective or realism (elaborated as a continuum between fictional mimesis and the "real" world, as argued recently by Tiphaine Samoyault). And, if we take into account the factors identified by former editor at Pantheon Books, André Schiffrin, a literary world must be defined by forms of self-censorship that affect a book before it reaches publication. This thoroughly capitalized literary world-system assumes that authors internalize commercial values and mediate their textual productions with projections of price points and sales figures.[17]

Without necessarily taking on the full complement of phenomenological philosophies of "world" that lead inexorably to Heidegger's abandoned structures of in-dwelling (the *Abbau*, or original temple), where metaphysics runs aground, there are also interrogations of the "globe" in globalization that philosophically complicate the world in world literatures. One key example is Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, which builds on his earlier book *The Sense of the World*, and brings to light the manifold differences between "globalization" (the crushing uni-totality of the network society) and *mondialisation* (a creative "world-forming"), not to mention the more subtle distinctions between the English "globalization" and the French *globalisation*. Nancy casts the philosophy of world as a translation problem. Taking his cue from Cassin's *Vocabulaire*, he defers to the Untranslatable *mondialisation* in his preface to the English edition of the book:

> It is not without paradox that in many languages the French term *mondialisation* is quite difficult to translate, and that perhaps this difficulty makes it almost "untranslatable" in the sense that the term has acquired in the recent *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*. This difficulty lies in the fact that the English term *globalization* has already established itself in the areas of the world that use English for contemporary information exchange (which is not necessarily symbolic exchange) … there has been in the English *globalization* the idea of an integrated totality, appearing for example with the "global village" of McLuhan, while *mondialisation* would rather evoke an expanding *process* throughout the expanse of the *world* of human beings, cultures, and nations.
>
> The usage of either term, or the search for an English translation that would keep the semantics of "world" are not without real theoretical interest: the word *mondialisation*, by keeping the horizon of a "world" as a space of possible meaning for the whole of human relations (or as a space of possible significance) gives a different indication than that of an enclosure in the undifferentiated sphere of a unitotality. In reality, each of the terms carries with it an interpretation of the process, or a wager on its meaning and future. This also means that it is understandable that *mondialisation* preserves something untranslatable while *globalization* has already translated everything in a global idiom.[18]

Mondialisation is summoned to offset the negative effects of globalization, itself cast as the philosophical equivalent of *Globish*. Moving beyond this familiar opposition, Nancy projects a theory of world-making that puts into colloquy the *orbis* of the planet, the *urbs* of the city, the

"globe" (as geometric icon) and its dark twin *glomus* (associated with the technoscientific nightmare of population explosion and the "dissipation of the certainties, images and identities of what the world was with its parts and humanity with its characteristics"). Nancy proceeds transhistorically, alternating between the early modern "vision of God" (Descartes's sense of "continual creation," Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*); Marx's conjugation of the *mondial* ("'worldwide' [coexistence]") with the *mondain* ("'worldly' [immanence]"); and phenomenological accounts of World (the latter invoked with critical distance). Nancy "deconstructs" "the becoming-world of the world" as inflected by Husserl, Heidegger, Bergson and Wittgenstein.[19] On the trail of a *mondialité* (worldhood) that enjoys itself through the "effervescence of its thought in act," and through "its creation of forms and signs" sui generis, Nancy projects a non-sovereign multiplicity of worlds that disavows the conventional alignment of planetary law with unequal territorial distribution: *cosmos/nomos*.[20] Here, one could say, he approaches Peter Szendy's "nomos of the sensible," characterized by the aesthetic repartition of the world's material forms.[21] Finally, Nancy's philosophical worlding asks to be read with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of "planetarity," set apart "from notions of the planetary, the planet, the earth, the world, the globe, globalization and the like in their common usage." Associated with "a species of alterity belonging to a system that we inhabit on loan," planetarity for Spivak refuses a custodial model of sustainability "that keeps geology safe for good imperialism" and "emphasizes capital's social productivity but not its subalternizing tendency."[22]

In these interrogations of the cosmopolitical, cosmological and philosophical dimensions of World, all wheels are turning and no point of orientation is consistently privileged. Philosophical world-making, another way of defining what world literatures do, is called out with different names—*mondialité* (Nancy), philosophizing in languages (Cassin), planetarity (Spivak), *toutmondisme* (Glissant), *philosofictions* (Szendy). And these names emerge as heterocosms (alternative worlds accessible to all) that encourage reimagining what in the world the "world" in literature might be.[23]

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1 Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 5.

2 Christophe Pradeau and Tiphaine Samoyault, *Où est la littérature mondiale?*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2005; Jeanne Garane "*Littérature-Monde* and the Space of Translation, or, Where is *littérature-monde*," in *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde*, ed. Alec G. Hargreave, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010.

3 In proposing that more pressure be put on the analysis of the word "world" in World Lit debates, I am implicitly subscribing to a philological critique nourished by John T. Hamilton's observation that "philology has always distinguished itself from other disciplines in the humanities by considering words themselves as objects of analysis and not merely as vehicles for the formation of concept," per letteras.

4 Anthony Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

5 Pascal David, entry "Welt" in *Vocabulaire*, translation by Christian Hubert (forthcoming in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, eds. Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood, Princeton University Press).

6 Rémi Brague, "Olam" entry, in *Vocabulaire*: 877, translation by Steven Rendall (forthcoming *Dictionary of Untranslatables*). Pascal David, in a complementary vein to Brague, emphasizes "the co-belonging of the world and time" in the German Romantic conception of *Welt* put forth by F. W. Schelling: "Etymologically, *Welt* maintains an optional relationship with time. This relationship is underscored by Schelling, the author of the *Weltalter* (Ages of the World), by means of a debatable, if not outright phantasmagorical, albeit illuminating, etymological link between *Welt* and *währen* (to endure), at the end of lesson 14 of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, in order to maintain the speculative equivalence of world and time (the cosmic eon): 'True time itself consists of a series of times, and inversely, the world is only one element of true time, and is in this respect itself a time, as the very name *Welt* indicates, which derives from *währen* and thus indicates a *duration*, which the Greek *aiôn* reveals even more directly, as it also designates a time of the world'" [*Wie schon das Wort, das von* währen *herkommt und eigentlich eine* Währung, *eine Dauer, anzeigt, und noch unmittelbarer das griechische* aiôn *beweist, das ebensowhol eine* Zeit *als die Welt bedeutet*], *Schellings Werke*, vol. 6, addendum, 308. "Even if *Welt* does not come from *währen*, which is itself a term related to *wesen* and to the third root in the etymology of the verb 'to be': Sanskrit *vasami*, Germanic *wesan* ('to dwell, remain, to live')," cf. Heidegger, *Introduction*, trans. 81. Schelling has nonetheless instinctively sensed the essential co-belonging of the world and time in his reference to the Greek *aiôn* [αί υ], "cosmic eon", even if in an essentially Paulist sense (I Corinthians 7, 31: "the form of this world [χόσμος] will pass away")," David, forthcoming, translation by Christian Hubert, 2004: 1390–1.

7 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 4. "Noch sind die Ausdrücke: die Welt *kennen* und Welt *haben* in ihrer Bedeutung zeimlich weit auseinander: indem der Eine nur das Spiel versteht, dem er zugesehen hat, der Andere aber mit gespielt hat." Immanuel Kant, "Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht," in *Akademie Ausgabe*, vol. 7, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900–20; cited in the *Vocabulaire*, 1393.

8 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*, trans. Michel Foucault, Paris: Vrin, 1984, 11–12. Christian Hubert in a note appended to this translation of "Welt" in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood (to be published by Princeton University Press).

9 "Taken by things": Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 247; "Thus man is": ibid., 177; Rémi Brague, *Les ancres dans le ciel: L'infrastructure métaphysique*, Paris: Seuil, 2011, 29.

10 Bruno Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics?" in *Common Knowledge*, 454 and 450, respectively.

11 Édouard Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*, Paris: Stock, 1996, 21, 24.

12 "Nous nous suggérions pourtant que '*Nottoway*' avait sans doute voulu dire: 'pas un chemin,' *not a way*, pas une voie, pas un moyen, sous-entendu: d'échapper au lieu. Pas une seule possibilité de marroner." Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*.

13 Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*, 87.

14 "La Trite passé par la porte étroite du bateau négrier, dont le sillage imite lareptation de la caravane dans le désert. Sa figure se présenterait de la sorte: … A l'est, les pays africains, à l'ouest les terres américaines. Cette bête est à l'image d'une fibrille." Edouard Gillant, *Poétique de la Relation*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990, 17.

15 "Dans l'espace du bateau, le cri des déportés est étouffé, comme il le sera dans l'univers des Plantations. Cet affrontement retentit jusqu'à nous," 17. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2004.

16 Vinay Dharwadker, "Constructions of World Literature in Colonial and Postcolonial India," *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, ed. Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir, London: Routledge, 2012, 477.

17 Pascale Casanova, ed. *Des littératures combatives: L'Internationale des nationalismes littéraires*, Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2011; see Thomas Pavel, *Univers de la fiction* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), and Tiphaine Samoyault, *Excès du roman* (Paris: Nadeau, 1999), as well as her "Le roman-fleuve ou le monde déplié," in *Actes du colloque international d'Oslo: Point de rencontre: le roman* (ed. Juliette Frölich, Oslo: KULTskriftserie 37: 2, 1995, 141–56); André Shiffrin, *Words and Money* (London: Verso, 2010). For a study of the landscape of translation and the international publishing industry, see Gisèle Sapiro, *Translatio* (*Le marché de la traduction en France à l'heure de la mondialisation*) Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 2009.

18 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey Librett, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, (original French title: *Le sens du monde*). Nancy, *The Creation of the World*, 28.

19 Ibid., 33–4, 49, 51.

20 Ibid., 64, 173. Nancy has the work of Hans Blumenberg in mind when he identifies the task of today as the creation of a new form of symbolization of the world. Blumenberg's *The Legibility of the World* (1979) draws on *metaphorology* to adduce time-sensitive worlds of sense. Figures that concentrate hermeneutical content like "the book of nature" or "the book of the world" function as "answer points" to the question of what a world is, posed from the point of view of nature or the cosmos. Metaphorology in this instance arguably effects a reverse "translation" from phenomena back to human language.

21 Peter Szendy, *Kant chez les extraterrestres: Philosofictions cosmopolitiques*, Paris: minuit, 2011, 144–5.

22 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, entry on "Planetarity" for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire* (forthcoming, Princeton University Press, 2013). Spivak confirms that as an English word planetarity was first used in her paper "Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet," presented at Stiftung-Dialogik in Zurich, December 16, 1997. The revised talk was published in *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet/Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten*, ed. Willi Goetschel, Vienna: Passagen, 1999.

23 "Heterocosm" is qualified by Sam Tanenhaus as "alternative but accessible worlds, open to us all" that are the result of Harold Bloom's "esoteric populism." See his review of Bloom's *The Anatomy of Influence* in the *New York Times Book Review*, May 22, 2011, 13.

Part Three
Translating “World Literature”

I

Auerbach's Welt-*Theology**

In the life and work of Erich Auerbach, theologies of translation converge with the problem of World Literature. Auerbach arrived in America in 1948 to take up a position at Penn State. An assimilated Jew, fired from his job in Marburg because of the Nuremburg Laws, he fled to Istanbul in 1936 and spent eleven years teaching there. He was brought to the University of Istanbul by his friend and rival philologist, Leo Spitzer. Though he arrived just as Spitzer was preparing to leave for Johns Hopkins, they collaborated on devising a Romance philology curriculum and published a series of seminar papers that included contributions on and in multiple languages including Turkish.[1]

In contrast to Spitzer, Auerbach made the condition of his exile from Europe a constant refrain. The "foreign" academic context, and what he referred to as Kemal Atatürk's "primal nationalism" (eerily comparable, he affirmed in a letter to Walter Benjamin, to its counterpart in Nazi Germany), induced a state of acute melancholia. This state was exacerbated by his witness to the "fantastical and ghostly" educational modernity in which he was a participant; charged as he was with creating a modern European curriculum built on the not-yet extinguished embers of Arabic and Persian. To quote from his letter to Benjamin:

> Here they have thrown all tradition overboard, and they want to build a thoroughly rationalized, extreme Turkish-nationalist, state of the European sort. It has quickly gone fantastical and ghostly, already there is hardly anyone who can understand Arabic or Persian, and even Turkish texts of the past century will quickly become un-understandable, [*unverständlich*] since the language is being simultaneously modernized and newly oriented on "Ur-Turkish," and written with Latin characters. "Romanology" is fundamentally a luxury, and I am the only real cultural historian among the newly hired Europeans. Moreover, I have to organize language instruction in all the Western languages in the university and many other things besides. The work is really irksome, because one has to battle with the most curious difficulties, misunderstandings, and tensions, but it is neither personally nor materially uninteresting.

As Robert M. Stein, the translator of this letter, notes:

> The real loss of history in this project that claims to draw all its energies from history—the substitution of concrete historical development by its ghost—is already at the center of Auerbach's perception, and he sees it in terms of the crisis in language that materially disconnects the present from the past.[2]

The temporal disjunction between linguistic past and present manifests itself as untranslatability—or more exactly, a distinct kind of untranslatability qualified in the letter as *unverständlich*, or the ununderstandable. This is untranslatability defined not so much in terms of mistranslation or failure to communicate but as a wedge of opacity in *Verstehen* perceptible at historical moments of political upheaval and violent linguistic regime change. Little wonder then, that the project undertaken by Auerbach in Istanbul—the foundational *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur,* published in 1946 and familiar to Anglophone readers under the title *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*—made the un-understandable an operative principle. The book was hailed as a model of comparative literature at a time when the discipline was still in its infancy, but Auerbach's attentiveness to the untranslatability of cultural expression and to discrepant literary traditions actually downplayed the equivalencies and similitudes cherished by comparatists. The field that he forged is better labeled, as James I. Porter would have it, "incomparative literature."[3]

To the theoretical constructs of un-understandability, untranslatability, and incomparativity (all three legible in the context of political and historical crises), we can add Auerbach's notion of "unGoethean" World Literature. The "Goethean," as Avihu Zakai and others have noted, was conscripted for a "historicist humanism," steeped in the permeation of consciousness by historical reality.[4] Auerbach mobilized the adjective *ungoethisch* to subject to critique the form of non-cosmopolitan World Literature or standardized literary monoculture that he perceived as ascendant in his own time and that, in his view, resisted historical, philological synthesis.[5] Though he could easily have positioned Goethe's *Weltliteratur* as the forerunner of today's market-driven Global Lit (strategically invented by Goethe to overcome Germany's lack of official status as a national polity and absence of a national literature competitive with that of England and France), Auerbach preferred not to.[6] He was more concerned with measuring the distance between *Weltliteratur* then and now, the better to inveigh against his own era's predilection for market-ready clichés that obfuscated the true literary objects of philology and left the shards of disparate traditions with no way to connect humanistically.

And yet, it was precisely the broken state of postwar *Weltliteratur* in mass society that arguably lent impetus to Auerbach's novel approach to literary history: He reconnected past and present not by charting linear genealogies of influence or geographies of cultural markets but by proposing an idea of linguistic "reality" that jumped across place and time.[7] More important still, he developed the typological construct of *figura* to refer to "the conception of reality in late antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages," according to which "an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms, without prejudice to the power of its concrete reality here and now."[8] Casting a fresh eye on the Christian Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Auerbach repurposed the figural anachronism, generating a theory of history that recuperated non-causal temporality. The emergent paradigm of a prophetic, discontinuous chronotope capable of releasing the now-time while projecting a narrative hologram of divine program, can be seen as nothing short of an attempt to reconcile worldly "reality" (*Weltwirklichkeit*) with messianic eschatology. In what follows, I will look more closely at the prophetic dimension of Auerbach's work, emphasizing how his idea of worldliness, which conflates theology and history, brings him closer to figures like Benjamin and Taubes in ways that are rarely given their due.[9]

Auerbach's references to "world," and to *mots-valises* built up from its cognates (*Weltgeschichte, Weltwirklichkeit*, and *Weltphilologie*), are impossible to disentangle from the story of what happened to European intellectuals when they went elsewhere. By all accounts, when Auerbach first arrived in the United States and began teaching at Penn State, he had some difficulty figuring out where he was, and did his best to get somewhere else (he spent 1949–1950 as a fellow at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study and then left for Yale). During this short period of post-exile exile, he was thinking a lot about Dante, to whom he had devoted an early book *Dante als Dichter der irdischen*

Welt in 1929. This classic (rendered in English as *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*) raises the question of *Welt* in relation to the seminal essay that he would publish in 1952, "Philologie der *Weltliteratur*."[10] The English title, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" (Edward and Maire Said's translation), suppressed the preposition *der*, hence losing the genitive, and with it, the sense that Auerbach philology *belonged* to World Literature; that World Literature engendered its own very particular philology; or that languages implied specific modes of world-having that stood outside national, patrimonial, or identity claims.[11] This drift is reinforced by Auerbach's later allusion to "Weltliteratur und ihrer Philologie," with "ihrer" underscoring once again that philology remains the property of World Literature. The full sentence in which the phrase appears is an interesting one: "This conception of *Weltliteratur* and its philology seems less active, less practical and less political than its [meaning Goethean] predecessor."[12] The way to de-enervate and repoliticize *Weltliteratur* is to ground philology in earthly criticism: "In any event, our philological home is the earth: it can no longer be the nation." This *Heimat*-philology, positioned against the "blood and soil" rhetoric of national socialism's *Heimat* fixation, becomes the royal road to "a proper love for the world."[13] Auerbach ultimately wants to see the world and the universe become parameters for the philological synthesis of *Weltliteratur*, but for now he will content himself with the earth expansively apprized.[14]

Auerbach's planetary orientation, and more specifically his earthly (*irdisch*) coloration of *Welt* (strongly registered in Jane O. Newman's rendering of the *Weltliteratur* essay's second sentence, "Our planet, the earth—which is the world of world literature—is growing smaller and becoming less diverse"), anticipates Edward Said's secular criticism, a connection elaborated in the following chapter. In a broader literary-historical framework, *irdisch* may be seen as the hinge between Hippolyte Taine's "milieu" (the environmental factors shaping literature) and contemporary articulations of "verbal ecology" that treat literature inclusively *as* an environment, with reference not just to land, weather and social mores but to politics and institutional cultures as well.[15]

What *irdisch* World Literature amounts to in practice, though, especially in *Mimesis*, is less an environmental criticism than a theological figuralism squared improbably with realism.[16] In this respect, Auerbach's work resembles that of a generation of literary critics on his heels who made the Biblical world a fulcrum of literary criticism and theory; among them Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Hans Frei, Frank Kermode and Robert Alter. If we focus on this theological dimension from a more philosophical perspective, Auerbach also invites comparison with Jacob Taubes. As a critic with a highly developed sense of his own personal destiny in world-*geist* who, like the exiled prophet, saw himself as one "called from without" (to borrow Taubes's expression), Auerbach was susceptible to a way of thinking (also channeled by Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, and Franz Rosenzweig) that Taubes referred to as "occidental eschatology." Taubes later published a thesis under this title, drafted in the late 1940s and briefly referred to in 1949 by Karl Löwith (in his book *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*). The title was likely unknown to Auerbach, but many phrases resonate with Auerbach's language: "Israel is the restless element in world history, the leavening that first actually produces history"; "Life is exiled in the world; the homeland of life is beyond the world"; "Alienness or exile" means "not to be at home in this world"; "The nonworldly comes into being through the call. That which is entirely other is audible in this world, but still as that which is entirely other"; "The process of redemption occurs ontologically in God's sublation [*Aufhebung*] of the world." Auerbach opened *Mimesis* with the staging of exile, contrasting Odysseus's unhoming (geographically defined and situated in relation to a pantheon of Gods) with the existential dislocatedness of Abraham in *The Old Testament*. God addresses Abraham from no fixed place, and Abraham himself is wholly abstracted from the real world. "We do not know," Auerbach begins,

> where he is actually, whether in Beersheba or elsewhere, whether indoors or in the open air, is not stated; it does not interest the narrator, the reader is not informed; and what Abraham was doing when God called to him is left in the same obscurity.[17]

If Taubes and Auerbach were both drawn to a picture of the Jewish subject as one destituted of world, they also, in different ways, committed to a vision of culture born of what Taubes called the "Davidic Messiah king." For Taubes, this is Jesus cast as the Son of David; he who usurps Saul's power and brings the kingdom of God closer to earth. This Davidic Messiah heralds a community of philosophical Jews who transcend the claims of race and nation:

> Groups within Roman society are drawn to the synagogue by monotheism and by the concept of the Law. But the Hellenistic Roman who is attracted to the synagogue by the *concept* of the divine law is not prepared to take on the *practice* of the Jewish law. Those who enter the community so as to lose the last characteristics shared with their nation and their race have no wish to join the national community of the Jews and exchange a Roman for an Oriental nationality.[18]

Like Taubes, Auerbach projects, through the very example of *Mimesis*'s philological practice, a complex community, equal parts Hellenic and Judeo-Christian. But where Taubes would enjoin eschatology to break the deadlock between an acosmic, anti-worldly Christian inwardness (*religiöse Umkehr*) and the Marxian presage of worldly, proletarian revolution (*weltliche Umkehrung*), Auerbach would pursue a path through the Old Testament and Dante to arrive at what I would call a prophetic ethical realism.[19] This was, in effect, a realism that articulated the insecurity of the Western world (its vulnerability to catastrophe, its crises induced by theodicy *and* secularism), while providing a figural reading of cultural redemption.[20]

Auerbach described an ongoing connection between eschatology and "real history" in the concluding paragraphs of *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*. He suggests that Christian eschatology might in Dante's time have "lost its unity and vitality," but "the European mind was so permeated with the idea of human destiny that even in very un-Christian artists it preserved the Christian force and tension which were Dante's gift to posterity." Dante's genius, according to Auerbach, was to transfer eschatology in the guise of individual destiny to the "earthly happening." He affirmed that after Petrarch and Boccaccio,

> the historical world acquired a fully immanent autonomy, and this sense of the self-sufficiency of earthly life spread like a fructifying stream to the rest of Europe—seemingly quite estranged from its eschatological origin and yet secretly linked with it through man's irrevocable bond with his concrete historical fate. [21]

This "secret link" would play out in Auerbach's subsequent work as the secret theology of worldly philology.

In 1948, Auerbach delivered a talk on Dante at Penn State aimed at a general audience. He took his auditors through familiar highlights of Dante's life and work, but more than the lecture's content it is the sound of his voice that is informative. In the recording unearthed by Martin Vialon, one hears grammatically impeccable English delivered with a throaty, *mitteleuropäische* intonation. It is the uncanny voice of an exile in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and its echo carries over into the very short gloss he wrote the following year on a passage of Canto 12 of the *Purgatorio* that describes an allegorical bas-relief (Singleton's commentary reproduces the image of a pavement tomb of the old Church of Santa Reparata in Florence). As Dante in purgatory will atone for the sin of pride and earn removal of the damning letter *P* from his brow, the engravings accordingly feature souls who have paid for the sin of pride, among them Briareus, a giant who dared to make war against Olympus; Nimrod, the commissioner of the Tower of Babel; and Niobe, the proud queen whose boasts of a plentiful brood spurred Apollo and Diana to slay them on behalf of the slighted Latona, and Saul:

> As, in order that there be memory of the, the stones in the church floor over the buried dead bear figured what they were before; wherefore many a time men weep for them there, at the prick of memory that spurs only the faithful: so I saw sculptured there, but of better semblance in respect of skill, all that for pathway juts out from the mountain …

> O Saul, how upon your own sword did you appear there dead on Gilboa, which never thereafter felt rain or dew![22]

As a reader of *Mimesis*, one might assume that Auerbach was attracted to these lines because of their depiction of the sculptor's feat of exact realism. Dante's narrator exclaims:

> What master was he of brush or of pencil who drew the forms and lineaments which there would make every subtle genius wonder? Dead the dead, and the living seemed alive. He who saw the reality of all I trod upon, while I bent down, saw not better than I!

Rather than comment on this rendering of expert mimesis, however, Auerbach fastens on the ethical perplex posed by Saul:

> It seems that no sufficient explanation has been given, either by ancient or modern commentators, for the inclusion of Saul among the examples of *superbia* carved as bas-reliefs into the marble ground of the first girone of the *Purgatorio*. For the readers not familiar with the details of medieval interpretation of the Bible, Saul's wickedness seems rather to be envy or a kind of wrathful melancholy than pride (*tristiria* and *ira* c. Inferno VII and VIII). Jacopo della Lana, the Anonimo Fiorentino, Francesco Buti and Pietro Alighieri give very general and insufficient explanations of his *superbia* such as "because he fought against David," or "because he did not wish to be captured alive by the Philistines" …

In Christian ethics *superbia* is linked with the original sin and disobedience to God. By his pride, i.e. by preferring his own will to the order of God, Adam committed the disobedience which caused the fall of man. Thus, the first examples of pride in *Purgatorio* XII and several of the following ones are examples of disobedience to God or contempt of divine power.

This disobedience, caused by pride, was committed by Saul when he acted against the will of God announced to him by Samuel: first by offering the sacrifice before the arrival of Samuel (1 Samuel 13, 8–14)—and even more when he spared the life of Agag, the king of Amalec, and saved from destruction the best of the booty, against the express orders of God (1 Samuel 15). From that moment God abandons him and confers the kingdom upon another, upon David; from that moment God sends him "the evil spirit" who darkens his life … commentators agree in considering these disobediences as *superbia* and as the cause of Saul's misfortunes and his final ruin.[23]

In his late, posthumously published *Literary Language & its Public in Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*(1958), Auerbach would focus on the Saul, who "keeps the booty" against God's orders. He refers to a passage of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* in which Saul's retribution is used for practical ethics. It becomes a cautionary tale about the dangers of greed and profiteering; demonstrating, in the historical context of fourteenth-century England, why priests should not take money for performing mass. The Saul episode stands as one of "numerous examples of a practical investigation of social justice, conducted on a Biblical foundation." In this instance, English ethical realism, rooted in a down-to-earth scene of instruction, is staked out in marked contrast to Dante's "God-given program for the earthly world."[24]

Saul's Pride evinces a wholly different approach to ethics, realism, the earthly, and the God-given. Here, Saul represents the culpable Jew, punished for performing sacrifices in disregard of God's command, but he also represents the Jew as anointed prophet with reference to an episode where he "prophesies among" a band of prophets sent by God to meet him in Gib´e-ah (1 Samuel 10). What interests Auerbach is

> "the principle involved," which, he notes, "seems strange to modern minds, [it] is the principle of 'polysemy' in the figurative interpretation: it very often considers, as in our case, the same person in morally contradictory meanings. The same Saul who has been rejected for his *superbia* is as a *figura Christi*.[25]

Auerbach's *figura Christi*, like Taubes's Davidic Messiah (or for that matter, Hélène Cixous's characterization of Derrida as "a Jewish saint"), is more than just a trope of typological prefiguration; it is a performative of belief, a proof of the leap of faith that enables opposing positions to be held together in non-contradiction, permanently resisting sublation. What is at stake is the naming of a Jewish Christ; at once the sinning Jew covered with *superbia* and the Jewish God-elect. To understand this further, we do well to turn to Giorgio Agamben's analysis of the figure of "Jesus Messiah" as read through Paul. Agamben refers to this figure technically as a "nominal syntagma," ascribing to it the status of preeminent word of faith:[26]

> What then does it mean that in Paul faith is expressed in the nominal syntagma "Jesus Messiah" and not the verbal syntagma "Jesus is the Messiah"? Paul does not believe that Jesus possesses the quality of being the Messiah; he believes in "Jesus Messiah" and that is all. Messiah is not a predicate tacked on to the subject Jesus, but something that is inseparable from him, without, however, constituting a proper name. For Paul, this is faith; it is an experience of being beyond existence and essence, as much beyond subject as beyond predicate.

According to the logic of the nominal syntagma, Auerbach's Saul emerges as a figure of political agency that comes into existence through his own pronunciation (as in the kerygmatic proclamation assigned full thrush by Auerbach's contemporary, the theological thinker Rudolf Bultmann). In his guise as a *figura Christi*, Saul passes over the traditional dichotomy between republican and monarchist interpretations of his fate: The former represents Saul as an unworthy legatee of his grandfather's civic honor, the latter venerates him as a just and entitled ruler commendable for showing mercy to his enemies. Auerbach's Saul, by contrast, functions as a portal into an eschatology of world history grounded in the "realism" of modern ethics; a world of ethical ambivalence in which *P* and not-*P*—the mutually cancelling values of Saul *superbia* and Saul Messiah—coexist in the one Saul. Auerbach's own practice of literary criticism models this principle insofar as it conjugates the language of the earthly world, or mimetic realism, with what Paolo Valesio terms "theo-rhetoric."[27] The nominal syntagma of realism and theology, like that of materialism and messianism in Benjamin, can be ascribed to the broader field of the Auerbachian *unverständlich* insofar as it signifies an "exceptional" conjunction of secularism and divinity that is virtually beyond belief; that is to say, at the razor's edge of logical credibility.[28]

The problem of belief in Auerbach's thought, rife with implications for how *Welt*-theology relates to realism and humanism, solicits multiple interpretations. If belief is synonymous with belief in absolute Truth, then for some readers of Auerbach his notions of reality, realism and everydayness are simply patches for the post-Enlightenment forfeiture of belief in absolute Truth and "cognitive and existential certainty" (the argument of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht). Adopting an analytic philosophical orientation, Barry Maine's 1999 article "Erich Auerbach's 'Mimesis' and Nelson Goodman's "'Ways of Worldmaking': A Nominal(ist) Revision" aligns Auerbachian realism with philosophical realism and applies a "constructivist" approach to the reality of words. The truth of realist textual representation depends on how to define a believable truth-claim; on nominalist arguments around causality, existence, and the status of abstract objects (numbers, ethical properties) in space and time. Belief in its relation to realism is taken in a wholly different ethico-religious direction by James I. Porter, whose basic question, addressed to Auerbachian philology, is, How Jewish is it? The figure of Saul is relevant here as well. In*Mimesis*, Saul and David are evoked as characters "fraught with background"; that is to say, possessed of "great depths of time, fate and consciousness" in contrast to their Homeric counterparts, defined as agential but without deep consciousness. The Bible "wins" over Hellenism in this instance, by delivering psychological realism. Porter implies that these prophet-seers of the Old Testament are linked in Auerbach's mind to a figure like Rousseau, who epitomizes the faith-versus-reason crisis of the Enlightenment; a crisis leading to a debilitating "insecurity" in the Christian world that reappears in a new guise as the crisis of national socialism in Europe.[29] Porter plumbs Auerbach's "Homeric/biblical-Jewish" antinomies—treating them like prequels to the culture wars—but for my purposes his most interesting point is that Auerbach brings the eschatological principles of "time, truth and revelation" (which he identifies as the very things Auerbach's Jewish philology wants to

recuperate from a Nazified, de-Judaicized philology) down to earth, so to speak, in the representation of everyday reality. He suggests that Auerbach brings the figural force of revelation and what Jane O. Newman characterizes as his desire for a re-sacralization of society to the task of "realist world-making," which is to say, to the politics of just worlds.[30]

This commitment comes into sharp relief in Auerbach's essay on Pascal—"On the Political Theory of Pascal"[31]—written in Istanbul in the 1940s, with a later version published in *The Hudson Review* in 1951. He begins with Pascal's vexed approach to the Christian person of faith in the age of absolutism. Why must the obedient Christian endure a regime of evil and injustice? Pascal, according to Auerbach, determined that

> the Christian religion is the only religion against nature and against common sense. To arrive at such an extremist conclusion he [Pascal] needed the pessimistic and nominalistic ideas of the theorists of the *raison d'État*; he combined them with Augustinism; thus he created a conception which, in spite of its Christian radicalism, contains germs of revolutionary criticism. The theorists of the *raison d'État*, more or less radically, more or less reluctantly, had expressed the doctrine that the State, in order to fulfill its task, is not obliged to follow the laws of morality: fraud and cunning, treason and perfidy, violence and cruelty, are legitimate in politics; the right of the State extends as far as it might and is based on it. Pascal is willing to agree with all this. But those theorists were interested in the State for the State's sake; they considered it as a terminal value; they either enjoyed its dynamic vitality … or they were interested in the benefits it might provide for the individual if it were organized in the right way.
>
> All that is utterly immaterial to Pascal. For him, a dynamic life of the State did not exist; or if it existed, he would consider it as profoundly wicked; he had no interest in the best possible form of the State, for all forms seemed to him equally bad. He combines the pessimistic empiricism of the political theorists with Augustinian ideas; thus, he got to the paradox of might as a pure evil, which one has to obey unconditionally, without any regard to a possible benefit—but without devotion, or better, out of devotion to God.[32]

In the manner of Rousseau and Saul, Pascal functions in this instance as a nominal syntagma—a figure signifying the leap of faith required to hold in one concept both *reason of state* and *faith without reason*. These nominal syntagmas are far from being ethical ends in themselves, but they name those rare instances in which worldly ethics and theology (or realism and eschatology)—though strictly speaking mutually disqualifying—are, exceptionally, one and the same.[33] Pascal's Evil, Rousseau's Insecurity, Saul's Pride—each qualifies as an example of the theological figuralism that contoured Auerbach's thinking about "world" and *Weltliteratur* from the late 1920s to the early 1950s. They prompt consideration of his work in the larger frame not only of Taubes's Occidental eschatology or his own theory of the *unverständlich* in models of World Literature past and future but also in relation to Said's terrestrial humanism; his critical figuralism of just worlds.

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* This chapter is indebted to the work of Jane O. Newman, in particular two chapters of her book-in-progress on Auerbach; the first "*Theologus* Auerbach" (ms.), the second, "Force and Justice: Auerbach's Pascal." Of particular relevance to my concerns are her discussions of "theo-existential issues" informed by "Dante's Thomist realism as Auerbach saw it" and "Pascal's Jansenism" (in "*Theologus* Auerbach"). *Points of Departure: Political Theology on the Scenes of Early Modernity*, ed. Julia Reinhard and Graham Hammill, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, 304–36.

1 For an extended discussion of the Istanbul adventure, see Aamir Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul"; Edward Said, "Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 25, 95–125, Autumn 1998; Emily Apter, Chapter 3, "Global *Translatio*: The Invention of Comparative Literature, Istanbul, 1933," in *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006; and Kader Konuk's *East-West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010. Konuk makes the interesting and "admittedly risky" argument that Westernization reforms in Turkey "prefigure the essentially Eurocentric scope of *Mimesis*" and therefore justify a "figural" (in Auerbach's sense of *figura*) reading of the reforms in Auerbach's masterwork and in Turkey's humanist legacy more generally (19).

2 Erich Auerbach, "Letter 8" (to Walter Benjamin), trans. Martin Elsky, Martin Vialon, and Robert Stein, included in special feature "Scholarship in Times of Extremes: Letters of Erich Auerbach (1933–46) on the Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death," *PMLA* 122: 3, May 2007, 749. Robert M. Stein, "After Culture: Erich Auerbach and Walter Benjamin in Correspondence," unpublished paper.

3 Porter elaborates as follows: "Far from constituting a project in comparativism, thanks to which Auerbach would be remembered as the father of modern comparative literature, his juxtaposition of the two major literary and cultural traditions of the West creates a dissonance within the projects of reading, of classicism, of Biblical scholarship, and of literary history and criticism—in short, of philology. Auerbach ought to be remembered as the father of incomparative literature! By indexing the present moment in his materials, Auerbach, the displaced German Jew in Istanbul, is historicizing philology. At the same time he is inverting the political polarities of philology, not least by contrasting the two treatments (Homeric/biblical-Jewish) of time, truth, and revelation in the two traditions that he is less comparing than he is critically pitting against each other. And he is undertaking all of this in opposition to the ingrained tendencies of an anti-Semitic classical philology and in the context of efforts in Germany to de-Judaize Christianity. Auerbach is in a sense Judaizing philology. That is, he is constructing a new oppositional Jewish philology." James I. Porter, "Erich Auerbach and the Judaizing of Philology," *Critical Inquiry*, Autumn 2008, 120–1.

4 Avihu Zakai, "Erich Auerbach and the Crisis of German Philology: An Apology for Western Judeo-Christian Tradition in an Age of Peril, Tyranny and Barbarism," unpublished book manuscript.

5 See Erich Auerbach, "Philologie der *Weltliteratur*," in *Weltliteratur: Festgabe für Fritz Strich zum 70 Geburtstag*, ed. W. Muschg von W. Henzen and E. Staiger, Bern: Francke, 1952, 40. The Said translation: "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," trans. Edward and Maire Said, *Centennial Review* 13: 1, 1969, 3. This notion of the "ungoethean" is lost in the Saids' translation, where it is rendered as "what Goethe had in mind."

6 Jonathan Arac makes just this point: "In Goethe's time (1749–1832) no political entity existed that could be called *Germany* and we may imagine this to be a significant reason for the appeal of the 'world' to Goethe, as over against the national state cultures of England and France." Jonathan Arac, *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007, 22.

7 In *Mimesis*, Auerbach criticized "the statically aprioristic categories of Thucydides," and more generally "an ethically oriented historiography" that uses "an unchangeable system of categories and hence cannot produce synthetic-dynamic concepts of the kind we are accustomed to employ today." Epochal categories—Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romanticism, and so on—were better equipped in his view to "cover phenomena in motion." Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, 39 and 38, respectively.

8 Ibid., 555.

9 Jane O. Newman's as yet unpublished essay "*Theologus* Auerbach" draws out a comparison between what she calls Auerbach's "poetical theology" and Carl Schmitt's political theology.

10 Erich Auerbach, "Philologie der *Weltliteratur*," in *Weltliteratur: Festgabe für Fritz Strich zum 70 Geburtstag*. ed. W. Muschg von W. Henzen and E. Staiger, Bern: Francke, 1952, 39–50; "Philology and Weltliteratur," trans. Edward and Maire Said, *Centennial Review* 13: 1, 1969, 1–17.

11 Emily Cersonsky, in an unpublished paper, has noted that "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," in substituting the conjunction "and" for the original "der," "democratizes these two disciplines, preparing the reader not for a discussion of *Weltliteratur*'s influence on philology, but for a consideration of how these two disciplines reflect upon and influence *each other*." In her new translation, Jane O. Newman renders the title more faithfully as "The Philology of World Literature." *Time, History and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach*, ed. James I. Porter, trans. Jane O. Newman, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013. My thanks to Jane O. Newman for allowing me early access to a draft version of her translation.

12 Said, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," 6 ("Diese Vorstellung von der Weltliteratur und ihrer Philologie erscheint weniger aktiv, weniger praktisch und weniger politisch als die einstige." Auerbach, "Philologie der *Weltliteratur*," 40.)

13 ("Die rechte Liebe zur Welt"); Auerbach, "Philologie der *Weltliteratur*," 50; Edward and Maire Said, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," Philologie der *Weltliteratur*," 17.

14 Said, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," 17.

15 See, for example, Wai Chee Dimock's discussion of literary ecologies in her essay "African, Caribbean, American: Black English as Creole Tongue," in *Shades of the Planet*, or Alexander J. Beecroft, "World Literature without a Hyphen: Towards A Typology of Literary Systems," *New Left Review* 54 November/December 2008, 91. Beecroft affirms that Niklas Luhmann's discussion of environment in his book *Ecological Communication* informs his turn from economic to ecological metaphors for World Literature. Charting a new theoretical direction entirely, Timothy Morton orients ecological thought away from the Romantic cultural construct of nature in his books *Ecology Without Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

16 On the attribution of *Weltliteratur* to *Wieland*, see John Pizer, *The Idea of World Literature*, Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006, 1.

17 “Occidental eschatology” (*“Abendländische eschatologie”*), “Israel is the restless element …”: Taubes, 16; “Life is exiled in the world …”: ibid., 27; “Alienness or Exile”: ibid., 26; “The nonworldly comes into being …”: ibid., 31; “The process of redemption …”: ibid., 38; Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, trans. David Ratmoko, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 8.

18 Taubes, 50, 61.

19 Timothy Bahti, in his seminal essay “Auerbach’s *Mimesis*: Figural Structure and Historical Narrative,” also reads eschatology into Auerbach. In bracketing Auerbach with Benjamin, through the “allegory of the eschatology of historical meaning,” he makes a polemical point about literary history’s relationship to theory: “The senses of the alternate allegories of history—nihilism or eschatology, dead meaning or meaning deferred—might be borne in mind today whenever literary history would be so blithely opposed to the labyrinths of literary theory.” Timothy Bahti, *After Strange Texts: The Role of Theory in the Study of Literature*, ed. Gregory Jan and David Miller, Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985, 145.

20 In the early Dante book, Auerbach described the crisis in terms of Dante’s commitment to a Thomist vision of the “physical, ethical, and political unity of the Scholastic Christian cosmos at a time when it was beginning to lose its ideological integrity.” Erich Auerbach, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, 175.

21 Auerbach, *Dante*, 178.

22 Erich Auerbach, “On Dante,” sound recording of a lecture delivered at Penn State University, 1948. See, too, Martin Vialon’s discussion of this recording in an essay published in the collective volume *Erich Auerbach, Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen*, ed. Martin Treml and Karl Heinz Barck, Berlin: Kadmos Verlag, 2007; Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatorio*, trans. Charles S. Singleton, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973, 121–3.

23 Ibid., 125, lines 64–9; Erich Auerbach, “Saul’s Pride,” 40–2, *Modern Language Notes* 64: 4, April 1949, 267–9.

24 Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language & its Public in Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, 236; ibid., 236.

25 Auerbach, “Saul’s Pride,” 268.

26 Agamben associates the nominal syntagma with “the zero degree copula, a complete assertion that does not contain a verbal predicate” (130). The expression of faith arises, he says, from what Paul is doing with Deuteronomy. “Having just affirmed that the Messiah is the *telos* of the law, Paul, in a typical gesture of hermeneutic violence, transfers onto faith and the Messiah what in Deuteronomy referred to Mosaic law … The word nearby, which was a word of command, now becomes a ‘word of faith’” (130). Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, trans. Patricia Dailey, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005, 127.

27 Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 130; see Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, New York: HarperCollins, 2000; Paolo Valesio, foreword to Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, xvi.

28 Similarities in the thinking of Auerbach and Benjamin are not purely incidental. They shared a friendship going back to 1924, when they met in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. Benjamin was writing his *Habilitationsschrift, Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* and Auerbach was there working as a librarian.

29 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, “Pathos of the Earthly Progress: Erich Auerbach’s Everydays,” in *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology: The Legacy of Erich Auerbach*, ed. Seth Lerer, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996, 26; Barry Maine, “Erich Auerbach’s ‘Mimesis’ and Nelson Goodman’s “‘Ways of World Making: A Nominal(ist) Revision,” *Poetics Today* 20, 1 (Spring, 1999): 41–52; James I. Porter, “Erich Auerbach and the Judaizing of Philology,” *Critical Inquiry* 35: 1, Autumn 2008.

30 With regard to Franz Rosenzweig’s 1921 book *Star of Redemption*, Peter Eli Gordon asserts, “Rosenzweig is tempted to look upon any concession to theological history as a denial of genuine theology. He feared it will lead to historicism, a mode of thinking which contextualizes and thereby destroys the actuality and immediacy of biblical revelation. Consequently, for Rosenzweig history is evacuated of genuinely theological significance, and against the traditional understanding of the Jews as a people bound to God who acts within history. Rosenzweig asserts the modernist vision of history as void of redemptive significance, and casts the Jewish devotion to God as a suprahistorical condition of complete inaction.” Peter Eli Gordon, “The Concept of the Apolitical: German Jewish Thought and Weimar Political Theology,” *Social Research* 74, Fall 2007, 865. Following Gordon’s exposition, one might characterize Auerbach’s position as the exact antithesis of Rosenzweig’s. Auerbach insists on reconciling earthly historicism with a theology of revelation. For him, revelation *can* be contextualized (through figuralism), affording it “actuality and immediacy” as an event of this world, seated in history and politics.

31 “Vier Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der französischen Bildung”

32 Erich Auerbach, “The Triumph of Evil in Pascal,” *The Hudson Review* 4: 1, Spring 1951, 78–9.

33 See Gumbrecht, “Pathos of the Earthly Progress,” 30–1. Stressing Auerbach’s theme of the “pathos of earthly progress,” part of a phrase taken from an essay on Proust that Auerbach wrote after the publication of the *Recherche*, Gumbrecht lends credence to my reading of Auerbach’s ethical realism as coextensive with *Welt*-theology. He notes that Auerbach was “not primarily interested in the world-creating function of memory but praised Proust for his representation of ‘the earthly world’ as an ‘unknown, unexplored, mysteriously composed substance,’” and pointed to the last sentence of the essay that characterizes Proust’s opus as “the true epic of the soul.” Gumbrecht, who adduces these examples in the name of Auerbach’s “practical existentialism,” offers, in this keen illustration of a Dantesque Proust (what I’m tempted to call “Proust, poet of the secular world”), a sense of how theological telos imbues reality, everydayness, realism and earthliness in Auerbach’s critical vocabulary.

II

Said's Terrestrial Humanism

Edward Said's late works *Freud and the Non-European* (2003), *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2003) and the posthumously published *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (2006) attest to humanism's persistence, both as a continuation of Leo Spitzer's exemplary investigations of "the modes of persistence of texts" and as an essential blueprint of the humanities in future iterations of World Literature. Though *Orientalism* will, undoubtedly, remain Said's most influential book, these later texts attest to the generative possibilities of Saidian humanism for comparative literature as a discipline and World Literature as one of its historic subfields. A number of critical studies of Said's oeuvre support this surmise. Anthony C. Alessandrini focuses on the re-baptism of Said's "residual humanism" as "emergent humanism" (the former a term coined by Said himself to describe the kind of accusations typically lobbed against much of his work outside of *Orientalism*). William V. Spanos's *The Legacy of Edward W. Said* (2009) attends to the fact that Said "nowhere theorizes" the history of humanism's usage nor exactly "what he means by it" and insists that the stakes are of the highest order, pertaining to the "global consequences for oppositional thought and politics."[1] For Spanos, Saidian humanism—what he calls his "historicist philology"—contains the possibility of a radically worldly poststructuralist criticism.

In a collective volume, *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, edited by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, Patrick Wolfe places the comparative study of settler-colonialisms within the compass of Saidian humanism, emphasizing

> relationships such as those between Chinese and Tibetans, Tswana and Khoi-San, Russians and Chetchens, or Indonesians and Papuans … as well as a "settler-colonialism that is internal to Europe, such as those imposed on the Irish, Basque or Sami peoples."

In his contribution "Edward Said's Unhoused Philological Humanism," Curthoys credits Said's exilic humanism with "enabling the adventurous intellectual to reflect on their motivations, peculiar characteristics and worldly circumstances." Debjani Ganguly associates Saidian humanism with a vision that challenges "the three 'negative' models of human existence in the world today: nationalism, religious ethnocentrism and exclusivism derived from identitarian thought."[2] Said's philological humanism is cast as translational, transnational, transtemporal and (according to Curthoys and Ganguly in their Introduction) "consciously at odds with dominant political and economic registers of the 'global.'"[3] From this perspective, translational humanism bequeaths a literary cartography calibrated to the social life of political cultures in real time. This is humanism charged with continually re-translating the cultural predicates of world literatures as they fluctuate relationally; inflected by the now-ness of actuality, the contemporaneity of the event.

To understand more fully this characterization of Saidian humanism as a call to revise conventional terrestrial and territorial configurations as well as the temporal coordinates of conventional periodization (intractably oriented around Europe-based chronotopes and genres such as classicism, the Renaissance, romanticism, modernism, and so forth), it is useful to reconsider briefly how Said himself defined humanism's compact, especially vis-à-vis some of the "strong critics" of his time. Said forged his positions confrontationally in response to two titans, Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom, both of whom, far more than Leo Spitzer or Erich Auerbach, set the terms of literary criticism and theory for his generation. I would even conjecture that Said's recourse to Spitzer and Auerbach was at least in part an effort to effect an end-run around Frye and Bloom. When Said wrote in *Freud and the Non-European* that it was Auerbach who "had the capacity to sense that a new historical era was being born, and he could tell that its lineaments and structures would be unfamiliar precisely because so much in it was neither European nor Eurocentric," he may have been erecting the figure of an anti-Eurocentric Auerbach in order to counter more proximate forms of Eurocentrism associated with Bloom and Frye.[4]

In Said's first book, *Beginnings*, Bloom is approvingly cited in relation to Walter Jackson Bate as the namesake of a revitalized influence studies. But, by the time we reach *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Bloom has become the avatar of humanism's wrong turn. As one may recall, in 1998, the year Bloom put his imprimatur on humanism with a best-selling book *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (cementing his status as arbiter of the Western canon), he was also stepping up his campaign against what he disparagingly dubbed the "school of resentment." Resentment (*ressentiment*) is a particularly injurious word, leaving the party that is accused of it locked into a position of psychic defensiveness, seeking scapegoats on which to displace feelings of failure, humiliation, and inferiority. It is a word often used in pop-psychological explanations of Arab and Muslim hostility to Western secular culture. For Bloom, it also works as an exclusionary term insofar as "resentniks"—critics who allegedly downgrade aesthetics for the sake of ideology—no longer belong to the fold of true humanists who understand that a full-value humanities (epitomized by the Shakespearean human) possesses the force of secular religion. For Said, the stakes went well beyond the condemnation of Bloom's restriction of humanism to predominantly Euro, Anglo male authors. Bloom's "vatic trumpetings" were objectionable, to be sure, but it was his preeminent hold on Gnostic humanism together with his self-appointment as guardian of the literary that were most worthy of contestation.[5]

Northrop Frye was a less controversial figure for Said, but he too was identified with a tradition of theological hermeneutics that impinged on Said's vision of secular criticism. In Said's estimation, Frye's 1957 *Anatomy of Criticism* offered a "Blakean-Jungian synthesis of the humanistic system organized into a mini-life-world with its own seasons, cycles, rituals, heroes, social classes, and utopian pastoral as well as urban settings," which, though impressive as "the last synthesis of a worldview in the American humanities," led inexorably to a Blakean idea of the "human divine, a Judeo-Christian Eurocentric norm." Whereas Said remained circumspect, Fredric Jameson cast an approving eye on Frye's construct of "the social," deriving from Frye's criticism of myth a "willingness to raise the issue of community and to draw basic, essentially social, interpretive consequences from the nature of religion as collective representation." Jameson also credited Frye's figuralism with leading to a demystificatory reading conducive to exposing the mythological substrate of ideology. Jameson's proto-Marxist Frye had no proto-postcolonial counterpart for Said. From Said's viewpoint, Frye's unproblematized sense of the "humanistic world of agency" and insufficient attention to the politics of nationalism were major flaws as was his obliviousness to institutions like "the monarchy, the treasury, colonial companies and land-settlement agencies."[6] Said placed institutional critique at the heart of humanism, for it was precisely an institution's structural hold on power and belief systems that made it a catalyst of secular criticism.

Aamir Mufti has crucially glossed Said's notion of secular criticism as "critical secularism." In his preface to a special issue of *boundary 2*, he wrote:

> Said's use of the term *secular* involves a displacement of its usual significations. Secular criticism in Said's reckoning is, first of all, a practice of unbelief; it is directed, however, not simply at the objects of religious piety but at secular "beliefs" as well, and, at its most ambitious, at all those moments at which thought and culture become frozen, congealed, thinglike and self-enclosed … At no point is *secular* used in his work in simple opposition to the religious per se. Above all, his concern has been with domination through the classification and management of cultures and of human collectivities, into mutually distinct and immutable entities, be they nations, properly speaking, or civilizations or ethnicities. To the great modern system for the classification of cultures Said gave the name Orientalism and viewed the hierarchies of this system as marking the presence of a "reconstructed religious impulse, a naturalized supernaturalism."[7]

Mufti points up the extent to which critical secularism functions as a theoretical pragmatics, a criticism of the mutually authorizing discourses of humanism and imperialism, as well as a means of practicing worldliness.

For insight into what this worldiness entails, we do well to return to Edward and Maire Said's 1969 translation of Auerbach's 1952 essay "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," which seeded the important concept of *Welt* in Said's oeuvre. In their introductory prelude to the translation, the Saids noted that Goethe used *Weltliteratur* to designate "universal literature, or literature which expresses *Humanität*, humanity."[8] In reworking the term for postwar times, they were clearly attuned to Auerbach's imagination of a *Weltliteratur* that was not standardized but made to measure on a planetary scale,[9] suggesting that Auerbachian humanism stressed that "where earlier epochs dared to designate man's place in the universe … our philological home is the earth. It can no longer be the nation." In calling for a "prenational" sense of *Geist*, they said Auerbach had opened the borders to "a proper love for the world."[10]

Welt and *Erde*, marked terms of Auerbach's mature internationalism, redound to the title of his 1929 book *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt*, which was rendered in English as *Dante: Poet of the Secular World* Ralph Manheim's translation of the title was consequential for Saidian humanism. "Secular" is something of a mistranslation of *"irdisch*," normally defined in English as earthly, temporal, or transient. Moreover, secular translates into German as *Weltlich*, which would produce the tautology *Weltlichen Welt* or "Dante: Poet of the Worldly World." This figure of the "worldly world" may, however, be precisely what Saidian humanism was after. It arguably works well for Saidian philology by underscoring the "earthliness" of secularism; something we see in evidence in his 2005 preface to *Mimesis*, in which, following Auerbach, he stresses Dante's ability to articulate earthly paradise and human incarnation by pushing the conventions of the *sermo humilis* or low style for communicating the Christian sublime. As distinct from philosophical ascriptions of *Abgrund*, or the Heideggerian terms *Grund* and *Erdherrschaft* (tainted by a nationalist rhetoric of nation and soil), *irdisch* connotes spirit imbued with the terrestrial, the fleshly, the material, the mundane. And in the longer sequence of Untranslatables that includes *Welt, Mundus, World, Terre, Cosmos, Chôra, Globe*, and *Planetarity, irdisch* takes its place as crucially constitutive of what Said, in the finale of his 1979 essay "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," characterized as political worldliness:

> Finally, (a) what role as a producer of criticism and historical knowledge does the Western intellectual play given the background of Occidental domination and oppression of the non-Occidental world; (b) what is the meaning of community given the construction and abuse of Others—women, Blacks, Palestinians, etc.—and given also the sustained production of alienating technological discourses (colluded in by liberal intellectuals) in the advanced capitalist world?
>
> To this cluster of problems the critical consciousness can respond only with: the study of history, a belief in rational knowledge, a strong sense of what *political* life is all about, a set of values grounded absolutely in human community, democracy, and faith in the future. Thus do theory and praxis become aspects of each other, when intellectual work more closely approaches political worldliness.[11]

One of the most difficult tasks set by this terrestrial humanism is the naming of Palestine. The vexed philology related to the terms "Palestine" and "Palestinian," much like that related to "Jersualem" and "Jews," triggers a syndrome associated by Mufti (in his essay "The Missing Homeland of Edward Said") with the problem of what it means "to be inside or outside a place that does not exist." In "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims," Said deplored strategic efforts to confine the name Palestine to usage as an administrative designation valid only during the Roman Empire. "There are innumerable and ongoing references to the name in Arabic from the ninth century on, as well as in European literature from the Middle Ages to the present," he points out. "Epistemologically, however, the name Palestine has transmuted from a reality into a non-reality." Said cites Moshe Dayan's chilling words: "You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I don't blame you, because … these geography books no longer exist … the Arab villages are not there either." In an interview, Daniel Barenboim confirmed how this attitude prevailed when he was growing up in Israel in the 1950s:

> We told ourselves that either the Palestinians had left because they wanted to leave, or they were encouraged to leave by other Arabs. I don't think I met a Palestinian growing up. I was a patriot. Then I remember in September 1970, when King Hussein killed a lot of Palestinians, Golda Meir saying: "Who are these Palestinian people? We are the people of Palestine." And for the first time I thought to myself, that can't be right.[12]

Mufti takes full account of the strange life of "the name of the non-place" of Palestine. It has become, he writes, "in the process of its disappearance a signifier that attaches itself to too many things, places and memories." So, too, has the name for the Palestinian people, which circulates as a generic, globally claimed moniker for dispersal and disposability, for an internationally iconic deterritorialization. *Palestiños*, Mufti reminds us, is the Cuban term for rural migrant. Functioning in this regard as a paronym (a word with shared cognates and multiple significations), it resembles the term *musulman*, a term of concentration camp argot applied to the survivor, Othered by encroaching death and the most tenuous hold on bare life. The transportability of these names—"Palestinian," "Muslim," and "Jew"—reveals reservoirs of historical irony and co-implication. Taking his cue from Hannah Arendt, Mufti notes, for example, that "the Jewish question was resolved by producing a new category of refugees. Palestinian is the name of that refugee." Palestinians also inherit the dubious mantle of statelessness from the Jews. As Mufti notes, by the '50s and '60s there was a momentous "transference of the problem of statelessness from Europe to the Third World." Even more recently, Mufti argues, "Palestinian" has come to signify "a figure of blocked and thwarted mobility that negates myths of large-scale mobility that structure thinking in the contemporary world." This leads to what he calls "the maddening paradox of any attempt at mobility if you come from nowhere."

The story of a homeland gone missing is most strikingly rendered by Said in *After the Last Sky*, a photographic album of Palestinian lives published in 1986, for which Said wrote the text that accompanied photos by Jean Mohr. I purchased my copy of this work in a bookstore in Istanbul, and reading it there, was inspired to think about secular criticism as a distinct form of Saidian humanism that fit with cities of cultural transverse, theological complexity, *translatio imperii*, and dense archaeologies of knowledge. Sensitive to the obvious parallels between Istanbul in the 1930s, a haven to displaced German and Austrian humanists, and Said's poignant writings about Palestinian dislocation, I came to understand Saidian humanism as a new foundation of the discipline of comparative literature; one that emphasizes exilic consciousness; the ethics of the human; textual filiation; worldliness; the critique of embedded epistemologies of Orientalism; and what I would call *negative philology*—a play on negative theology that uses the syntax of negation to designate what is no longer there. In *After the Last Sky*, Palestine is named in a drumbeat of "no's" and "nots":

> There is *no* great episode in our history that establishes imperatives for our future course, partly because our past is still ragged, discredited, and unassimilated … We have *no* dominant theory of Palestinian culture, history, society; we can*not* rely on one central image (exodus, holocaust,

> long march); there is *no* completely coherent discourse adequate to us, and I doubt whether at this point, if someone could fashion such a discourse, we could be adequate for it. Miscellaneous, the spaces here and there in our midst include but *do not* comprehend the past; they represent building *without* overall purpose, around an *un*charted and only partially surveyed territory. With*out* a center. *A*tonal. [My emphases in italics.]

Said relies, interestingly enough, on a language of "de-centering" typical of deconstruction, but he endows it with earthly and worldly valences, especially with that reference to uncharted, partially surveyed territory. It is territory that underwrites so many of his declensions and translations. *Al-dakhil*, meaning "from the interior" and a term used to refer to Israel's expansion over communities and places, once the name Palestine is translated by Said as "people still Palestinian despite the interdictions of the Israeli presence." After the '67 war, he maintains, *al-dakhil* has been associated with inhabitants of the occupied territories: "those from inside," those enjoying the privilege of "obduracy." Gradually, especially when Palestinians meet in other parts of the world, the semantic emphasis shifts slightly to designate the strange kind of privacy that comes from living on the outside as if it were the inside; a public incognito based on using "'their' codes … to mean something quite different." The problem with this ambiguous zone of language is that meaning becomes perforce "evasive" and "idiosyncratic." In answer to the dilemma of living alongside outsiders while trying to define what you lay claim to on the inside, Said describes a mode of speaking in enigmas:

> We are a people of messages and signals, of allusions and indirect expression. We seek each other out, but because our interior is always to some extent occupied and interrupted by others—Israelis and Arabs—we have developed a technique of speaking *through* the given, expressing things obliquely and, to my mind, so mysteriously as to puzzle even ourselves.

Translation, as Said performs it, is always about a kind of territorial loss, be it cultural or geographic property. It deeply pains Said that the Arabic word *tabooleh* is appropriated in Hebrew as a word meaning "kibbutz salad." When the Lebanese refugee camp *Ein el-Hilwé*, (meaning "sweet spring") is pronounced in Hebrew *Ein el-Khilwé*, (meaning "a spring in an empty place") language is clearly the battleground of occupation. And the heavily freighted word "diaspora" is treated as an Untranslatable, a term measuring the subtraction of a tragic Jewish heritage from contemporary usage:

> I do not like to call it a Palestinian *diaspora*: there is only an apparent symmetry between our exile and theirs. Besides the Diaspora no longer exists spiritually and culturally as it once did in Central Europe, with tragic figures like Kafka, Schoenberg, and Benjamin at its core. Today's Diaspora is represented centrally by American Zionism …[13]

After the Last Sky reveals just how *irdisch* Said was as a practical critic and reader of site-specificity, not only of language use in a particular location but also of Palestine as a land riven by partition, erasure, and architecture. Alive to the crucial role of architecture in territorial politics, Said's caption to several images shot by Jean Mohr of a housing complex designed by the Polish-born Israeli architect Zvi Hecker in 1979 conveys with irony his vision of territorial occupants no longer there and new inhabitants not yet arrived: *Settlements of Ramot near Jerusalem, 1979. As the buildings neared completion, tenants were in short supply.* Interestingly, the very designation of this place emerges as a site of translation politics: Hecker calls it a "housing complex" and Said calls it a "settlement." Said's commentary was pointed, associating "settlement" with Israel's self-accorded license to offend Palestine:

> The attitude expressed in the construction of settlements on the West Bank is unmistakable. Visually there is a rude interventionary power in them that, I am told, shocks even Israelis. One thinks not only of a coarse army of heedless and rough crusaders, but also—given some of the structures themselves—of a marching cancer. As for the effect on the landscape and Palestine's ecology, the offense is deep and lasting.[14]

I too found myself profoundly disturbed by these images of Hecker's polyhedric pods, with their menacing military aspect, their fortress-wall massing, and windows resembling surveillant periscopes or stages for sharpshooters. But I could also see that the complex could read quite differently if it were abstracted from context. Hecker was a rather interesting figure in the history of modernism, often hailed (by Daniel Libeskind among others) as an architectural deconstructivist avant la lettre. He has been cast as an heir to the Viennese expressionists Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbart (who emphasized the crystalline perfection of natural geometries) and as a comparable figure to Moshe Safdie, whose Habitat megastructure was featured at the 1967 Montreal Expo and like Hecker's Ramot, was of a piece with work by Dutch urbanists such as Aldo van Eyck (who coined the term "built homecoming" to refer to his vision of the reciprocity between cognition and environment, social patterning and built form, domestic space and city) and Piet Bloom, whose much-loved Cubic Houses in Rotterdam, built in the mid-1980s, serve as the city's mascot on numerous websites.[15] Conceived as living modules against the reigning orthodoxy of slab block housing, and drawing on the ideal of cities like villages, the Cubic Houses were situated on top of a pedestrian bridge. The concept behind the project was to create a forest, with each cube a tree. The windows opened onto the environment below, embracing the site.

Like these Dutch proponents of configurative design, Hecker belonged to a postwar movement that looked to stones, crystals and honeycombs to furnish a formal system for housing. Nature provided a "systems" humanism that was intended to mitigate the relentless straight lines of international modernism. For Hecker, "dodecahedra in space-packing arrangements" sent a message of collective "individuality" and humanized material surfaces. In a subsequent elaboration, Hecker wrote:

> Toward the end of 1972, while engaged on the Ramot Housing Complex near Jerusalem, I decided to undertake a systematic investigation of the properties and potentialities of the dodecahedral form in architectural design. It was the last of the five Platonic solids (tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron) that I had considered … it is a polyhedron whose occurrence in nature is rare … the length of a diagonal of its pentagonal face corresponds to the Golden Section … used by Greek and Gothic architects, and applied by Le Corbusier… It was my rather casual observation that a group of dodecahedra resembled a rough stone wall that captured my imagination … the catalyst in the design of the Ramot Housing Complex with its landscape characterized by small hills, piles of rocks and human-made terraces.

In discussing Ramot, Hecker seems impervious to the impact of settlements on the Palestinian villages. Though he mentions,offhandedly, that he made his preliminary sketches of polyhedral form "in the first days of the Arab–Israel war of 1973, when I was in the Israeli army, far from my office," there is no acknowledgment that his architecture was basically part of a strategic plan to use settlers as battlements, or that it did violence to its surround. This violence is underscored by the photographic sequence in *After the Last Sky*. Mohr's camera moves beyond Hecker's housing units, zooming in on the Arab village that survives in its shadow. The caption reads: "The foreground drops away, leaving only the Arab village, its mosque and houses surrounded by fruit trees, olive trees, and stone walls." The message is clear: if you want to find an urban form that grows naturally from the territory, if you are in search of a formal ecology expressive of humanism, then look here. In fact, the village seems to embody perfectly the humanist theoretical principles elaborated in Henri Focillon's "life of forms," advanced in his 1934 book that includes the phrase in its title:

> We must never think of forms as simply suspended in some remote, abstract zone, above the earth and above man. They mingle with life, whence they come; they translate into space certain movements of the mind … Whether stable or nomadic, all formal environments give birth to their own various types of social structure: styles of life, vocabularies, states of awareness. Expressed in a more general way, the life of forms gives definition to what may be termed "psychological landscapes," without which the essential genius of the environments would be opaque and elusive for all those who share in them.[16]

Two psychological landscapes—one militarized, the other naturalized—enter into historic face-off on the outskirts of Jerusalem in 1979. Two

conflicting visions of humanism battle it out on land, assigning terrestrial concreteness to the secular concept of *irdischen Welt*, cherished by Auerbach and Said alike. In his own formulationsof humanism, Said grappled with the well-worn quandary: how and why Jewish humanism —updated at midcentury to include credos of progressive avant-gardism, political community, and formalist ecology—moved into compromise formation with national territorialism, thus blinding itself to other humanisms and misrecognizing as a settlement a land gone missing.

In posing this question, the aim is not to defer to the obvious answers: namely that humanism's universalism is particular, relative to territorial emplacement and local politics, or that one person's humanism is another person's oppression, depending on who possesses the power of franchise and property exploitation. Nor is it sufficient simply to point out the irony of the fact that both the Israeli settlement and the Palestinian village default to competing humanisms, each based on an ideal vision of collective habitat and participant sociality. For Said, such evenhandedness would neuter the politics of humanism. There would no longer be a reason to contrive a terrestrial humanism that tracks the history of forced relocation, exile, and occupation if humanism as such were applied willy-nilly as the great equalizer in places of contested ground.

What Said seems to have been after was a vision of linguistic and cultural translation in the service of political justice; a vision of "justice as translation" to borrow the title of a book by the legal scholar James Boyd White. This would entail a genuine reckoning with Israel and Palestine's chiastic relation, based on the shared fate of a missing homeland and a common exilic ancestor, "Moses, the Egyptian." As Said argued in *Freud and the Non-European*, Freud's effort to "protectively huddle the Jews inside the sheltering realm of the European," casting them as "remnants of Mediterranean civilization," is "janglingly discordant with his show of force about Moses's Egyptian origins."[17] Said uses his reading of Freud to introduce the shifting category of the "non-European" as a unit that complicates the politics of culture, and with it, the practice of psychoanalytically inflected terrestrial humanism. Who is and who is not considered European is revealed to be phantasmatically constructed as well as supremely contingent on the fragile historical circumstances of national belonging and withdrawn citizenship. Underscoring the consequences of this contingency—in the interest, perhaps, of the unconditional right of return or internationally sanctioned laws of hospitality—Said presses specific homologies: the de-Europeanization of Jews under the Nuremburg Laws of Nazi Germany, the re-Europeanization of Jews as defenders of the West in the Middle East after the 1948 creation of the Jewish state in Palestine, and the de-Mediterraneanization of Arabs after 1948.

In addition to foregrounding the political stakes that accompany the classification of peoples within heritage traditions (a major concern in Orientalism), Said places the study of legal statutes governing citizenship and land entitlement within humanism's purview. Equally important, he urges the critic to remake humanism in the guise of ethical militance; thereby disrobing the congeniality of a liberal tradition that loves the world but ignores the earthly violence of distributive injustice. Finally, Said's emphasis on the word "world" in its widest ascription prompts renewed philosophical investigations of what is *irdisch*, in the manner of late Kant, who advanced some wacky yet intriguing theories about the earth as a self-sanctioning *nomos*. Peter Fenves reminds us (drawing on Kant's *Toward Eternal Peace* as well as a number of posthumously published writings invoking the "Earth-globe now") that

> the original meaning of the Greek word *nomos* is 'division,' especially the division and distribution of the land for the purpose of its occupation and cultivation … Insofar as the *nomos* of the earth is more original than any particular legal order, there is no position from which it can be judged right or wrong: it is a matter of fact, not of right … *Toward Eternal Peace* addresses the lawless character of this *nomos* of the earth.

Fenves argues that such a *nomos*, at least in Kantian terms, engenders not a world without laws but a motion toward concession; a place-making for "another kind of human being" that would transition the planet "from the metaphysics of nature to physics." Though this sounds abstract, cosmic, even science-fictional, Kant's wild speculations about "another law of the earth" in his late writings exhibit the traits of "late style" that Said mined for future humanisms. Quirky thought experiments, strange geological and astrophysical projections, unpleasing stylistic admixtures of archaism and decadence, recourse to anachronism and other mechanisms of revolutionary untiming—these were among the riches discovered in "late style." Celebrating Theodor Adorno's "daring thesis [in an essay called "Alienated Masterpiece" in his *Essays on Music*] that like Kant, Beethoven was posing the question of ultimate ontology in terms of subjectivity," Said was particularly struck by Adorno's way of reading exclusion and renunciation into Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, for it enabled him to argue that what Beethoven was also renouncing was "the aim of reconciling [what Adorno termed] 'the universally human' with a concrete way of being human."[18] Said's openness to "concrete ways of being human" that are not foretold in the conventional humanist program of universal values strikes me as comparable in an interesting manner to the Kantian notion of a humankind to come. This *irdisch* human may be somewhat otherworldly, but it is a kind of otherworldliness that discloses states of freedom, or heresy, or sublime justice (what Dante and Mahmoud Darwish each called Paradise).

Having conceived Said's terrestrial humanism in terms of multiple heuristics—a negative philology, a translational cartography, a contrapuntal reading of world literature, a revelation of the weaponization of humanism in situations of territorial incursion—I will conclude by emphasizing that it above all represents *irdisch* in the full if mistranslated sense of *Weltlich Welt*, "worldly world," or earthly paradise. It is tempting to draw a line of criticism that leads from late Kant, to Kostas Axelos (author of the 1964 *Vers la pensée planétaire*), and up to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose anti-globalization theory of planetarity in *Death of a Discipline* has held sway in reconfiguring comparative literature through a renewed area studies. Another line goes from Jacques Derrida (whose notion of *chôra* implies a "cosmetics" of the world that considers the globe as both an earthly raiment and holding receptacle) to Jean-Luc Nancy, who poses the question in *Being Singular Plural*:

> Can we think an earth and a human such that they would be only what they are—*nothing but* earth and human—and such that they would be none of the various horizons often harbored under these names, none of the "perspectives" or "views" *in view* of which we have disfigured humans [*les hommes*] and driven them to despair?

Nancy designates "Sarajevo" as the "martyr-name" of "a world that does not even manage to constitute a world … a world lacking in world, and lacking in the meaning of world."[19] Said designates "Palestine" in much the same way, but where Nancy refers to the signification of "Sarajevo" in terms of what he describes as the world's autism, Said coaxes "Palestine" into the loquacious place of humanism's afterlife.

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1 Ned Curthoys, "Edward Said's Unhoused Philological Humanism," in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007, 156. Curthoys's citation of "the modes of persistence of texts" comes from Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, London: Vintage, 1991, 149; Anthony C. Alessandrini, "Humanism in Question: Fanon and Said," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, 431–50; William V. Spanos, *The Legacy of Edward W. Said*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009, 4 and 5.

2 Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, "Introduction," *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007, 4. The excerpt is from Patrick Wolfe's essay for the volume "Palestine, Project Europe and the (Un-)Making of the New Jew: In Memory of Edward W. Said," 314; Curthoys, "Edward Said's Unhoused Philological Humanism," 154; Debjani Ganguly, "Edward Said, World Literature and Global

Comparatism," in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, 177–8.

3 Curthoys and Ganguly, *Edward Said*, 9.

4 Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, London: Verso, 2003, 23.

5 Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, New York: Riverhead Books, 1998; Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 27.

6 Ibid., 39–40; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981, 69; Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 40.

7 Aamir R. Mufti, "Critical Secularism: A Reintroduction for Perilous Times," *boundary 2* 31: 2, 2004, 2–3.

8 Edward and Maire Said, introductory prelude to "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," trans. Edward and Maire Said, *Centennial Review* 13, 1969, 1; Erich Auerbach, "Philologie der Weltliteratur," *Weltliteratur: Festgabe für Fritz Strich zum Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Muschg, Emil Staiger, and Walter Henzen, Bern: Francke, 1952, 39–50.

9 *Auf dem ganzen Planeten*; ibid., 39.

10 Edward and Maire Said, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," trans. Edward and Maire Said, *Centennial Review* 13: 1, 1969, 17.

11 Edward W. Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text* 1, Winter 1979: 56.

12 Edward W. Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims," *Social Text* 1, Winter 1979, 56; Aamir Mufti, "The Missing Homeland of Edward Said," unpublished essay; Said, "Zionism," 8; Moshe Dayan, cited in ibid., 8; Daniel Barenboim, interview with Michael Kimmelman, "A Whirlwind Named Barenboim," *New York Times*, November 23, 2008, 29.

13 Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky*, London: Vintage, (1986) 1993, 68, 129, 51, 56, 52, 53, 135, 136, 135 and 115.

14 Ibid., 72.

15 Karin Jaschke, "City is House and House is City: Aldo van Eyck, Piet Bloom and the Architecture of Homcoming," in *Intimate Metropolis*, ed. Vittoria Di Palma, Diana Periton, and Marina Lathouri, London: Routledge, 2009, 184.

16 Zvi Hecker, "My Geometry of Polyhedral Sculpture," *Leonardo* 10: 3, Summer 1977, 185; Zvi Hecker, "The Cube and the Dodecahedron in My Polyhedric Architecture," *Leonardo* 13: 4, Autumn, 1980, 272–3; ibid., 273; Said, *After the Last Sky*, 74; Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Beecher Hogan and George Kubler, New York: Zone Books, 1992, 60–1.

17 James Boyd White, *Justice as Translation: An Essay in Cultural and Legal Criticism*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990; Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, 40.

18 Peter Fenves, *Late Kant: Towards Another Law of the Earth*, New York: Routledge, 2003, 168, 169; "another Law of the Earth" is borrowed here from Fenves's subtitle; Edward W. Said, *Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain*, New York: Pantheon, 2006, 92.

19 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000, xii, xiii.

III

Derrida's Theologies of Translation

> If the mind could, in a single act of knowledge, *really* grasp (*begriefen*) absolute totality as a system completed in all of its parts, it would overcome its finitude. It would not need to translate.
>
> —Jacques Derrida, "Theology of Translation"

> So I've chosen, in attempting this quasi-concluding reflection as a kind of premise for the discussion that will follow, to mark, remark, and have you remark with me the fact that at bottom everything we have spoken about came down to problems of translation.
>
> —Jacques Derrida, Thirteenth and final session, March 27, 2002, Seminar on "The Beast and the Sovereign"

In April 1979, acting in his capacity as chair of comparative literature, Paul de Man corresponded with Jacques Derrida on the subject of renewing his invitation as visiting professor at Yale. He mentions a translation seminar that Derrida will teach in 1979–80, and in a follow-up missive, refers to the course as "Translation and the Question of Comparative Literature." In his gracious acceptance of the offer, Derrida refers in French to the same seminar as "The Concept of Comparative Literature and the Theoretical Problems of Translation."[1] The discrepancies are, of course, intriguing. Where de Man foregrounds "translation" as the first order of the seminar's business, Derrida foregrounds "comparative literature." Where Derrida treats comparative literature as "concept," de Man treats it as "question." Where Derrida frames "translation" as a set of "theoretical problems," de Man lets translation stand without any allusion to theory. And where de Man implies that translation as a praxis puts comparative literature into question, Derrida renders the very name comparative literature a conceptual Untranslatable; the name of a strangely exotic discipline from the perspective of a philosopher.

Derrida's transcript for the seminar (written in French and housed in UC Irvine's Special Collections and Archives) reveals a marked self-consciousness about his outsider status to the field of comparative literature.[2] It shows too how consequential the course was for his future work; in fact, it may be no overstatement to affirm that it was the crucible for his long-term meditation on disciplinary "rights" (the "right to literature," the "right to philosophy"), and, at the very end of his life (in the seminar on "The Beast and the Sovereign"), for his critique of how the animal has been separated from the human.[3] Disciplinary interrogation was in the air at Yale in the '70s and '80s and Derrida was fully participant in the symptom. Already, in 1974 he had joined a group of educators in France that came to be known as GREPH (Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique) that sought to rethink philosophical pedagogy. Imbued with post-'68 populism and interested in examining the "what" of philosophy by displacing the "where" of philosophy (dislocating its transmission to places outside the university walls), the group produced a document in 1975 that would critically investigate "models of didactic operations legible, with their rhetoric, logic, psychagogy, etc., within *written* discourses"; "*pedagogical practices* administered according to rules in fixed places, in public or private *establishments* since the Sophists"; "the teaching system's legislative power and juridical and traditional code"; and "the stakes of the struggles within and around philosophical education, today, in France." In "Philosophy and its Classes," an article published in *Le Monde* in 1975, Derrida offered a passionate defense of the teaching of philosophy. His polemic was forged in opposition to the ultimately defeated "Haby Reform," which called for scaling back philosophical instruction in French schools and universities. Emphasizing the need for "training," "new techniques," and the fashioning of "experiments," Derrida proselytized for "the extension and transformation of so-called philosophical teaching."[4]

Derrida brought these political talking points to bear on the academically rarefied internal discussions at Yale over how to revamp the literature departments to accommodate theory, or, more to the point, how to defend theory against its institutional adversaries.[5] He would give substance to this agenda in his seminars at Yale and elsewhere by developing a deconstructive technics that presaged comp lit's future as translatability studies.

Derrida's 1979–80 seminar, the Concept of Comparative Literature and the Theoretical Problems of Translation, was of a piece with others that he was offering around the same time: the Right to Philosophy (*du droit à la philosophie*), the Right to Literature (*du droit à la littérature*), and the Reason of the University (*la Raison universitaire*), given in the years 1978–79, 1970–80, and 1982–83, respectively. Each of these courses activated the pedagogical aporia. Evidence of this is found in "Vacant Chair," an essay published in *Eyes of the University* that wittily glossed Kant's famous dictum "One does not learn philosophy, one can only learn to philosophize" by imagining models of "teaching without learning," and a "university itself that does not take place." Recalling his course on the right to literature in an interview in *Acts of Literature*, Derrida returned to the pedagogical aporia; imagining an ideal reader

> who does not yet exist, whose competence cannot be identified, a reader who would be "formed," "trained," "instructed," "constructed," even engendered, let's say *invented* by the work … The work then becomes an institution forming its own readers, giving them a competence they did not possess before: a university, a seminar, a colloquium, a curriculum, a *course*.

In the play on the vocabulary of universities—chairs, faculties, training, instruction—Derrida parodies the ceremonial forms of university life but preserves their instructive force. Designating "the works" themselves as teachers (rather than the corporatist body of the professoriat), Derrida opens a channel to thought that instantiates creative pedagogies (in a way that anticipates Jacques Rancière's exploration, in his 1987 study *Le maître ignorant: Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle*, of Joseph Jacotot's revolutionary models of emancipatory learning).[6] All this is important background to the comparative literature seminar, which sutures translation theory and practice to institutional critique.

Derrida deals with the "concept" of comparative literature by deferring to the "theory" of translation. From whence did this interest in translation derive? In part, of course, from his passionate engagement with the work of Walter Benjamin, whose French reception in the '60s and '70s was revitalized by Derrida's close friends and interlocutors Maurice de Gandillac (Benjamin's major French translator), Peter Szondi, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy and Antoine Berman (who was working at the time on *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, a watershed book of translation theory published in 1984).[7] We should also recall that, during an earlier teaching stint at Yale (1976), Derrida

offered a class on his essay "The Task of the Translator" titled "Des tours de Babel," which forged the basis of "Living On Border Lines" (in *Deconstruction and Criticism*) and *Des Tours de Babel* (in *Difference in Translation*). As Dragan Kujundži notes in his introduction to the publication of an English translation of the comparative literature seminar in *Discourse*, Derrida used Benjamin to establish

> a contesting analysis of the concept of comparative literature, which at the time did not find a way into the published essay dedicated to Benjamin. Similar to the name of God, Derrida argues in the seminar, works of literature are unique, singular, and operate something like proper names.[8]

Roughing in the full picture of what Derrida was teaching in the '70s and '80s, then, we begin to appreciate how distinct topologies converged in this particular seminar. Theology, law, institutions, disciplinary logic, textual survival, techniques of reading, translation—each of these concerns was in some sense a facet of the same problem: how to make philosophy and literature teachable as *technē*, or living practice.

The seminar on comparative literature, as the occasion of Derrida's anomalous entrance into a literature department, prompts a disavowed questioning of the institutional legitimacy of his host institution. Derrida piles up a list of legalistic challenges that he—as invited guest—feels *un*entitled to pose (including what the institution bases its claims to existence, property, occupancy, funding on). But, of course, he *has* posed these and even more serious challenges under cover of preterition. It is through this backhanded case against the university institution—whose authority rests on what he calls the "mechanical reproduction of its legality"—that Derrida argues for a "concept" of comparative literature that does not just exist by automatic entitlement:

> This is a department of comparative literature; I just arrived [*j'y arrive*]. Like many institutions, comparative literature did not wait for me, it did not wait for *us*, in order to exist. Nor did departments of literature in the West and elsewhere. To exist, for an institution, is to affirm its right to existence; it is to constantly refer, more or less virtually, to a legitimacy, but to a certain type of particular legitimacy, a historical legitimacy, an entitlement that has its origin in a historical act or in historical acts of foundation. When the day comes that this act of foundation—that founds the law upon nonlaw, upon an ajuridical situation—the day this act of foundation is contested by another claim to legitimacy, or simply the day when no one feels the necessity or the possibility of referring to the foundation of the law, when no one draws authority from it any longer, then the institution dies. It can outlive [*survivre à*] its own death, continue to *translate itself* in rituals, objective behaviors, reproductive procedures, and give all the exterior signs of vitality, all the apparent guarantees of its smooth functioning, of its continuity, of its legitimacy. It can continue to pretend to have a determined, rigorously identifiable object and to relate to it in a living, renewed, effective, productive way. Even if it no longer has an object around which a living consensus can be established and can bring together a community of researchers, teachers, and students, a department in a university can long outlive the disappearance of its object and of the living consensus relating to it. It is true that, in these cases, the *survival* [*survie*], the time and the economy of survival (for example, the budget, the demographics of the institution, its region of influence, etc.) are always ruled by its inscription in a larger sociopolitical space, of which we must never lose sight.[9]

When Derrida writes "comparative literature did not wait for me, it did not wait for *us*, in order to exist," it is hard not to hear echoes of Emily Dickinson's famous line "Because I could not stop for Death / He kindly stopped for me." Comp lit stops for Derrida, prompting him to re-legislate comp lit's institutional right such that it depends no longer on ajuridical statutes or a state of exception[10] but instead rests on acts of translational *sur-vie* that are equal parts Shelley and Benjamin in inspiration.[11]

Intent on disabling the reductive opposition between pedagogical life and institutional death, Derrida appeals to four mutually interfering "nouns" whose formal arraignment recalls Lacan's "four fundamental concepts":

> Now if I had to choose three or four nouns to designate what resists this opposition, what is *instituted* precisely to defeat this opposition, to disqualify it, to make it lose its entitlements, its rights, and its conditions of existence, if I had to choose three or four nouns to designate what contravenes and defies this law, I would say (1) Institution, (2) Literature, (3) Translation, and consequently, among other consequences, (4) Department of Comparative Literature. What does this mean? [Emphasis in original][12]

How, one wonders, do such "nouns" "defy laws" and say what they mean by it? The answer seems to lie in their collective power to overthrow the "rule" of logic's logic over "translations, transformations, figures and tropes" in a bid for a new order of translational justice.[13]

What we are calling "the right to translation" proves to be indistinguishable from the occasion of the seminar itself—a course at Yale *in* comparative literature *on* comparative literature and translation theory. Though fully in line with the institution's local debates over the teaching of poetics and literary theory, Derrida's course takes these pedagogical investigations in a new direction, exercising the right to translation by "translating" the name "comparative literature" itself. Thus, he moves from the Italian *letterature comparate*, to the German *vergleichende Literatur*, to the French and English correlatives:

> I am a foreign "visiting professor," speaking in his own language, but within the enclosure of an American university department dominated linguistically by English and whose title is not "compared literature;" [*littérature comparée*], but, and I translate, "comparative literature" [*littérature comparative*].[14]

By purposefully mistranslating the disciplinary proper name ("Department of Compared Literature"/Département de littérature comparative), Derrida not only underscores the extent to which "comparative literature" qualifies as a prototypical Untranslatable (an incorruptible or intransigent nub of meaning that triggers endless translating in response to its resistant singularity), he also incites the student to acts of institution. One imagines "Departments of Compared Literature" or "*Littérature Comparative*" coming into existence dedicated to translational *différance* that is to say, to the practice of attending closely to discrepant valences of "compared," "comparativity," *vergleichende* and so on.

What proves tricky in this matter of disciplinary rights, however, is the negotiation between comparative literature and literature. It would be altogether reasonable to assume that comp lit and lit would share the same rights, or at the very least a disciplinary common ground. But here, literature acts as comp lit's disestablishmentarian:

> We addressed these questions—in particular the question of the formation of the narrow concept of "literature" in the eighteenth century—last year, under the title of *droit à la littérature*. Is literature in the narrow sense, if there is such a thing, compatible with the encyclopedic project of general and comparative literature? Because comparative literature, if these words have the meaning that the consensus has always attributed to them, compares literature with itself, some literature [*de la littérature*] with itself, literatures, or literary phenomena amongst themselves. Whether we speak of comparative literature as a work or as a discipline, it always claims to be at once on the side of the comparing and of the compared. Comparative, compared, or comparing literature should, in the final analysis, only have to do with literature or with literatures as its specific object or subject. And one can identify literatures or literary phenomena, literary products or productions, only if one knows, if one at least has a precomprehension, of what "literature" or the "literariness" of literature means. Is this a "critical" question and in what way? Does it inaugurate [*ouvre*] a crisis? Does it put the concept and the institution of "comparative literature" in crisis? And what relation does it have with the problem of translation?

Comparative literature ostensibly derives its epistemological legitimacy from the singular right of literature to itself, but once this singularity is made multiple (such that comp lit, in Derrida's words, "compares itself with itself as other"), comp lit risks losing its disciplinary singularity in the welter of compared comparisons or a generalized genericity.[15]

Derrida's stated aim is to make intelligible the *critical fold* structuring comp lit's claim to "the concept of general literature, that organizes *and* disorganizes this entire discourse" (italics in the original). To this end, he assails the eminent French critic René Étiemble, who,

throughout the seminar is treated as the representative of an Enlightenment vision of comp lit, molded, like philosophy, by the ambition to embody Spirit or absolute knowledge ("totalizing or finalizing the history of meaning or of culture"). Derrida pillories Étiemble's entry on comparative literature in the *Encyclopedia Universalis* for offering a UNESCO-like template of enlightened,"techno-political" comparatism that he defenestrates as literary data management; a fantasy, as he sees it, of "the entire world becoming an immense department of Comp Lit":

> Universitas as rational realization of the universal state and decline of the state is a political problematic at the center (not at the margins) of this great comparative literature dream. Although it is commensurate with a certain modern technico-politics (UNESCO, telecommunications, gigantic memories of computerized libraries, a certain state of inter-state information transfer, etc.), the spirit of the philosophico-encyclopedic project is obviously in synchrony with the great speculative systems of the nineteenth century on the Hegelian model (but of which the Hegelian example is itself only a particularly powerful and spectacular phenomenon). I have not chosen this manifest by Étiemble, this encyclopedic text published in an *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, in order to abuse or deride it. I believe that it expresses directly and without detours the broad outline of the spirit that governs, that necessarily governs the original [*principielle*] foundation, the very constitution of every department of "complit." (To be complete or not to be.)

"To be complit or not to be"—a Beckettian Shakespeareanism of the first order that gives us the prospect of a "department of complete" or "comp lit" pronounced with a French accent—is indeed the question. It can be elaborated as whether comp lit should be given over to omnivorous encyclopedism and the comprador pursuit of allness (which, as the much later 1993 Bernheimer Report noted, could lead to the abandonment of the purely literary object of study and the ceding of comp lit to cultural studies or to expansive discursive fields that juxtapose literature non-hierarchically to extra-literary forms and mediums) or whether it should focus on the "in-complete"; that is to say, on the deconstruction of the general. Derrida, of course, gravitates to the latter option, and in doing so he may well have been responding to the de Manian problematic of literary *Vorhabe* which, as Ortwin de Graef has noted, preoccupied de Man in the late '60s. *Vorhabe* encompasses the idea of textual pregivenness, or the text as "a self-enclosed system of pure signs, unadulterated by the everyday exteriority of reference."[16] Derrida's version of *Vorhabe* is expressed as the "precomprehension of the literary," an ambiguous phrase suggesting that literature's literarity and technicity always already precomprehend the text:[17]

> In order to compare literatures or literary phenomena, I must first know, at least by way of precomprehension, what the literary is, lacking which I risk comparing anything with anything in the name of comparative literature. I would compare for example a painting and a real plant, a cookbook and a constitutional text, a novel and a bank check, a speech by Carter and the *Iliad*. Farfetched as these examples appear to you, you are well aware that for want of a rigorous a priori, of an essence rigorously protected by its apriority, one can always argue that such comparisons belong to the field of comparative literature. Since the existence of a pure literariness is and remains today more problematic than ever, the study of general literature concerns an object that is more problematic than ever and thus comparative literature can also become a wandering discipline, as delirious as it is bulimic in an unbridled encyclopedism: nothing that has to do with language is foreign to me, nothing that has to do with the work of art is foreign to me, it says; not only do all languages interest me but so do all artifices, all artistic or artisanal practices; they all have to do with language and thus with literature, etc.[18]

A second-order literarity of technics, comp lit is unique among disciplines in that its proper name assigns "comparative" a predicative rather than an adjectival status. The name comparative literature stands as a double predicate, technics multiplied by two or *Vorhabe* squared. To emphasize this distinctive feature, Derrida contrasts comparative literature with disciplines that cannot have "comparative" predicatively affixed: so for example, there is no department of comparative mathematics, department of comparative pure physics, or department of comparative general history. While it is possible to deploy "comparative" adjectivally in relation to fields (comparative politics, comparative religion, etc.), the disciplines they qualify are the predicates. Comp lit, then, is a "hapax" or singular disciplinary occurrence whose effect is captured as a tautology: "What do you expect," Derrida comments, "comparative literature, is, well, comparative literature." Earlier in the seminar he uses a similar formula: "One must compare literature with literature," a phrase milked for all its strangeness. Even if we want to understand "comparative" as the *translatio* of technics, Derrida does not teach the "literature on literature" relation that simply: "Do not forget," he admonishes, "that this idea is at once very trivial and very strange, and the conditions of its appearance are far from being clear today."[19]

Taking stock of where Derrida was situated in literary history when he referred to comparative literature "today," it is particularly interesting that he fixed on translation in the 1979 seminar.[20] Only a few years prior, in the 1975 American Comparative Literature Association's report on the state of the discipline, Derrida's Yale colleague Thomas Greene had communicated the committee's disapproval of the increase in courses including literature in translation:

> Courses in translation are potentially of great value to the student, but if no one in the classroom, including the instructor, is in touch with the original language, then something precious has been lost to the learning experience, and something also of our Comparatist integrity. An examination of several college catalogues suggests that, at more than one institution, the titles of Comparative Literature course offerings do not exclude the dillentantish, the modish, even the frivolous.

Ever the one to brook, or even exult in, accusations of dilletantishness, modishness and frivolity, Derrida instinctively gravitates to the translation problem as a flashpoint of disciplinary ire. He is of course by no means advocating monolingual pedagogy (his hermeneutic procedure, as we know, famously devolved around appositions of Untranslatables in their original languages), but one senses throughout the seminar an aversion to legislating where and how translation should take place. And, while hardly an apologist for World Lit, he endorses René Wellek's resurrection of Goethean *Weltliteratur* for the postwar era. He is also especially interested in tracking the vagaries of the Babelian comparatist who wanders across state borders infringing trespass law, seeks access to the literary commons, experiences like the emigrant the portage of language from place to place (*übersetzen* as *übertragen*), and relinquishes lasting title to authorial property to the translator (the passage from *Eigentumsüberträgung* [the transfer of title] to *Uberleben* [translational afterlife, *sur-vie*]). The importance for both Derrida and de Man of the philology of the German term for translation, *Ubersetzung*, cannot be emphasized enough. Translation was their "home," insofar as both were exiles operating continually in "foreign" languages and intellectual traditions. But "translation" was also a metaphor for the disarticulation of "the original"; its refugee status as language in a state of perpetual transit, retreat, and referential infinitude. As de Man observed:

> *Ubersetzen* translates *exactly* the Greek *metaphorein*, to move over, *übersetzen*, to put across. *Ubersetzen*, I should say, *translates* metaphor—which, asserts Benjamin, is not at all the same. They are not metaphors, yet the word means metaphor. The metaphor is not a metaphor.[21]

Ubersetzung in its very etymology denotes "to move over" or "to put across" with all of its associations: the incorporation of psychic damage, the pain and suffering of language as such, the deportation of humans, and of literature. It was surely not incidental that de Man would devote a substantial portion of his 1979 undergraduate comp lit seminar on Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" to the juridico-ontological implications of the *Ubertragung/Ubersetzung* pairing, for these cognates performed as signifiers of linguistic evacuation, homelessness, and abrogated citizenship.[22] For his part, Derrida would explore the semantic panoply around translation and statelessness in *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre, ou, Laprothèse d'origine*, whose original title, when it was delivered in 1992 in lecture form was Echoes from Elsewhere/*Renvoz's d'ailleurs*.

Though Derrida presciently articulated disciplinary anxieties that are commonly heard in the first half of the twenty-first century over whether "it is possible to know what should constitute a specific training, a verifiable competence in comparative literature," his spirited practice of translation as pedagogical technique works through the sense of imminent crisis.[23] The comp lit seminar records Derrida teaching "live" and as we follow the paces of his translation of comp lit's unaccessed *Vorhabe* in real time, we experience a surprisingly confident disciplinary deconstruction. Comp lit is disabled as a proper name and imperialistic arbiter (that, lacking a singular object of study, exerts its power by trying to be all things to all languages), but it is also instituted as an epistemologically self-reflexive logic of disciplinary generality that will lead, in due course, to what he will subsequently call "the duty to translate." Derrida developed this idea in a paper on the theology of translation (published in English in *Eyes of the University*).

"Theology of Translation" originally formed part of a cluster of talks on language and translation delivered at Toronto in 1983–84, including "If There is Cause to Translate I: Philosophy in itsNational Language" (Toward a 'licterature en françois'); "If There is a Cause to Translate II: Descartes' Romances or The Economy of Words"; "Vacant Chair: Censorship, Mastery, Magisteriality"; and "Mochlos, or The Conflict of the Faculties." The first paper takes up Descartes' defense of his decision to write in French on the grounds that the vulgate offers a better conduit to natural reason than Latin. The consequence, Derrida notes, is that for the first time French becomes a universal language of philosophical method buttressing French law and the monarchist state. The most astonishing twist comes when Derrida refers to "suicide by translation" to talk about cases like "I am speaking in French" that are enunciated in English. Here, the original, in his words, "lets itself be destroyed almost without remainder, without apparent remainder *inside* the corpus." Death by translation is of course coextensive with translational living-on, familiar from Derrida's Shelley and Benjamin readings. Equally significant is Derrida's use of Descartes and later Schelling to undo the Kantian divisionism of the university faculties, which, severed philosophy from action and poetics. In "Theology of Translation," Derrida marshals Schelling's *Lectures on the Method of University Studies* against Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties* in the service of reuniting philosophical and literary pedagogies. "Poetry," writes Derrida, "is at the heart of philosophy: the poem is a philosopheme." Schelling also provides him with the terms for asking where, how, and if philosophy and poetry can be learned. The task of teaching how "to philosophize" is sharply distinguished from the task of teaching philosophy as an academic subject. The goal for Schelling and fellow Romantics is to prove that philosophical intuition cannot be learned but rather is cultivated as *bildung* through the *translation* of the ideal into the real; nothing short of a "theology of translation" in Derrida's view:

> The point is precisely that for Schelling, whose onto-theology I wished to present, language is a living phenomenon; life or living spirit speaks in language; and in the same way nature is an author, the author of a book that must be translated with the skill of a philologist.

"Without man," he concludes,

> God's very revelation would not be accomplished. By his very activity, man is to develop (*entwickeln*) that which is lacking in God's total revelation … That is what is called translation; it is also what is called the destination of the university.

David L. Clark finds in Derrida's theologized "translatology" a form of romanticism in contemporary guise; that is to say, a categorical imperative—the "duty to translate"—characterized, on the one hand, by acts of community that allow subjects to "*tremble* in their delirious relationship to language," and, on the other hand, by operations that are "machine-like" because they introduce "a form of prostheticizing technicity into the heart of mortal life, the radically inhuman alterity of which language is, as de Man would say, an effacing 'figure.'" [24]

Derrida's "Mochlos, or The Conflict of the Faculties," shifts the discussion from the "duty to translate" and the "theology of translation" to "untranslatability" as something endemic to the university institution that causes us to renegotiate the boundaries between self and institution, life and death, language and world. Originally delivered as a lecture in English in 1980 to mark the centennial founding of Columbia University's graduate school,[25] it continues the reading of *Conflict of the Faculties* but this time attends to "its points of untranslatability"; which is to say, "anything that no longer reaches us and remains outside the usage of our era." "Untranslatable nodes," he argues, reveal "certain contradictions, laws of conflicts, or antinomies of university reason" but also "what exceeds this dialectical rationality itself; and the un-translatability we experience will perhaps signal the university's inability to comprehend itself in the purity of its inside, to translate and transmit its proper meaning." In a kind of Hosannah moment, he calls out to the text to "translate me": to interpret me, evaluate me, inherit from me, make me live on."[26] This giving over of the subject to translation, I take to be a putting oneself into position, a resetting of the set-up, the better "to negotiate" (the verb is Derrida's) a new social contract with the university.[27]

To translate, then, is to enter into labor negotiations on different grounds, to gain leverage through philosophy. This gets us back to one of the literal meanings of *mochlos* as a lever mechanism that operates in accordance with Archimedes's "Law of the Lever." In Book 1 of *On the Equilibrium of Planes*, Archimedes, following the Aristotelian formula that says "the ratio of the weight moved to the weight moving it is the inverse ratio of the distances from the center," proposed that "magnitudes are in equilibrium at distances reciprocally proportional to their weights." "The Law of the Lever" was based on a pulley system that Archimedes designed toenable sailors to leverage objects that would otherwise be too heavy to move. He became famous for the boastful quip "Give me a place to stand on, and I will move the earth."

In addition to its applications in physics, mathematics, architecture and design, *hypomochlia* had medical and orthopoedic uses, particularly relevant to the treatment of misaligned bones, joints and rotator cuffs. I recall the medical ascription because it has play in the section "The Philosophy Faculty versus the Faculty of Medicine" in Kant's *Critique of the Faculties*, subtitled "On the Power of the Mind to Master its Morbid Feelings by Sheer Resolution." Here, Kant details his ailments: insomnia, hyopchondria, epileptic aches and "brain-cramp." As Peter Fenves notes, the inventory of his illnesses was no mere sidebar; it serves as a reminder of the fact that the organic body "neither precisely alive nor precisely dead is always, from beginning to end, in 'constant transition' from life to death."[28] The emphasis, then, on incremental transition is theoretically consequential, for it contests the idea of death as a radical break from time into eternity. It poses, instead, the notion of transitioning organic bodies; bodies capable of accessing a new terrestrial and cosmological prospect "for our globe and its inhabitants" through acts of mental leveraging.

Kant models this thought experiment in the last section of *Conflict*, describing how he overcame pain by concentrating his mind fully on the supposedly neutral name of "Cicero." And, in a footnote, he mentions the *hypomochlium* with reference to Prussian infantrymen who

> are trained *to start out* with the left foot … they put this foot in front, as on a *hypomochlium*, in order to use the right side for the impetus of the attack, which they execute with the right foot against the left.

Not surprisingly, Derrida is delighted by this note. He conjures, with the meanings of left and right footing, shoes that are not a pair, what it means to "take the call" for a foundational leap to another foundational place, and the laying out of conditions for a new orientation in thinking:

> When I asked a moment ago how we should orient ourselves toward the foundation of a new law, I was citing, as you no doubt recognized, the title of another short work by Kant (*How to Be Oriented in Thinking?: Was Heisst: Sich im Denken Orientieren?* [1786]. This essay speaks, among other things, of the paradox of symmetrical objects as presented in yet another essay of 1768, *Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raume* [Foundation for the Distinction of Positions in Space], namely, that the opposition of right and left does not arise from a conceptual or logical determination, but only from a sensory topology that can only be referred to the subjective position of the human body … as Kant will have told us, the university will have to walk on two feet, left and right, each foot having to support the other as it rises and with each step makes the leap.

The task of putting the university on a different footing turns out to be a matter of "determining the best lever, what the Greeks would call the best *mochlos*. Derrida further points out:

> The *mochlos* could be a wooden beam, a lever for displacing a boat, a sort of wedge for opening or closing a door, something, in short, to lean on for forcing and displacing. Now, when one asks how to orient oneself in history, morality, or politics, the most serious discords and decisions have to do less often with ends, it seems to me, than with levers. For example, the opposition of right and left, in this originally parliamentary sense, is perhaps largely, if not entirely, a conflict between several strategies of political *mochlos*.[29]

Channeling Kant via a philosophy of "untranslatable nodes" (like the term *mochlos*), Derrida advocates no violent break or suicidal leap into the future. He is talking, pragmatically and mechanically, about finding the right lever, about a political *mochlos* strapped to a political muscle capable of harnessing political will through the aggregative force of small numbers and almost imperceptible percentages. Translation as a kind of leveraging of language, causes the university, and the entire world, to pivot, eventually if incrementally, on its axis.

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1 Letter from de Man to Derrida, September 6, 1979; ("Le concept de littérature comparée et les problèmes théoriques de la traduction."); letter from Derrida to de Man, April 26, 1979. Courtesy Patricia de Man, personal archive.

2 Jacques Derrida, "Le Concept de littérature comparée et les problèmes théoriques de la traduction," unpublished transcript, Jacques Derrida Papers (MS-C001), box 14, folder 1, University of California, Irvine. Handwritten on the typescript next to the title, Derrida subtitles the seminar "Gulliver's or Pangloss's wake" next to the comment "Qu'est-ce qui se compare!" These marginalia are used in Eric Prenowitz's English translation as a title for the first section of the essay. The English version is entitled "Who or What is Compared? The Concept of Comparative Literature and the Theoretical Problems of Translation" (trans. Eric Prenowitz, "'Who' or 'What'—Jacques Derrida," special issue, guest editor, Dragan Kujundži , *Discourse* 30: 1–2, Winter/Spring 2008, 22–53). My special thanks to Dragan Kujundži for providing me with a copy of Prenowitz's translation prior to my access to the French typescript. I also benefited greatly from his compelling introduction.

3 Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 447. Derrida underscores the opposition between "a logic of programmed reaction in the animal to a logic of free and sovereign responsibility in a man." He implies that interspecies translation is needed to overcome the questionable limit imposed between "reactive animality and responsive or responsible humanity."

4 Document produced by GREPH: Jacques Derrida, appendix to "Where a Teaching Body Begins," in *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?*, trans. Jan Plug, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002, 93–5; Jacques Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?*, 162 and 171, respectively.

5 One seminar, "The Right to Philosophy" (offered in 1978–79 at Yale, Columbia, and the École Normale Supérieure), formed the basis of the two-volume work: *Eyes of the University* and *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?*

6 Derrida's 1979–80 seminar: See Peggy Kamuf's discussion of Samuel Weber's notion of the "aporetic project of the humanities," in *The Division of Literature, or, The University in Deconstruction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 15; "Vacant chair" ("*La chaire vacante*"); Jacques Derrida, "Vacant Chair: Censorship, Mastery, Magisteriality," trans. Barbara Havercrof, in *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy*, 2, 55 and 56; Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge, New York: Routledge, 1992, 74. Jacques Rancière, *Le Maître ignorant: Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle*, Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1987.

7 Daniel Hoffman-Schwartz in a comment on a draft of this essay reminds us that the full story of Benjamin's French reception (especially as it informs Derrida's work) leads back to Peter Szondi's work on German Romanticism, along with Philppe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy's theory of romanticism (*L'Absolu littéraire*, 1978) and involves these and other critics moving from the École Normale Supérieure to the Freie Universität.

8 Dragan Kujundži , "Introduction: Whowhat Gives?!" *Discourse* 30: 1–2, Spring 2008, 9.

9 Derrida's suggestion that comparative literature does not exist by automatic entitlement: Derrida, "Who or What is Compared?," 23; ibid., 22–3.

10 ("Cet acte de foundation—celui qui, à partir du non-droit, a partir d'une situation a-juridique, fonde le droit.")

11 Derrida, "Le Concept de littérature," 1.

12 Ibid., 24.

13 ("Nous retrouverons sous les formes les plus diverses, les traductions, les transformations, les figures et les tropes les plus riches, mais toujours réglées par cette puissante logique—qui est peut-être la logique même, la logique de la logique…") Derrida, "Who or What Is Compared?," 24; Derrida, "Le Concept de littérature," 2, 3.

14 Derrida, "Who or What Is Compared?," 25.

15 Derrida, "Who or What Is Compared?," 34–5, 27.

16 Derrida's stated aim: ibid., 43, 33, 34; René Étiemble: ibid., 33; UNESCO-like template: ibid., 31; ibid., 33; the "precomprehension of the literary": ibid., 33; Charles Bernheimer, ed., "The Bernheimer Report, 1993 Comparative Literature at the Turn of the Century," in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 42; Ortwin de Graef, *Titanic Light: Paul de Man's Post-Romanticism* 1960–1969, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, 210.

17 This phrase is used in a section of the third seminar transcript that was not published in *Discourse*.

18 Derrida, "Who or What Is Compared?," 29–30.

19 Derrida contrasts comparative literature with disciplines: ibid., 28–9; "What do you expect, comparative literature, is, well, comparative literature" ("Que voulez-vous, la littérature comparée, eh bien, c'est la littérature comparée"); "One must compare literature with literature" ("Il faut donc comparer de la littérature avec de la littérature"); ibid., 50; "Le Concept de littérature," 2; Derrida, "Who or What Is Compared?," 50.

20 On the typescript, section 3 of the seminar is titled "Littérature Comparée/ Traduction." Underneath, as a subtitle, we find Benjamin's trademark phrase "La tâche du traducteur" ("The Task of the Translator"). This is crossed out, and "Babel" is handwritten below it. Eric Prenowitz notes these variations in a footnote accompanying his exclusive choice of "Babel" as the header for this section.

21 Thomas Greene, "The Greene Report, 1975," in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 31–2; Paul de Man, "Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" in *The Resistance to Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 83.

22 Margaret Cohen, who was in de Man's seminar in 1979, is the source for the description of its focus on translation and cognate terms in German.

23 Derrida, "Who or What Is Compared?," 26.

24 Ibid., 19; Jacques Derrida, "Theology of Translation," trans. Joseph Adamson, in *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy* 2, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004. Derrida marshals Schelling's *Lectures*: see Tilottama Rajan, "First Outline of a System of Theory: Schelling and the Margins of Philosophy, 1799–1815," in *Studies in Romanticism* 46: 3, Summer 2007, 311–35; Derrida, "Theology of Translation," 68, 77, 80; David L. Clark, "Lost and Found in Translation: Romanticism and the Legacies of Jacques Derrida," *Studies in Romanticism* 46, 2, 173.

25 In the French edition, the title is "Mochlos, l'oeil de l'université" (Mochlos, eye of the university). What happens, then, is that the French subtitle gets transferred over (and pluralized as "eyes") to the frame of volume 2 in English, so we have *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy* 2. It would seem that the editors of the English edition wanted to set the notion of the blind eye of the university as a general application; as if to play on the subliminal panoptical refrain "These eyes are watching you," or to remind us of the Odyssean recourse to cunning in parrying the attacks of an oppressor.

26 "Mochlos, l'oeil de l'université," *Philosophie* 2 (April 1984): 21–53; (M 92–3); "to interpret me, evaluate me, inherit from me, make me live on" ("Formez tel type d'institution pour me lire et m'écrire … pour m'interpréter, m'évaluer, me garder, me traduire, hériter de moi, me faire survivre.") (M 101, 422).

27 Hent de Vries: "It is no accident that the Greek word for 'lever,' *mochlos*, figures as the title for Derrida's reflections on the aporias of Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* and the task of a new academic responsibility. Aside from recalling a term Kant himself cites in a footnote—*hypomochlium*—the Greek word *mochlos* stands for the necessary and impossible task of 'negotiating' the old and the new, the past, the present, and the future … it should be understood as taking a stand—as a *prise de position*—with regard to that institution … the attempt to found a new insitution and to reverse or displace the order of its hierarchy, however radical the intention, could never force a radical rupture with the edifice—whether ruined or phantasmatic—that precedes it. In order to take a step forward or beyond, it would have to 'negotiate a compromise' with the traditional order that it seeks to displace and that offers itself as the stepping stone from which the leap to another place could be made, if such a leap is possible and desirable. Where this is so, everything would come down to finding and using 'the best [or right] lever' for change." Hent de Vries, *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Persepectives from Kant to Derrida*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, 114.

28 Fenves, *Late Kant*, 155.

29 Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1979, 110–11; Derrida, "Mochlos," 111.

IV

Kilito's Injunction: "Thou Shalt Not Translate Me"

Philosophy in translation studies has routinely referred not to logical questions pertaining to the threshold of sense within language but to professional practice, as in, What is your philosophy of translation? Are you a literalist in the tradition of doctrinal Hebraic, Koranic and mystical Christian traditions seeking to preserve to the maximum the original letter of the sacred text? A word-for-wordist who proceeds by rendering textual segments at the same rank (morpheme, word, group, clause, sentence)? A partisan of the German Romantic tradition (spanning August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher to Walter Benjamin) who construes literalism as a form of foreignized cultural translation? Or, do you subscribe to a philosophy of free translation in the tradition of Jerome and Boethius, according to which the faithful translator is the one faithful to God "but not to the individual words of God's Word"?[1] In other words, a sense-for-sense practitioner of unbounded (or mixed rank) translation or a poet playing with translation loosely in imitation and pastiche? For all the rich research these opposing traditions have inspired, what interests me most is something more pointed: what does it mean to think of translation as a kind of philosophy, or as a way of doing theory and its history?

Such questions prompt reflection on the full impact of translation on the making of cross-continental philosophy and theory. The intra-European and trans-Atlantic transfer of texts while often acknowledged has yet to be accounted for as part of theory's archival remit. A cursory sampling provides a glimpse of this as-yet-unwritten translation history. Derrida translates appendix 3 of Edmund Husserl's 1936 study, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, from German into French in 1962 (John P. Leavey translates this translation into English, along with Derrida's introduction, in 1989). Anthony Wilden translates Jacques Lacan's "The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis" in 1968. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak translates Derrida's *Of Grammatology* in 1976. Alan Sheridan translates Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* in 1977. Barbara Johnson translates Derrida's *Dissémination* in 1981. Margaret Waller translates Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* in 1984. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke translate Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One* in 1985. Geoffrey Bennington translates Derrida's *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* in 1989. Peggy Kamuf translates Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, and the Work of Mourning & the New International* in 1994. Paul Patton translates Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (a text of 1968 which comes out in English in 1994). Daniel Heller-Roazen translates Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* in 1998. Andrew Parker translates Jacques Rancière's 1983 *The Philosopher and His Poor* in 2004. Lisabeth During translates Catherine Malabou's *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic* in 2004. Oliver Feltham translates Alain Badiou's 1988 *Being and Event* in 2005. Bruce Fink translates Lacan's 1966 *Écrits* in 2006. Eric Fassin and Cynthia Kraus translate Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* into French in 2006. Bruno Bosteels translates Badiou's 1982 *Theory of the Subject* in 2009. In each instance, the translator plays a pivotal role in the history of theory in her or his own right. Translational apprenticeship, as a way of learning and teaching philosophy and theory has always been recognized, but it is something that warrants more explicit foregrounding as a critical pedagogy in the humanities.[2]

If the particular text chosen for translation is clearly determinative on the course of theory (spanning both its Anglo-European and planetary gyres), so too is the date of a translation, especially where there are discrepant periodicities. The general rule seems to be: the greater the time lag between a text's original publication and its translation, the greater the chance it will be misread or creatively re-contextualized. In the case of early texts by Deleuze, Guattari, Agamben, Butler and Badiou, for example, tectonic shifts between the moment of their cultural production and the reception of their translation led to new semantic colorations of keywords like "difference," "the sensible," "biopolitical," "publicity" (*öffentlichkeit*), "gender," and "evental." Words, say, that had specific resonance with situationism, French Maoism, or the events of May '68 ("situation," "logics of revolt," "conjuncture") come to be substantially re-signified by the time they reach the early 2000s, whether in Žižekian Leninism or the Badiouvian post-neoliberal "communist hypothesis."[3] My point here is that in studying the history of translation within the history of philosophy and theory, we are not just performing a philological or intellectual exercise. By gauging the deformations, reformulations, and temporal *décalages* of translated works, we are doing philosophy.

The contemporary foregrounding of philosophical translation owes much to the landmark volume *Difference in Translation*, a collection of essays edited by Joseph F. Graham published in 1985. Here, we find essays by Phillip E. Lewis, Cynthia Chase, Richard Rand, Alan Bass, Derrida (his important reading of Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" and "Des Tours de Babel"), and the late and much regretted Barbara Johnson. As an ensemble, the collection marks a moment in the history of deconstruction in which translating, instead of being something assumed—what critics do as part of their training—is activated as theory. In the words of the book's editor, "We might set translation as a test for claims about deconstruction or any other disruptive effects of discourse." Noting in her essay "Taking Fidelity Philosophically" that Derrida's work "has always already been (about) translation," Barbara Johnson offered a nuanced summary of how translation emerged as a way of doing philosophy for Derrida:

> Derrida's rearticulation of philosophy and translation is obviously not designed to evacuate meaning entirely. But his concept of textuality displaces the very notion of *how* a text means. What goes on in every text far exceeds what can be reduced to so-and-so's "thought." Derrida's own ingenious translations, such as that of Hegel's *Aufhebung* by *la relève*, are attempts to render all the often contradictory meanings of a term in such a way that crucial logical complexities are not oversimplified. It is quite often by finding the pressure points previously lost in translation that Derrida rearticulates philosophy with itself.[4]

The rearticulation of philosophy with itself enables something quite miraculous: It eases the difficult passage of natural language into philosophy, characterized by Derrida as the "violent difficulty in the transference of a non-philosopheme into a philosopheme." This difficult transference is keenly felt in Derrida's treatment of the word *pharmakon*: "No, it is not a *pharmakon* … it is rather a *pharmakon*."[5] to borrow Peggy Kamuf's phrase in her analysis in this issue of *Profession* of Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy."[6] Kamuf fixes on Derrida's identification of the invisible pivot, the Greek-to-Greek "translation" of philosopheme/pharmakon, whereby an apparent non-translation translates

nonetheless. Jonathan Rée tracks a similar operation in the case of Heideggerian *Dasein*:

> In most contexts *Dasein* is equivalent to the English "existence" (for example in the Darwinian "struggle for existence"), but in *Being and Time* there is a distinct concept of *Existenz* which had a stronger claim on that word. It could also be translated, in some ways very faithfully, as "being-there," except that this might reactivate the metaphysical connotations that Heidegger was determined to avoid. So Macquarrie and Robinson were obliged to invent an artificial expression to serve as *Dasein's* counterpart in English. That new English word was "Dasein," (with a capital initial but no italics; plural: "Daseins"; possessive: "Dasein's"), and it was duly included in their index of English expressions.[7]

"No, it's not *Dasein*, it is rather Dasein." What we have here is a distinct case of fidelity to the original in which the target is samed and othered, which is to say, philosophized.

In "Taking Fidelity Philosophically," Barbara Johnson is fascinated by philosophy's fidelity to philosophy by means of this Othering process of translation. The philosopheme taps into its own untranslatability and contacts a correlative untranslatability in another language. The quilting point of Untranslatables is where philosophy happens. This suggests that philosophy answers to untranslatability, even as it attempts to cross over into translation. As Johnson, glossing Heidegger, puts it:

> The bridge of translation, which paradoxically releases within each text the subversive forces of its own foreignness, thus reinscribes those forces in the tensile strength of a new neighborhood of otherness. Yet all travelers on that bridge are answering a summons that repulses them at every step, a summons reminiscent of the sign Lautréamont sets up in front of Maldoror, containing a warning that is received just a moment too late to be heeded: "Vous, qui passez sur ce pont, n'y allez pas." "You, who are crossing over this bridge, don't get to the other side."[8]

With the help of Lautréamont, Johnson inadvertently moves translation theory, identified throughout *Difference in Translation* with such topics as abusive translation, the property of the proper name, signature, fidelity, and prosthesis, to the arena of what might be called the *translational interdiction* or the first order of untranslatability: "You who attempt to cross this bridge will not pass." This ban on passing from one language to another may be read not just as an example of the philosopheme's obstacle course but as an idea that has particular resonance today in efforts to rethink theological and secular criticism. It suggests a bound of sacrosanction; a theology of translation; a "saving difference" (an expression used by Harold Bloom that I am detourning), which is a difference believed in because it saves or preserves the Untranslatable.[9] In his chapter of *The Map of Misreading* titled "The Primal Scene of Instruction,"Bloom seems most concerned with staging *a scene of primal injunction* whose caption might read: "Thou Shalt Translate Me." Such a command, in exacting submission from its addressee, corresponds to what Bloom calls "God's condescension, his accommodating gift of his Election-Love (*'ahabah'),"* whereby "the human receiver [of God's book whether in Scripture or in nature] incorporates and makes himself one with the Divinely given cipher."[10]

If the duty to translate is rooted in Bloom's writing in the cipher of the Hebrew Bible and its secular re-inscription in the aesthetics of romanticism, one could say that in more recent philosophy and theory, the duty to *not* translate is derived from Islamic tradition and, more generally, from principled opposition to facile computations of cultural equivalence. I am thinking here of Abdelfattah Kilito's injunction "Thou shalt not translate me," a title he used for a lecture that plays off titles used in books: "Tu ne parleras pas ma langue"[11] and "Défense de parler ma langue". [12]

A chapter begins:

> One day I realized that I dislike having foreigners speak my language. How did that happen? I used to think of myself as an open-minded, liberal person who wished unto others what he wished unto his kin. Furthermore, I used to think it my duty to endeavor as best I could to make my language radiate its brilliance, to increase the number of its learners, and so forth. But that noble goal disappeared when I realized that I dislike having foreigners speak my language.

Later in the chapter, Kilito recounts the time when he spoke Arabic with an American woman whose uncanny mastery of the language made him squirm. When she uses the Moroccan colloquial term *wallahila*, it strikes him as transgressive: "Did she realize that *wallahila* contains the word 'Allah,' and that she let herself so easily tread on rough terrain? She referred, probably without knowing it, to a faith that apparently was not hers. I leave this question open."[13] The question in question circles through the problem of sacred language used in ignorance as well as the issue of broken trust among native speakers in the face of foreign entry into their language world. Ushering in an era of suspicion toward the apparent neutrality of translation, he attends to situation-specific power differentials among language users, thus complicating the politics of ethical translation and bilingualism in territories scourged by histories of imperialism.

Through lessons and anecdotes of translational travesty, Kilito formulates something like the divine right of untranslatability. In "Du balcon d'Averroès" ("Averroës's Balcony"), a pastiche of Jorge Luis Borges's 1949 fiction "La busca de Averroes" ("Averroës's Search"), he gives us a parable of the Untranslatable. Just as in Borges's tale where Averroës emerges as the father of untranslatability theory (he discovers that Greek concepts of tragedy and comedy are untranslatable in Arabic), so too in Kilito's short story he is cast (at least initially) as the author of an untranslatable Arabic phrase that comes to the narrator in a dream. This phrase, *loughatouna-l-aǰamiyya*, includes the root *ajam*, meaning non-Arab or Barbarian, and is rendered in French as *notre langue étrangère*, literally "our foreign tongue."[14] The enigmatic sense of the expression obsesses the narrator: it refers to the common Barbarian tongue for both Arabs and Greeks (Persian); to a native language as foreigners speak it; to foreignized or Othered speech within one's native tongue; to the experience of being unhomed in the mother tongue; and to many other meanings besides. The phrase seems to guard the trace of an *Ursprache*—a sacred, originary language that will reveal the origin of philosophy.

Suspecting that philosophy has been lost in translation, the narrator stages a spectatorial encounter where a faceless Averroës (standing for Philosophy) and the narrator's translator (standing for Translation) confront each other in a de Chirico—like dreamsetting: a courtyard overlooked by one opaque and three transparent windows. This face-off is interrupted, however, when a fight breaks out between the translator and the narrator. The former accuses the latter of insulting the Arabic language, calling him to account for repressing the attribution of the little phrase to Averroës (an attribution he claims to have discovered in a work by the narrator on the picaresque novel that he, the translator, had translated into Arabic). "You did not even read my translation because it was in Arabic!" he rebukes him resentfully. The hapless narrator learns that he has betrayed his own text by betraying Arabic. In the end, he makes amends, restoring Arabic to its position of glory as a singular God-language: the origin and end of all languages, the master-original *and* the master target.

The narrator ultimately solves the mystery of his phrase. Pursuing a chain of associations that leads from Borges (whose Averroës is horrified by the danger to classical Arabic posed by the colloquial mixture of Spanish and Arabic spoken by Spanish street kids) to the Biblical legend of Noah's Ark (where the deluge is taken as a metaphor for the catastrophic loss of Arabic), he traces it to the preface of a renowned Arabic dictionary *Lisane al-'arab*, whose author, the thirteenth-century Egyptian scholar Ibn Manzour, was the first to apprehend fully that Arabic was becoming an endangered language. Taking up Manzour's cause (and in defiance of his feckless translator, who, in a strange turnaround now speaks to him only in French), the narrator assumes the mantle of Arabic defender, becoming, as it were, a champion of the translational interdiction. Though the story's message is elusive—it would seem, after all to be satirizing Arabocentrism, and by extension all forms of cultural nationalism (manifest, say, in the recent prosecutions of insults to Turkishness)—it nonetheless uncovers the moral structures of guilt and betrayal that hold the translational prohibition in place and that theologically underwrite the complex cathexes of writers to *their* languages.

Wail S. Hassan, in his translator's preface to the English edition of *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, sets the context for Kilito's protective barrier around Arabic (referring to "literalism" in an argument similar to the one undergirding Jewish proscription against translation of the Hebrew Bible). He reminds us that the "sacred book of Islam is, from the perspective of the faithful, untranslatable because it is considered the literal word of God; human beings are incapable of exhausting its meaning, let alone transposing it into other languages."[15] Hassan recalls too that within much Islamic tradition, translators are readily held to be apostates and heretics; a class of interpreters worthy of punishment even if they also qualify for redemption. Emphasizing the folk etymologies clustering around the Arabic words for translator *mutarjim, turjuman*, and *tarjamah* (terms that in actual fact redound etymologically to the Turkish *tercümen*, itself an Ottomanized version of the ancient Babylonian word for "interpreter," *targumannu*, later Europeanized as *dragoman*), Hassan notes that the phonetically similar but nonetymologically related Arabic word *tarjamah*

> shares the root verb *rajama*, which means "to stone to death," with a sizable constellation of words that include *rajm* (killing, beating, battering, reviling), *rajam* (well, cavity, hole in the ground, oven), *rujum* (shooting stars), *rajeem* (cast with stones, damned, an epithet of Satan, and also driven away, reviled, insulted), *rujmah* (grave and tombstones). The verb *rajama* also appears in expressions like *rajm bil-ghayb* (conjecture, soothsaying) and *kalam marjum* (uncertain or unreliable speech). *Tarjamah* therefore carries connotations of alienated speech that have the flavor of falsehood, damnation, and death, but also possibilities of survival, narration and understanding.[16]

Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language articulates in a casual idiom the fearsome possessive requirements of owning Arabic. To own Arabic is to assume its untranslatability, its status as an Adamic language.

In an earlier book, *La langue d'Adam* ("the language of Adam"), Kilito stipulates that babel, or plurilingual confusion, should no longer be regarded as punishment for man's hubris but instead as a divine sign; a manifestation of God's intention to mark and preserve linguistic difference among men.[17] Monolingualism (particular to each language comprising the diversity of languages) becomes something to have and to hold in reverence. Such an idea runs patently counter, of course, to the reigning orthodoxy of linguistic pluralism so commonly embraced by comparative literature and World Literature programs. However, though it risks sounding anti-comparatist or at worst xenophobic, Kilito's bid for monolingualism seems, rather, directed at safeguarding the sacred in language, particularly as it resides in the singularity of poetry. Arabic poetry is Kilito's model Untranslatable—even more than the Qur'an—for in passing from one language to another, the poem loses rhyme. Once rhyme is sacrificed, poetry turns into something other, which is to say, prose.[18] Translation, according to Kilito, cuts the poetic thread, the very same thread that organizes and regulates the cosmos. His injunction "Thou shalt not translate me" rests on a heightened awareness of translational taboo—of translation's potential for violating sacred tongues or the private language of prayer and recitation. But it skirts the issue of ecclesiastical censorship imposed by clerical institutions.

One thinks here of the Wycliffe and Tyndale bibles, preeminent historical cases of death-by-translation. An Oxford-trained theologian of the fourteenth century, referred to as the "Morning Star" of the Reformation, John Wycliffe translated the New Testament from the Vulgate into Middle English in 1382. He garnered the hostility of the Church when he became a critic of indulgences, a supporter of the "poor priests," and a proponent of

> the doctrine of "dominion by grace," whereby each man was immediately and directly responsible to God, to obey God's law, which meant not canon law but the Bible, which was the codification, in both Testaments, of the law of God.

Wycliffe's Bible was linked to the move toward independence from papal Rome, especially among commoners. After his death, he was declared a heretic and his remains exhumed and desecrated. And under the Anti-Wycliffe Statute of 1401, his followers, known as Lollards, were persecuted. The use of his unauthorized English Scripture became an offense punishable by death.[19] Many Wycliffites were burned at the stake; among them, the Bohemian religious thinker John Hus and Lord Cobham (Sir John Oldcastle), a favorite of Henry IV, who, following a sensational escape from the Tower of London was recaptured and slowly roasted alive, all the while calling out for his right to Scripture in English. Close to 150 years later, William Tyndale met the same fate. Swayed by Lutheran reforms, and profoundly influenced by his teacher, Erasmus, who was already at work on the Greek translation of the New Testament, Tyndale used his gifts as a linguist to draw on Hebrew and Greek texts for his English translation of the New Testament. When it appeared in 1526, vernacular editions were still illegal, and Tyndale added insult to injury by impugning Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII in a political pamphlet. In a an ironic twist, Tyndale was condemned as a heretic and executed in 1536 only to have his translation become the backbone of Henry VIII's Great Bible four years after his death. As translation martyrs, Wycliffe and Tyndale may be abstracted as examples of how the politics of sacred language becomes imbricated in the politics of religious institutions (particularly when what is at issue is control over lay instruction).[20]

If matters of life and death hinge on translation in these cases, it is due in large part to the fact that the sanctity of the language of Holy Writ is freighted with the oldest authorizing claims and questions of Judeo-Christian and Islamic hermeneutics: In what language did God originally speak? Did Adam speak the same language before and after the fall? If the Logos is the divine *Ursprache* overriding any given language, is Babel its tongue? When (as Derrida argues) John identified Christ as the mediator of the *logos*, did he set him up as the very model of the sovereign mediator-translator? Why did God transmit the Qur'an to Mohammed (via the angel Gabriel) in Arabic? Was the Septuagint's "perfect" Greek translation of the Old Testament divinely inspired (such that the seventy interpreters, working in isolation, miraculously reproduced identical copy, including the same mistranslations) or mediated by Alexandrian Jewish translators? Did linguistic discrepancies between the Hebrew and Greek Bibles serve as God's way of signaling to the Jews that the Hebrew Bible was exclusively their own? Once Latin became the official language of the Bible in Europe and was decreed Untranslatable, how was this policy reconciled with the fact that the Latin Bible was known to be a translation of Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Coptic and Greek? How does one sever, as Luther tried to do, the Jewish body of the Hebrew letter from the Christian spirit, even as one elevates the Hebrew Bible as the authoritative source for the German translation? Should Walter Benjamin's biblical model of interlinear translation at the end of the essay "The Task of the Translator" be read as a call to translational messianism or as the scholarly acknowledgement of "a larger Jewish and indeed international modernist movement toward 'foreignizing' translation, as evidenced by [Martin] Buber and [Franz] Rosenzweig's archaizing, Hebraizing Bible translation?"[21] Such questions continue to resonate in contemporary debate: Are religious exponents of prayer or religious ceremonies "in the original" adhering to what Wai Chee Dimock calls "an orthodoxand fetishizing claim about untranslatability," or are they deferring to faith in untranslatability as the guarantor of, as Lawrence Rosenwald put it, "the idea of a sacred language distinct from its secular alternative"?[22] These problems of translation and theology have moved to the center of translation theory as it works through problems of messianism, fedeism, orthodoxy, doctrinal fidelity, the bounds of secular law, tolerance, ethical neighboring, the right to offend, literalism, and linguistic monotheism.

In *The Translation Zone*, I used the term "linguistic monotheism" to characterize the singularity of sacred tongues and, if I reprise it here, it is in the context of theologies of untranslatability. My interest in these theologies stems not from the classic liberal position of "trying to understand," as a secular person, the attraction of believers to linguistic messianism or the uncontestable authority of religious books whose sacrosanct status must be protected by censorship and *fatwahs*. It derives, rather, from the sense that translational interdictions define those points where theologies of translation and philosophies of language converge, especially with regard to peformative proclamations. Ayman El-Desouky ventures the proposition that there exists in Islamic doctrine the concept of "a kerygmatic single standing utterance [that] may be initially viewed as comparable to the commandments of Genesis and the Call to Discipleship in the Gospels."[23] A term for proclamatory enunciation *kerygma* may be enlisted as the new name for the Untranslatable in its condition of theological sanction and linguistic

inviolability, whether in the guise of glossolalia, the religious "call," or the more commonplace ban on "you" speaking "my" language. [24]

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1 Douglas Robinson, entry on "Free Translation" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker, London: Routledge, 1998, 87.

2 Rée, "The Translation of Philosophy," in *New Literary History* 2001, 231. Jonathan Rée makes the following case for the importance of translation in the history of philosophy: "In the English language in the twentieth century, for example, many of the finest translations are philosophical, and many of the greatest works of philosophy are translations. Miller's version of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, published in 1977, is brilliant; its only clear drawback is that it has overshadowed the very different but no less marvelous translation by Baillie, dating from 1910. Then there is the meticulous work of several dedicated translators of Husserl, and a remarkable sequence of parallel texts (German and English on facing pages), which began with C. K. Ogden's edition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* in 1922 and continued in J. L. Austin's version of Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic* and G. E. M. Anscombe's of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*. Norman Kemp Smith's commanding version of *The Critique of Pure Reason* has been read ragged by thousands of students since it was first published in 1929, but hardly any serious weaknesses have come to light … Probably the most magnificent achievement of all, though, is Macquarrie and Robinson's version of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, whose publication in 1962 marked an epoch in the history of philosophy in English."

3 Alain Badiou, *L'hypothèse communiste*, Clamecy, France: Nouvelles Editions Lignes, 2009.

4 Joseph F. Graham, "Introduction," *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985, 17; Barbara Johnson, "Taking Fidelity Philosophically," in *Difference in Translation*, 144 and 145.

5 Derrida, cited ibid., 146; Jacques Derrida, "La Pharmacie de Platon," in *La Dissémination*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972; English translation: "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

6 In her essay "Passing Strange: The Laws of Translation," Peggy Kamuf writes: "According to the myth Socrates recounts, an Egyptian demi-god presented his invention of writing to the king of the gods, calling it a *pharmakon* and praising all the benefits it will bring humankind. The King responded in effect, no, it is not a *pharmakon*, as you pretend, it is rather a *pharmakon* and you have been deluded by your fondness for this invention of yours. It will not benefit men but deprive them of the benefit they now realize by having to exercise their memories. Between the first and second iteration of the word, the value or meaning of *pharmakon* and thus of writing turns, as Derrida puts it, 'on its strange and invisible pivot' (97; 109). It is thus already a scene of interpretative translation, from Greek to Greek, where the King gets to decide both what the other *meant to say* and what he *did not say*, but *should have said*, in other words, the truth about writing. At stake, then, in transposing into another language this pivotal play is not just the repetition of a same word bearing different and indeed opposable meanings, but the point of view *in* the text from which the true value of writing is decided. What is brought out by Derrida is the reproduction by translation of the point of view and the interpretation of the King." (See this issue of *Profession*, 66.)

7 Rée, "The Translation of Philosophy," 232.

8 Johnson, "Taking Fidelity Philosophically,"148.

9 Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, 43. The phrase "saving difference" is coined by Bloom in his response to Derrida's notion of *différance*. "Writing, as Derrida tropes it, both keeps us from the void and, more aggressively (as against voicing), gives us a saving difference, by preventing that coincidence of speaker with subject that would entrap us in a presence so total as to stop the mind."

10 Ibid., 51–2.

11 *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*.

12 (Rendered as "Thou Dost Not, and Shalt Not, Speak My Language.") Abdelfattah Kilito, *Tu ne parleras pas ma langue*, trans. (from Arabic into French) Francis Gouin, Paris: Sindbad, 2002. English edition, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, trans. (from Arabic into English) Waïl S. Hassan, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008.

13 Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, 87; ibid., 92.

14 "Du balcon d'Averroès," in *Le cheval de Nietzsche*, Casablanca: Editions Le Fennec, 2007.

15 Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, xix.

16 Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, x. My thanks to David Bellos for his comments on the etymological history associated with the Arabic terms for translator and translation.

17 Kilito writes: "Dissemination in space, diversity of languages and colors: that's a positive thing, the concretization of God's design. The confusion of languages is not a malediction, it is a divine sign, like dispersion in space. God installs diversity in his creation, and it is an effect of his merciful will that men are finally disseminated, evidently so as to populate and fructify the planet." (Translation from the French text my own.) Abdelfattah Kilito, *La langue d'Adam*, Casablanca: Les Editions Toubkal, 1999, 20.

18 Deferring to the ancient philosopher al-Jahiz, Kilito writes in a chapter of *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*: "He is of the opinion that 'poetry cannot, and should not, be translated. When translated, its rhyme is disrupted, its meter ruined, its beauty lost, and its wonder fades.'" Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, 27.

19 David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003, 71–2; on John Wycliffe's translation of the New Testament and use of his unauthorized English Scripture, see, ibid. 171–2.

20 A contemporary example of the translational interdict as a form of religious censorship and persecution is the extension of the *fatwah* from Salman Rushdie himself (condemned for *The Satanic Verses*) to the death of the book's translators (Hitoshi Igarashi, the Japanese translator, was stabbed to death in 1991; the book's Italian and Turkish translators were injured in attacks in 1991 and 1993, respectively).

21 John identifying Christ as the mediator of the Logos: Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 450; Naomi Seidman, "'A Gift for the Jewish People': Einspruch's *Der Bris Khadoshe* as Missionary Translation and Yiddish Literature," unpublished paper.

22 These remarks were made in the context of a Facebook group forum initiated by Wai Chee Dimock titled "Rethinking World Literature." The exchange took place between Dimock and Lawrence Rosenwald under the discussion topic "Translation and Empire," on January 7, 2010. Also relevant, Judith Butler's query, formulated in response to Étienne Balibar's surmise that "The religious as such is a point of untranslatability." Butler asks "if translation has a theological history, does that theological history simply fall away when translation is positioned as the neutral arbiter of religious views?" See Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012, 16.

23 Ayman A. El-Desouky, "Global *Translatio* and the Sacred: On the Hermeneutics of Voice Between the Kerygmatic and the Revelatory," paper presented at the Modern Language Association Conference, January 2011.

24 Glossolalia, especially in the Christian Pentecostal tradition, which emphasizes the phenomenon of "speaking in tongues," or speaking *the* tongue of the Angels, exemplifies an interesting case of singular enunciation. At once linguistically incomprehensible to the non-initiate (Untranslatable) and intelligible to the community of believers (universally translatable), glossolalia are conferred through the intermediary of The Holy Spirit doubling, as Daniel Heller-Roazen following Agamben has emphasized, the "barbarian" within: "'Glossolalia' is a technical expression referring to a variety of speech act whose name derives from the Greek term for 'speaking in tongues.' St. Paul may have been the first to define this linguistic practice. In his first letter to the Corinthians, he enjoins his addressees not to 'speak into the air.' To 'speak in tongues,' Paul suggests, is how to forget the meaning of one's words. It is to abandon one's tongue for 'tongues' and 'obscure expressions,' such that one becomes a 'child in understanding' and a 'barbarian … that speaketh unto a barbarian.' Giorgio Agamben has commented that such speech consists not so much in the '"pure uttering of inarticulate sounds" as in a "speaking in *gloss*," that is, in words whose meaning one does not know.' To hear such sounds is to know they mean something without knowing exactly what such a 'something' might be; in other words, it is to discern an intention to signify that cannot be identified with any particular signification. Agamben notes that the traditional translations of the Greek text of Paul's letter fail to capture the full radicalism of the linguistic 'barbarism' that it clearly describes. Whereas the King James version, following the Vulgate, has 'If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto he that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me,' a literal rendition would read otherwise on a single, decisive point: 'If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto he that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian *in* me [*en hemoi*].' 'The text's *en hemoi*,' Agamben writes, 'can only signify "in me," and what Paul means is perfectly clear: if I utter words whose meaning I do not understand, he who speaks in me, the voice that utters them, the very principle of speech in me, will be something barbarous, something that does not know how to speak and that does not know what it says.'" See Daniel Heller-Roazen, "Glossolalia," entry for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*.

Part Four
Who Owns My Translation?

I

Marx's Bovary

In "Thyroid Diary," one of the stories included in her collection, Lydia Davis, author of a much-acclaimed English translation of *Madame Bovary*, relies on a first-person narrator who happens to be a professional translator:

> I have been trying to see if I am thinking more slowly than before. In my translation work, for instance, I see that I sometimes try to find an equivalent in English before I really understand the French. Then I realize that I don't understand the French, even after trying several times, and I cast my eye rather listlessly here and there within the paragraph, hoping the meaning of it will fall into place by itself, which it sometimes does. But today it does not, and then my mind wanders. I go back to work on it, look in the dictionary again, reading every word of a very long entry, but there's nothing in the dictionary that helps me. I want to put something down, anything at all, just to mark the place so that I can go on translating and come back to the problem later. I need to put down something noticeably wrong, so that later I will see that the spot needs work, but everything I think of is so poor that it is embarassing. I don't know why I should be embarassed, if there is no one to see it, but I am embarassed and will not go on until I put down something decent, though wrong. At least, this morning, as I was studying the dictionary carefully in order to see if I really wanted to use the word, I learned more about *embarassment* and its earlier, concrete meaning of "encumbrance" or "obstruction"…
>
> Now, if I do this whole translation, which is an important job, with my mind not working very clearly, then the translation may not be very good … though I may not know that. And if it isn't very good, that would really be unfortunate, since some of my future income may depend on it.[1]

In taking the reader through the arduous relay of dictionary word checking, in analyzing the "listlessness" and "embarassment" that translation can engender, Davis's narrator recalls Charles Bovary, introduced in the famous opening scene as a dull-witted translator of Latin sentenced by his teacher to copy out *ridiculus sum* twenty times[2]: "We saw him working conscientiously, looking up all the words in the dictionary and taking great pains … for while he knew his rules passably well, he had almost no elegance in his constructions."[3] The word "tournure," translated by Davis as "construction," draws attention to the laboriousness of translation. Belaboring the translator's *Aufgabe*, Davis seems to have channeled the spirit of Eleanor Marx, the first recognized translator of *Madame Bovary* into English.

The story of the English translation of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* by Eleanor Marx, Karl Marx's youngest daughter, reads like a novel worthy of the title "Kapital (The Novel)" or "Marx's Bovary, Flaubert's Kapital." It is the tale of a world literature classic in translation into whose folds bits of the personal histories of its translators are secretly embedded. Flaubert and Karl Marx have often been written about together, but I am interested here in approaching their relation on the bias of translation, and through the intermediary of Eleanor Marx. I am interested in writing the "biography of a translation," one that in principle would yield the screenplay for a weepie featuring an aspirational feminist storyline, philandering, betrayed love, and suicide. Yet these familiar plot lines diagram something more than melodramatic boilerplate; they show the extraordinary place of Eleanor Marx in the history of translation. We begin to see "Marxist translation" not just as women's work but also as a theory of what Eleanor herself called "conscientious" translation.

Though apparently not the very first English translation of Flaubert's masterwork—a preexisting 1881 edition by John Stirling (pen name of a Mrs. M. Sherwood) appears in the bibliography of D. J. Colewell and an equally intangible "lost" version has been attributed to Juliet Herbert, the governess of Flaubert's niece—Eleanor Marx's translation of *Madame Bovary* has endured like none other.[4] Following its publication in 1886, it became the basis of many succeeding editions, including the teaching edition by Charles I. Weir Jr. in 1948 (used by Vladimir Nabokov), Paul de Man's 1965 Norton edition, and Margaret Cohen's 2004 Norton edition, all published in the United States.[5] The critical attention that this translation has received from the beginning has attached the questions surrounding Flaubert's style to those of his translator, and has drawn attention to the parallels between Emma Bovary's and Eleanor Marx's suicides in the wake of failed relationships.[6]

Eleanor Marx's *Madame Bovary* gained its greatest notoriety when Vladimir Nabokov referred to it as an exemplary instance of bad translation. Nabokov used a 1948 Rinehardt edition of her translation, revised by Charles I. Weir Jr. ("Wonder what these were," Nabokov wrote next to the "Corrections and Modernization by the editor" credit.) In this text, bequeathed to the New York Public Library, Nabokov marked up what he considered to be Eleanor's most egregious errors, many of them pertaining to descriptions of Emma's appearance. In emendations to her text and notes to the *Madame Bovary* chapter of his *Lectures on Literature*, Nabokov lit into Marx's rendering of the imperfect tense—recognized by Proust as Flaubert's masterful means of conveying temporal unity and continuity—without mentioning her by name.[7]

Any projected "biography of a translation" must take stock of Nabokov's castigations, but just as important is an account of Paul de Man's intervention. Why did de Man choose to base the Norton edition on the translation by Eleanor Marx when this version was clearly so dated? The obvious answer—that the translation was out of copyright and would save money for the publisher and both money and time for the editors—was not especially convincing even if it remained the primary reason.

In 1962, de Man was recommended by M. H. Abrams for the job of editing *Madame Bovary* for the recently launched Norton series. Already a rising star of literary criticism, de Man promised to burnish the new series with intellectual brio and scholarly authority. "The Substantially New Translation Based on the Version by Eleanor Marx Aveling" appeared with his signature after three years of work on the translation in 1965, and was reprised in Margaret Cohen's 2004 Norton edition. Time constraints apparently hindered Cohen from undertaking her own translation, part of the interest of which would have been to toy with convention by re-titling the work *Mrs. Bovary*! But in her case, as in de Man's, there was undoubtedly something about the Marx "standard edition" that could not be supplanted or wished away, as in the case of James Strachey's translation of Freud.

Paul de Man may have been attracted to the Marx translation because of the name "Marx," which allowed him to establish his own placement in a unique genealogy; an executor not only of Flaubert but, through intellectual heredity, of Karl Marx, and by extension, of the Hegelian tradition of dialectical thinking that challenged the neo-finalism of de Man's formation. Conceivably, de Man's work on *Madame Bovary*—the only work of French fiction that bears his signature as translator (despite a plan to translate Rousseau)—afforded him insight into the problem of translation. It was of course Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator" that occasioned theoretical reflection in his last lecture. It was here that he argued that translation reveals "the pain and suffering of language itself."[8]

What was the extent of de Man's contribution to the Marx translation? Highly limited, if we go with the account given by de Man's daughter

who was under the impression that her father's revised copy was lost in transit from Germany. Discouraged and unable to recommence, he apparently turned the project over to his wife Patricia de Man. This version of the story supports Neil Hertz's recollection. According to Hertz, a close friend and one-time colleague of de Man's at Cornell, it was Patricia who did the bulk of the work and even petitioned Norton after Paul's death for double billing on the editorial credits of future reissues (to no avail):

> I would guess Paul went over it pretty carefully, so his sensibility would leave traces, no doubt—perhaps even more determinative than Marx's on Eleanor Aveling's translation?! But these men, these men … with their loyal women! Who needs it? Pat died earlier this year, so there's no way of checking all this with her, alas.

To treat de Man's *Madame Bovary* as the sexist appropriation of a woman's labor falls into the old trap of reducing woman to the status of victim, and panders to a cottage industry of de Man-bashing. (Typically, de Man's personal history of covering up his anti-Semitic wartime journalism is used to indict deconstruction as a theoretical smokescreen for rank moral relativism.) And yet, even if one is concerned to avoid such reductionism, de Man's 1965 preface is a peculiarly passive-aggressive text; one that seems to belie his claim to "extensive" revision. If one goes back to Marx's 1886 text, what is most surprising is how faithful the de Man version was to her translation, not the reverse. Reviewing his preface—with the Marx text in view—one can only conclude that it disavows the extent of his debt to Eleanor's work (and behind that, to that of his spouse Patricia). De Man wrote:

> The text here reproduced is an extensively revised version of the older translations of *Madame Bovary*, done by Eleanor Marx Aveling, the daughter of Karl Marx … the Marx Aveling text has advantages and drawbacks. One of its main virtues is relatively high degree of fidelity in rendering the cadence of Flaubert's sentence. Other translators have produced versions that are a great deal more fluent and idiomatic. But Flaubert himself is neither fluent nor really idiomatic (except in conversations), and by adhering more closely to his rhythm, Mrs. Aveling sometimes succeeds in conveying Flaubert's carefully controlled syntax.[9]

There are several things to note in this preface: First is the instability of naming when referring to Eleanor Marx. De Man passes from Eleanor Marx Aveling, to the epithet "daughter of Karl," to the Marx Aveling text, to Mrs. Aveling. Eleanor herself fell prey to a similar instability of self-naming. She was an inconsistent signatory of letters and manuscripts, and overly conscious of being a literary help-mate: first to Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray (whose 1876 *L'Histoire de la Commune de 1871* she translated into English in 1886), then to Edward Aveling, and, most constantly, to her father. The "daughtering" and "spousing" of Eleanor goes along with the phrase "adhering more closely to his rhythm," which underscores feminine psychic and physiological servitude to a male author. This syndrome seems eerily repeated in the case of Patricia de Man, but then, one might well ask, who ascertained the "unfluency" of Flaubert's French? Patricia or Paul? Though it now seems quite certain that Patricia de Man did the lion's share of the revisions, that Paul de Man's principal motive for editing the novel was financial, and that Eleanor Marx's translation provided a cheap and efficient means of remitting the commissioned text, these revelations do not alter the fact that Paul de Man should be credited with the intuition that riches could be wrung from Eleanor Marx's "fidelity" to Flaubert's "unfluent" style.[10]

The de Man version restored Flaubert's paragraph structure and narrative units (following consultation of the authoritative Dumesnil, Conard, and Garnier editions), while generally preserving Eleanor Marx's punctuation and diacritical alterations. Whether Marx's punctuation was as idiosyncratic as it might seem—she inserts question marks, for example, where none appear in the French original text—remains a matter of debate since Flaubert left his manuscripts notoriously unpunctuated and avowed his hatred of typography and redacted versions of his books.[11] What does seem clear, when one compares Eleanor Marx's translation to de Man's revised version, is that de Man modernized the diction by de-Victorianizing style, drying out sentimentalities, and rationalizing metaphor:

> Several misleading inaccuracies and mistranslations have been corrected. Especially in Part II and III of the novel entire pages had, at times, to be rewritten; Mrs. Aveling often loses track of the meaning in the meditative, inward passages and renders the already obscure original altogether opaque. One feels about this patching and mending job the way a surgeon must feel about a difficult operation: the patient is by no means as good as new, but he should at least feel some relief. Students of this text should be a little closer to Flaubert's original intention than when the Marx Aveling translation was sprung upon them without warning.[12]

As a justification of amputation in the name of "cure," de Man's "surgical operation" recalls Bovary's botched operation on Hippolyte's clubfoot (resulting in the poor boy's leg amputation). The surgical metaphor may distantly allude to the profession of Flaubert's father, and to the oft-repeated commonplace that Flaubert's clinical realism was indebted to his early exposure to the operating theater adjoining the family home. But most important, it pathologizes Marx's translation, and by extension Eleanor herself, positioning her as "patient"—an hysteric or *détraquée*—ready to ambush the reader with an unforeseen attack.

De Man reserved his harshest criticism for Eleanor's translation of the novel's "meditative, inward" passages; those famed moments of subjectivity in parts 2 and 3. And yet it was precisely in one of those passages that one finds evidence of some rather pathological translating on de Man's part. Homais has just delivered to Emma the news of her father-in-law's death and she is in a peculiar state: a death has been announced; a deadly poison has been revealed; her monotonous, grieving family surrounds her; and she sits, locked in private reverie, savoring the pleasure of her latest tryst with Léon. It is at this point in the 2004 Marx/de Man/Cohen edition that we read: "She would have liked to stop hearing and seeing, in order to keep intact the stillness of her love; but, try as she would, the memory would vanish under the impact of outer sensations." On first reading, this phrase in the English version, my attention was riveted by the phrase "the stillness of her love." "Still" underscores absence of movement and absence of sound; a state of utter acoustic and kinetic quiescence. The phrase acted as a referential compass for numerous points in the text. It referred to the tension between the barest movement of light and shadow and the silence of the natural bower at the moment when Emma finally yields to Rodolphe: "Here and there around her, in the leaves or on the ground, trembled luminous patches … Silence was everywhere." It recalled the "blue space" of love, an arrested spot of time in which *jouissance* is remembered as a sensation of spatial immensity:

> She was entering upon a marvelous world where all would be passion, ecstasy, delirium. She felt herself surrounded by an endless rapture. A blue space surrounded her and ordinary existence appeared only intermittently between these heights, dark and far away beneath her.

The chain of associations leading from "stillness of her love" to the "blue space of bliss" seemed to give directly onto the death-drive. "The aim of all life is death," Freud wrote in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in describing the pulsion of "the instinct to return to the inanimate state." Emma's being yields to inertia, syncope, catalepsy, and drugged stupor ("She felt a stupor invading her, as if from opium fumes"), with each state advancing the pull of the suicide-drive:

> Why not end it all? What restrained her? She was free. She advanced, looked at the paving stones, saying to herself, "Jump! jump!"
>
> The ray of light reflected straight from below drew the weight of her body towards the abyss … She was right at the edge, almost hanging, surrounded by vast space. The blue of the sky invaded her, the air was whirling in her hollow head.[13]

Emma experiences the sensation of being absorbed by space; a condition in which the outside comes in and occupies the seat of consciousness, and all traces of an exterior world yield to subjective interiority. The cliché of "a still point in a turning world" comes to mind, not just because this is a moment when "time stands still" as Emma's life hangs in the balance but also because Binet's lathe is turning;

producing a drone that blocks out the reassuring sound of human voices and prompts the programming of self-destruction. The "stillness of her love," an arresting trope, thus acquires performative force as the rhetorical hinge between the life and death instincts.

I went back to the French original to see how Flaubert had rendered the phrase "Elle aurait voulu ne rien entendre, ne rien voir, afin de ne pas déranger le recueillement de son amour qui allait se perdant, quoi qu'elle fit, sous les sensations extérieures." The phrase was nowhere to be found! In its place, there was only nothing—*rien*—substantivized like a thing or noun: "Elle aurait voulu ne *rien* entendre, ne *rien* voir." What had happened to this nothingness in the Marx/de Man/Cohen translation? The Eleanor Marx text was reassuring on this score: "She would have liked to hear nothing, to see nothing, so as not to disturb the meditation on her love, that, do what she would, became lost in external sensations." Lydia Davis's translation follows Marx quite closely but renders "receuillement" with "recollection" instead of "meditation." "She wished she could hear nothing, see nothing, so as not to disturb the recollection of her love, which was steadily vanishing, no matter what she did, under external sensations." Adam Thorpe's Vintage translation (committed to pre-1857 vocabulary and expressions) hews like Davis to the original syntax, though he replaces Davis's stress on memory and sensation with the visually oriented figures of contemplation and impression: "She would have liked to hear nothing, see nothing, so as not to disturb the contemplation of her love which would disappear, whatever she did, beneath external impressions."[14] In neither the Marx nor the Davis nor the Thorpe versions is there a reference to the "stillness of her love," no false trope. "Nothing" is kept intact, dutifully performing the work of reinforcing Flaubert's evocation of "le néant."[15] If "nothing" were regained, there were, however, other losses of meaning. "Nothing" was manifest in the Eleanor Marx version at the expense of memory, since the effort of Emma's consciousness to "re-collect" (*recueillir*) memory-impressions was hardly conveyed by the word "meditation" (the very word, we recall, that de Man used to signal Eleanor's translation failures). Also sacrificed was any attempt to render the phrase "son amour qui allait se perdant," which, though nicely rendered by Davis as "steadily vanishing," blunts the economic ratio of "pay as you go" love, receding as it expands; an image harking back to Balzac's magical ass's skin that shrinks life with every erotic wish fulfillment.

Despite such drawbacks, Marx's language was an improvement over de Man's illegitimate figuration. But then, in an odd twist, de Man's use of "the stillness of her love," a trope that was not there, came back in different guises, first in Chapter 3 of Part 3 in a scene of Emma and Léon's moonlit lovemaking on a boat, traced by Nabokov (in his marginalia) to the fourth strophe of Lamartine's *Le Lac*:

> Ils restaient au fond, tous les deux cachés par l'ombre, sans parler. Les avirons carrés sonnaient entre les volets de fer; et cela marquait dans le silence comme un battement de métronome, tandis qu'à l'arrière de la bauce qui traînait ne discontinuait pas son petit clapotement doux dans l'eau.

"Stillness" here supports the sentimental cliché of lovers enjoying a speech-free (sex-filled) moment. The Marx translation, which aligns the lovers' "silence" with the air's "stillness," seems motivated by the desire to exaggerate the irritating racket of the background noise (on the order of Binet's lathe):

> They sat at the bottom, both hidden by the shade, in silence. The square oars rang in the iron thwarts, and, in the stillness, seemed to mark time, like the beating of a metronome, while at the stern the rudder that trailed behind never ceased its gentle splash against the water.

Nabokov makes the sound even louder when he submits "ceased its splashy sound" as an improvement. The de Man translation, by contrast, was concerned less with noise and more with beat. Truer to Flaubert's "sans parler," he avoided Eleanor Marx's play on "silence/stillness," opting instead to emphasize the withholding of language, its replacement by the sound of things:

> They stayed below, hidden in darkness, without saying a word. The square-tipped oars sounded against the iron oar-locks in the stillness, they seemed to mark time like the beat of a metronome, while the rope that trailed behind never ceased its gentle splash against the water.[16]

The ritornelle between "square-tipped oars" and "iron oar-locks" simulates the metronome beat. It assigns a special role to "stillness" as the signal pause of the musical measure, marking time in the last hours of an idyll.[17] Adam Thorpe would pick up on the metronome effect while enhancing the autonomous agency of the boat, each of whose parts—assigned their technical names—performs like an instrument in a chamber ensemble: "The square oars rang between the iron tholes, and this marked the silence like the beating of a metronome, while from the stern the hawser would not leave off its soft little splashing as it trailed through the water."[18]

A kind of "stillness of her love" also might be said to rivet Emma's perception of Rouen, en route to an assignation with Léon:

> Then on a sudden the town appeared. Sloping down like an amphitheatre, and drowned in the fog, it widened out beyond the bridges confusedly. Then the open country spread away with a monotonous movement till it touched in the distance the vague line of the pale sky. Seen thus from above, the whole landscape looked immovable as a picture; the anchored ships were massed in one corner, the river curved round the foot of the green hills, and the isles, oblique in shape, lay on the water, like large motionless, black fishes … Sometimes a gust of wind drove the clouds towards the Saint-Catherine hills, like aerial waves that broke silently against a cliff.
>
> A giddiness seemed to her to detach itself from this mass of existence, and her heart swelled as if the hundred and twenty thousand souls that palpitated there had all at once sent into it the vapour of the passions she fancied theirs. Her love grew in the presence of this vastness, and expanded with tumult to the vague murmurings that rose towards her. She poured it out upon the square, on the walks, on the streets, and the old Norman city outspread before her eyes as an enormous capital, as a Babylon into which she was entering.[19]

The de Man version reads:

> Then all at once, the city came into sight.
>
> Sloping down like an amphitheatre, and drowned in the fog, it overflowed unevenly beyond its bridges. Then the open country mounted again in a monotonous sweep until it touched in the distance the elusive line of the pale sky. Seen thus from above, the whole landscape seemed frozen, like a picture; the anchored ships were massed in one corner, the river curved around the foot of the green hills, and the oblong islands looked like giant fishes lying motionless on the water … From time to time a gust of wind would drive the clouds towards the slopes of Saint Catherine, like aerial waves breaking silently against a cliff.
>
> Something seemed to emanate from this mass of human lives that left her dizzy; her heart swelled as though the hundred and twenty thousand souls palpitating there had all at once wafted to her the passions with which her imagination had endowed them. Her love grew in the presence of this vastness, and filled with the tumult of the vague murmuring which rose from below. She poured it out, onto the squares, the avenues, the streets; and the old Norman city spread out before her like some incredible capital, a Babylon into which she was about to enter.

Where the boat idyll had played on sound effects, here stillness was hitched to a certain frozenness of painted landscape, its referents seemingly culled from Romantic pastoral poetry (Wordsworth's *Prelude*) and Dutch or British landscape painting. In Lydia Davis's 2010 translation, Flaubert's "immobility" grows into the idea that a painting is simply a landscape that does not move: "The entire landscape had the stillness of a painting." By way of contrast, Thorpe writes, "The landscape had the motionless look of a painting." He then uses "still" adjectivally as if to underscore the effect of motion coming to a standstill: "and the islands, oblong-shaped, looked like great black fish stilled on the water." Flaubert's reference to "anchored ships" is a possible pastiche of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: "As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean," and draws attention to the deathly immobility of ships marooned in still waters, of islands walled off from the worldly fray, of dead fish floating on the surface of the sea. Eleanor Marx's diction emphasizes the logic of analogy: hills are to isles as isles are to fish. In de Man's rendering, the geometry is more precise ("oblong" is Flaubert's term, not "oblique"), but the syntactically choppy way in which Eleanor's islands "lay on the water, like large, motionless black fishes" seems true to the painted-on feeling of Flaubert's

"semblaient sur l'eau de grands poissons noirs arrêtés." Flaubert's homophonic play between *arête* (meaning "fishbone") and *arrêté* aurally complements the visual "arrest" created by that daub of black. It is odd that de Man's rendering—they "looked like giant fishes lying motionless on the water"—is colorless, neutral. In the place of color we have an awkward alliterative construct—"looked like … lying"—which bizarrely recalls de Man's commentary on euphony in a chapter of *Blindness and Insight* called "Literature and Language." Referring to Roman Jakobson's analysis of the slogan "I like Ike," de Man zeroes in on the way euphony seeds confusion between literal and figural representation, drawing attention to the "infinitely deceiving epistemology of representation" and to "the innumerable ways in which it is possible to confuse images and things." De Man is trying to identify what ascribes literarity to literature, the quantum in which the figural status of language resides. But he soon comes up against the problem of sliding degrees of figuralism, the impossibility of clearly distinguishing tropes from figures, metaphor from metonymy. Figural language is captured by an "apt water-metaphor," he argues, quoting Heinrich Lausberg to the effect that "the transition (of one figure to another, in this case, from metaphor to metonymy) is fluid." "Rhetoric," de Man concludes in a familiar turn of argument, "implies the persistent threat of misreading."[20] Perhaps the encrypted "looked like lying"—placed uncannily in a painted scene of watery stillness—may be read as a caveat against the desire to make language, or life, stand still.[21]

Such a reading calls for a full reckoning of the inertia of mass crucial to the representation of the death-drive, which is depicted as the heaviness of embodiment emphasized by Flaubert's image of "les existences amassés," and rendered existentially by Eleanor Marx's "mass of existence." Marx's turn of phrase rings true to the famous line "Elle n'existait plus," by which Flaubert would mark Emma's passing, or to the portrait of dead Emma covered by a mortuary sheet: "Le drap se creusait depuis ses seins jusqu'à ses genoux, se relevant ensuite à la pointe des orteils; et il semblait à Charles que des masses infinies, qu'un poids énorme pesait sur elle." ("The sheet sunk in from her breast to her knees, and then rose at the tips of her toes, and it seemed to Charles that infinite masses, an enormous load, were weighing upon her.") The weight of "infinite masses, an enormous load" foreshadows the immense heaviness of Emma's coffin, transferring the pull of gravity to the measured exhaustion of the pallbearers: "The tired bearers walked more slowly, and it advanced with constant jerks, like a boat that pitches with every wave." "Weariness," for Roland Barthes, a key term of the Neutral, relates lassitude (*lassitudo, fatigatio*) to labor (*labo*, "to fall," "painful rural work"); it enters a sequence including mental exhaustion, chronic fatigue, depression, and the "work" of mourning.[22] This state of tropological standstill inheres in the cliché—itself an operator of dead or copied speech.

Like the cliché, Marx's translation stands as a plea for unoriginal textuality. Deauthored, neutered, deowned—"suicided," if you will—the translation, like the Flaubertian cliché, is cast as an unusual form of literary expression that, counter to Romantic values and myths of avant-garde originality, flaunts its derivativeness and proudly wears the lead weight of predication on literary antecedent. In what is perhaps a singular case of literature as authorized plagiarism or legalized appropriation, the translation reproduces the original with as much exactitude as possible, with no risk of copyright infringement or allegations of forgery. It is granted this extraordinary license because it claims to be *of* the original—that is to say, possessed of no autonomous textual identity. Critically framed in these terms, Eleanor Marx's biography is no longer reducible to the plot of her mistreatment at the hands of a dastardly partner. The focus shifts instead to "Marx, the translation," and its status in textual history.

As has been often noted, Gustave Flaubert and Karl Marx (whose respective dates of birth, 1818 and 1821, placed them in a common chronotope) shared a landscape dominated by the long historical shadow of 1848, the society of bourgeois sham and speculation that asserted its ascendancy under the Second Empire of Napoleon III, the commercialization of discourse that resulted from Napoleon's manipulation of the mass press for propaganda purposes, and the glitter and shine of the commodity arcade that cut its swath through midcentury Europe.[23] February 1848 was the month in which revolution erupted in Paris, a mere two weeks after Marx and Engels published their *Communist Manifesto*, establishing it, to borrow Martin Puchner's words, as a text "arising from the revolution even as it sought to trigger the revolution." Though a study of "provincial manners" far-flung from the political agitations that would sweep mid-century Europe, *Madame Bovary* superimposes a post-1848 sensibility onto a pre-1848 historical setting, registered most palpably in Emma's dislocated idealism or the ideological grain of Homais's morally compromised progressivism. The way in which Marx charted how the revolution telescoped epochal shifts created a sense of time out of joint, and disturbed the temporal consistency of the present that has struck many critics as compatible with a Flaubertian sense of the aesthetic laws of parody and the ironies of historical repetition. In the history of their reception, *Madame Bovary* and *Das Kapital* also line up as texts that fit no single genre: the former outraged readers by introducing unfixed narrative perspective (*style indirect libre*) and a psychological realism clouded by authorial irony, while the latter taxed its audience by confronting them with what Isaiah Berlin referred to as "a curious amalgam of economic theory, history, sociology and propaganda which fits none of the accepted categories."[24]

It is not hard to imagine how Eleanor Marx might have filtered Flaubert's novel through the lens of Marxism. George Steiner has argued that

> George Moore had been instrumental in the project, but Eleanor Marx was principally inspired by what she took to be the radical posture of Flaubert's book. Here was a statement of the condition of women under the suffocating regime of bourgeois hypocrisy and mercantile ideals … The book had been prosecuted for obscenity in the courts of Napoleon III. Eleanor Marx saw in this prosecution a nakedly political attempt to silence an artist who, by sheer honesty of vision, had laid bare the cant and corruption of life in the Second Empire. Thus the translator brought to her task an explicit programmatic "set." She approached the text almost entirely via context, via what she felt to be a shared sphere of moral-political intention.[25]

An interest in commodity fetishism seems to have been part of the "programmatic 'set'" that Eleanor Marx brought to bear on the text. Flaubert arguably wrote his way, through the art of the detail, into what would become Karl Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. In the passage describing the porcelain sheen and glossy veneer calqued onto the gentlemen's faces and bodies at the Vaubyessard Ball, there would seem to be an intimation of Marx's celebrated formula of fetishism whereby social relations between men have been displaced by "the fantastic form of a relation between things":

> Their clothes, better made, seemed of finer cloth, and their hair, brought forward in curls towards the temples, glossy with more delicate pomades [the French "lustrés par des pommades" accentuates the gleam of light]. They had the complexion of wealth—that clear complexion that is heightened by the pallor of porcelain, the shimmer of satin, the veneer of old furniture ["ils avaient le teint de la richesse, ce teint blanc que rehaussent la pâleur des porcelaines, les moires du satin, le vernis des beaux meubles"], and that an ordered regimen of exquisite nurture maintains at its best.

Eleanor Marx's consistent rendering of riches as wealth enhances the latent critique of wealth in Flaubert, and it is interesting in this regard to note that Lydia Davis, in her strong translation, preserves "the complexion of wealth," as does Adam Thorpe. Throughout *Madame Bovary*, the desire for wealth is contracted like an incurable disease, as when the satin shoes stored by Emma after the ball exceed the function of fetishistic *memento mori* to become objects of wealth-transference: "Her heart was like these. In its friction against wealth something had come over it that could not be effaced." Alan Russell used "riches" in his 1952 Penguin translation: "Her heart was like that. Contact with riches had left upon it a coating that would never wear off."[26] In preferring the term wealth to riches, it was as if Eleanor Marx were intent on not letting Anglophone readers forget that luxury items—clothing, jewels, aristocratic refinements—were dressed-up versions of money, hardened into congealed capital.[27] Flaubert's luxury passages, in the hands of Eleanor Marx, suddenly appear like a gift to Karl Marx, providing grist for his theory.

It is of course a stretch to cast Flaubert as a Marxist. A member of the *rentier* class who prided himself on just how *uneconomic* his writing was, Flaubert's depiction of wage-labor in *Madame Bovary* was confined to the personage of Berthe, Madame Bovary's hapless daughter, consigned at the novel's end to factory work. ("It was an aunt who took charge of her. She is poor, and sends her to a cotton-mill to earn a living.")[28] Compared to Zola, the Goncourt brothers, or early Huysmans—each of whom documented the exigencies of wage-labor, piece work, domestic work, and sex work in the diverse arenas of the slaughterhouse, the department store, the laundry, the home, or the brothel—Flaubert rates as a pale chronicler of the workingwoman's everyday.[29] At the Vaubyessard Ball, for example, servants are treated as utility figures, allowed to assist with narrative action and occupy character-space but scarcely dignified with names or dialogue. (A steward resplendent in knee breeches and white cravat is flattened and objectified when glimpsed bobbing amid a sea of platters while another servant, similarly attenuated, shouts the names of dishes into the Duc de Laverdière's ear.) Characterologically speaking, Flaubert assigned space for such liveried domestics on the narrative subfloor of minor characters.[30]

No Marxist then, in his class sympathies, Flaubert nonetheless qualifies as a Marxist of sorts insofar as he can be seen as an intellectual worker or laborer of the "real" of realism. To read Flaubert this way is to home in on the material origins of his images, and the importance of the art of illustration to his literary *techne*. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert modernized the classical procedures of *ut pictura poesis* (ponderously deployed later on in the overly historicist *Salammbô* [1862]) by linking them to modern media and the condition of mechanical reproducibility. His use of caricature, satirical illustrations, maps, portraits, fashion plates and optical contrivances (spectacles, lorgnons, microscopes) as devices for constructing visual set pieces lent historical density and phantasmagorical surplus-value to commodity spectacle. This effect is especially striking in the novel's attention to fashion, brought out in the Claude Chabrol film version with its exquisite reconstruction of period ensembles and colors coordinated to Emma's moods. Margaret Cohen's 2004 edition (which, in addition to preserving the revised Marx translation is heavy on fashion plates) underscores the importance of sartorial templates to Flaubert's realism. They include: an Amazon in a riding costume similar to the one that Madame Bovary acquires when she arranges riding excursions with Rodolphe; two stevedore costumes that reference those donned by Emma when she attends a masked ball in Rouen; two Devéria prints from an 1840 collection called *Les Heures de la Parisienne* showing what a fashionable woman wears while writing letters or while asleep on the divan after a night of reveling; and a plate of two women in ball gowns from an 1846 German edition of *La Mode* that Cohen matches up with outfits worn by Emma and other ladies at the Vaubyessard Ball: "She wore a gown of pale saffron trimmed with bouquets of pompom roses mixed with green … Lace trimmings, diamond brooches, medallion bracelets, trembled on blouses, gleamed on breasts, clinked on bare arms."[31] Cohen's illustration-embellished edition prompts further reflection on the labor of literary visualization.

Flaubert's transmogrification of the object could also be said to prefigure what Marx would do in *Capital* with a table or a coat in his theories of exchange-value and commodity fetishism (his own overcoat went in and out of pawn throughout the 1850s and '60s, determining whether he would be allowed into the British Library). As Peter Stallybrass observes:

> In *Capital*, Marx wrote about a coat as a commodity—as the abstract "cell-form" of capitalism. He traced the value of that cell-form to the appropriated body of alienated labor. In the process of production, he argued, the commodity takes on an exotic life, even as the body of the worker is reduced to an abstraction.[32]

Though Stallybrass wants to insist on the fact that Marx's coat, like the coats of most workers, "were anything but abstractions," he acknowledges the power of Marx's *dematerialization* of things in his idea of the commodity fetish. "As a *commodity*, the coat achieves its destiny as an *equivalence*: as 20 yards of linen, 10 lbs of tea, 40 lbs of coffee." Marx's commodity fetish, in Stallybrass's ascription, "inscribes *im*materiality as the defining feature of capitalism."[33] One could say that this immaterialized materialism also defines Flaubertian realism, which emerges as a "Marxist" genre in its obsession with the mystificatory capabilities of objects. This Marxist Flaubert is only underscored by the addition of Eleanor Marx's signature to the novel's English translation.

The Marx-Flaubert-Marx trifecta, crucial to the "Englishing" of French realism's language of class, luxury, and commodity fetishism, may have also contributed to the idea of the "work" of art grounded in man-hours, productive outcomes, and the forms assumed by intellectual labor. Arguably, there is a discernible quilting point where Flaubert, the self-designated "homme-plume," who left two thousand pages of polished writing and over twenty thousand pages of notes and drafts, joins Eleanor Marx, the worker bee of translation, whose corpus went beyond Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Marx's *Capital*, and Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray's *History of the Paris Commune of 1871* to include Nikolaus Delius's *The Epic Elements in Shakespeare's Dramas* and Ibsen's plays.[34] One could even say that Eleanor's concept of "conscientious translation," expounded in her preface to the first-print runs of her translation, would not have been possible without the example of Flaubert's labored prose. Eleanor wrote:

> There are three possible methods of translation. The first is that of the genius, who, literally re-creates a work in his own language. Schlegel has done this for Shakespeare, Baudelaire for Edgar Poe. But there are few geniuses in the world, and those we have do not, for the most part, devote themselves to the thankless task of translating. Next, there is the hack translator, who, armed with dictionary, rushes in where his betters fear to tread. He it is who has earned for the translator the epithet of *tradittore*, and his work is but too often a perversion, not a rendering. Finally there is the conscientious worker. He cannot if he would belong to the first category of translators. He would not if he could belong to the second. He can but strive to do his best; to be honest, earnest. To this last category I claim to belong. Certainly no critic can be more painfully aware than I am of the weaknesses, shortcomings, the failures of my work; but at least the translation is faithful. I have neither suppressed nor added a line, a word … My work, then, I know is faulty. It is pale and feeble by the side of its original. Yet, if it induces some readers to go to that original, if it helps to make known to those who cannot thus study this work of the greatest of French novelists after Balzac, I am content. At any rate, I cannot believe James Thomson was right when he prophesied that "if any one dared to publish an English version [of *Madame Bovary*], he and it would be overwhelmed with execrations." But whether thus "overwhelmed" or not, I do not regret having done this work; it is the best I could do.[35]

While Eleanor reveals a curious lack of solidarity with the hack translator who is arguably the real proletariat of translation, her self-identification as a translator of the worker stripe was surely not unrelated to the fact that she herself translated for money and saw financial independence as the key to female emancipation from property marriage. The modesty of the translation's textual ideal seems here to conform to the personal modesty of a woman whose literary talents were substantial but whose personal claim to the literary vocation was adjusted to the "class" of the writer *manqué*—that is to say, of the translator. And yet, rather than stop at an interpretation that reinforces the idea of the translator as a second-class citizen, or pays tribute to the feminist translator as redeemer of devalorized forms of work, I am more interested in extracting from Eleanor Marx's preface and practice of translation a singular model of unalienated literary labor.

As S. S. Prawer reminds us, literary labor fell into a peculiar category in Marxist thought. Literature "was valuable to Marx not least because it resisted crude 'utility'—and 'consumption'—thinking." There is, he continues,

> something distinctly odd about Marx's humorous use of the labels "productive" and "unproductive" in a literary context. If the distinguishing mark of "productive labour" is that it serves to increase capital and bring profit to the owners of capital, then the fact that Milton only received 5 pounds for *Paradise Lost* proves no more than that he was himself no capitalist … But the general point Marx is making is clear enough. The true poet's labour could remain—in Milton's time at least—unalienated to the extent that he took no account of market value. Such a poet writes what he has to, from the center of his being, and leaves it to others to convert his poem into a profit-bearing commodity. He thus prefigures that "realm of

freedom" which has inspired the most eloquent and justly famous passage of *Capital* III.

Where Prawer focuses on how literature serves Marx as a model of unalienated labor, Werner Hamacher sees capitalism itself leading, in Marx's scheme, to the "end of labor, more precisely, of forced and commodity-producing labor." Hamacher also homes in on the "famous passage" of chapter 48 of the third volume of *Capital* in which Marx wrote:

> In fact the realm of freedom actually begins only where labor which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus, in the very nature of things, it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production … Beyond it [the realm of necessity] begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with the realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the work day is its basic prerequisite.

For Hamacher, what Marx promises here is "not so much the liberation *from* labor as the liberation *to* it." The end of labor is structurally registered in a whole new language: "a language other than commodity-language … that speaks beyond—but also in—all 'objective thought-forms' of commodity-language, opening up its syntactic arrangement and its meaning to something else beyond any conceivable form."[36]

Literary or intellectual labor, identified respectively by Prawer and Hamacher as the place where Marx seeded an idea of unalienated labor—and from there, perhaps, the foundational principle of an "International of letters"—provides a different optic on the well-worn canonical reading of Flaubert as laborer of the *mot juste*. Frances Ferguson reminds us that the symbolic capital of Flaubert's work ethic was drawn on by his lawyer Jules Senard to bolster his character defense at the obscenity trial, and that the acquittal was taken by Flaubert as a validation of his commitment to literary technique ("technique," says Ferguson, "had won the privilege of the technical"). This profile of Flaubert as master technician informs Gilles Philippe's study of the grammaticalization of French literature between 1890 and 1940, a phenomenon attributed in large part to the enshrining of the Flaubertian "worked" phrase in literary pedagogy. Philippe Hamon had already established the terms for analyzing Flaubert's art of description (sometimes qualified as *ekphrasis*) as labor-intensive stylistics, contending in his *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptif* that description

> is the site where work is manifest in three ways: as the application of a professional lexicon (used say, by an architect to describe a house), as work *on* the lexicon itself (ostentatious use of stylistic savoir-faire, rarified epithets, descriptive metaphors), and as site of generic study of the world, of knowledge, of classification, of Mathesis.[37]

Julian Barnes, reviewing Pierre-Marc de Biasi's critical edition of Flaubert's *Carnets de travail* expatiates on the labor of research: "Research for Flaubert is not preliminary but central; not a matter of 'checking' but part of the writing process."[38]

The research model of writing, what Barnes dubs "conscientious literature," puts translation theory into dialogue with the French field of manuscript scholarship known as *la critique génétique* in which the final published version is effectively unspooled in an archival field of drafts and sketches.[39] Such an approach is especially suited to authors like Flaubert or Hölderlin, the latter notorious for never leaving a final version of his poems untouched. As J. M. Coetzee has recently noted:

> In his last productive years Hölderlin seems to have abandoned the notion of the definitive and to have regarded each seemingly completed poem as merely a stopping place, a base from which to conduct further raids into the unsaid. Hence his habit of breaking open a perfectly good poem, not in order to improve it but to rebuild it from the ground up. In such a case, which is the definitive text, which the variant, particularly when the rebuilding is broken off and not resumed? Are apparently unfinished reworkings to be regarded as abandoned projects, or might Hölderlin have been feeling his way toward a new aesthetics of the fragmentary, and an accompanying poetic epistemology of the flashing insight or vision?[40]

Provisionality rather than finish becomes the norm in this "new aesthetics of the fragmentary and accompanying poetic epistemology"; in Hölderlin's case practiced by himself as well as by the *généticiens* who labored posthumously to determine a definitive edition.

Translation, like genetic criticism, effects a subtle generic shift in how we view the literary text. The work becomes something on the order of what I would call *l'oeuvre oeuvrée*, the worked and working text. No longer viewed as a stable object owned by a single author, it emerges as a site of translational or editorial labor. Though *génétique* can have the effect of enhancing the patrimonial prestige of a national author, its working method of scholarly teams dedicated to transcription, collation, and chartist authentification passes the singular author to the collective interpretive community, attenuating the writer's exclusive literary title. Jacques Derrida characterized this singular/plural textual identity as "the genius of the genius" that "enjoins us to think how an absolute singularity subtracts itself from the community of the common, from the generality or the genericness of the genre and thus from the shareable."[41] Derrida grounds his insistence on the "genericity of all genre" in a way that makes it compatible with the pragmatism of literary genetics, which, by dissolving the unitary integral into a textual commons of epitexts and variants, creates a kind of generic literary field. Jean-Michel Rabaté, in conversation with Derrida, ascribes this genericity to the functionalist archive such that manuscripts, made subject to the analytic methods of *informatique* and classified as research objects—are effectively "ITEM-ized" (ITEM being the initials for *L'Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes* [the Institute of Modern Texts and Manuscripts]).[42] Mediated by unseen editorial hands, the text bears the imprimatur of anonymous signatories whose alterity redounds against the unregistered identities of the work's all-inclusive readership. Translation is similar in this respect: the translator remains below the radar interceding as unobtrusively as possible. And like *génétique*, translation operates in the domain of literary *techne*, working through linguistic medium and milieu.

The terms "medium" and "milieu" are paired by Antoine Berman to approximate what Walter Benjamin intended by "task" in his famous 1923 preface to his translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens* titled *Die Aufgabe des Ubersetzers*. Berman suggests that for Benjamin language was a medium comprised of differential densities, while translation implied the act of moving among zones of greater or lesser density.[43] Berman offers the interesting observation that Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator" should by rights be titled "the task of translation" given that Benjamin says virtually nothing about the translator in the essay. Traditionally, Berman argues,

> translators' prologues—even if they seek to generalize—speak of the translation being introduced. It's the law of the genre: think of Humboldt's preface to Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, of Stefan George's to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, of Bonnefoy's to *Hamlet*, of Meschonnic's to the Bible. Whenever a translator prefaces his work, he always speaks of *his* translation, or at least of the work he has translated. Nothing of the sort with Benjamin. This is too unusual not to be deliberate and indicates Benjamin's intent to produce an alternative kind of discourse on translation.[44]

If a Benjaminian parenthesis on the task of translation has been opened at this juncture, it is because Benjamin's notion of task provides a critical framework for analyzing the conscientiousness of Flaubert's text and Eleanor Marx's translation in terms of literary technics. Of special interest in this regard is Benjamin's understanding of translation failure. A profound sense of technical failure informs his theory of translation and grounds his notion of *Aufgabe*. According to Berman, Benjamin lacked the "translation drive" (*pulsion-de-traduire*) essential to the "true" translator. Translation did not come easily to him, and he reserved harsh judgment for his own translation of Baudelaire, which initially he hoped would rival that of Stefan George. In his own estimation, his Baudelaire translations fell woefully short of metric ingenuity or a style equivalent to Baudelaire's aesthetically fascinating "baroque of banality." In a letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal cited by Berman, Benjamin wrote:

> I think I have come to understand that every translation that is not undertaken for the highest and most urgent practical goals (like Biblical

translation, as a prime example) or for the sake of purely philological research must have something absurd about it.

As Berman surmises, as soon as Benjamin engaged in the actual work of translation, a hiatus opened up between translation theory and the practice of translation:

> As soon as we posit translation as involving work, say, on the signifier, a gap opens between the discourse on translation and the experience of it. From this point on, this discourse can neither preside over translation nor fully analyze it. One can certainly formulate principles that might govern the translation of the "letter," but these principles will never achieve the status of a methodology. Between such principles and the act of translation, there emerges an obscure space where the subjectivity and the unconscious of the translator intervene … The discourse on translation can *never* rejoin the actuality of translation.[45]

The worst translation experience for Benjamin occurred when he took on Proust, a project begun in 1926 in collaboration with his friend Franz Hessel. Only the first two volumes ever saw the light of day: *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* and *Le côté de Guermantes*. The completed manuscript of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* was lost and the partially completed text of *La Prisonnière* abandoned in midstream. To Gershom Scholem, Benjamin confessed that the Proust work was killing him. The only way to redeem the pain was to use the difficulties he was encountering with the Proust translation as the basis for a projected article titled "On Translating Proust." The article was never written, and together with the missing translation of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, it forms a monument to the impossible task of translation; or, alternately, to a theory of translation as task. Though the slide from labor to task, and from task to translation, may be not entirely true to the spirit of Benjamin's and Berman's efforts to "demetaphorize" translation (Richard Sieburth, himself their common translator, maintains that Benjamin "tropes translation away from its etymological roots in metaphor and into metonymy"), I would insist that metaphoric and metonymic modalities are in fact combined in Berman's adumbration of the Benjaminian concept of task. Mining the shared connotations of *Aufgabe* and *Auflösung*, the latter a favored term of German romanticism whose cognate is "solution," Berman offers a rich rereading of "task" as:

- the logical solution (of a problem)
- the chemical (dis)solution (of a substance)
- the mathematical (re)solution (of an equation)
- the musical (re)solution (of a chord)

And, as a solvent of the foreign, as in Novalis's "Poetry dissolves (*auflöst*) the foreign in its native essence,"[46] Berman's concept of translation as trial, or test, or experience of the foreign (*l'épreuve de l'étranger*) implies taxing language with the search for a solution to dissonance. The *Aufgabe* as *Auflösung* involves laboring the native tongue while assuming the risk of capitulation (*aufgeben*) to the stranger.

Berman's desire to underwrite Benjamin's translation *practicum* by glossing the concept of *task* ends up placing renewed emphasis on intellectual labor as a literary technics. And it is this paradigm of textual critique—relevant to translation theory and *génétique* alike—that can be adduced from Eleanor Marx's labor theory of translation and Paul/Patricia de Man's revisions to her translation of *Madame Bovary*. The task of translation, in these terms, involves working on solutions to linguistic Untranslatables, while mining the text's fluctuating mobile status as material and editorial object.

"Marx's Bovary"—that is, the "Marxist" Bovary encrypted in the English translation by Karl Marx's daughter—affords a glimpse of a language of labor released from a transcendental, capitalist logic of equivalence, exchange, project and credit. Such a language, in Werner Hamacher's view, is what Derrida was after in *Specters of Marx*. Derrida's idea of "hauntology," Hamacher argues, implies

> that language does not belong to the system of capital, nor to that of labor, that language does not define itself as commodity-language; that it only assumes the character of productive or reproductive labor when the equivalence form is generalized and has repressed the credit-character of capital as well as the project-character of labor.[47]

A non-capitalized theory of language, an unalienated form of labor, a form of literature (translation) released from the burden of possession by a single authorial signature, and the conscription of these objectives for a new "international of letters" (or refurbished *Weltliteratur*) that would sustain the internationalism of *The Communist Manifesto*—these immense stakes of aesthetic politics are thus coaxed out of Eleanor Marx's reflections on the task of the conscientious translator.[48] It is no small irony that this labor theory of translation—a kind of last will and testament tucked into an ephemeral preface to Flaubert's masterpiece—was lost to literary history even as the translation itself was reborn in the most recent Norton edition.

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1 Lydia Davis, "Thyroid Diary," in *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis*, New York: Picador, 2009, 388–9.

2 "Nous le vîmes qui travaillait en conscience, cherchant tous les mots dans le dictionnaire et se donnant beaucoup de mal … s'il savait passablement ses règles, il n'avait guère d'élégance dans les tournures." Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Paris: Flammarion, 1986, 64.

3 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Lydia Davis, New York: Viking/Penguin, 2010, 5.

4 See Graham Falconer, "*Madame Bovary* and the Translators," in *Significations: Essays in Honour of Henry Schogt*, ed. Parth Bhatt, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1997, 41. For a discussion of Juliet Herbert's translation (and Flaubert's effort to get it published by the Parisian publisher Michel Lévy), see Julian Barnes's review of Lydia Davis's translation, "Writer's Writer and Writer's Writer's Writer," in *London Review of Books* 32: 22, November 18, 2010, 7.

5 In addition to Lydia Davis, Margaret Mauldon (Oxford University Press), Geoffrey Wall (Penguin), Gerard Hopkins (Oxford University Press), Alan Russell (Penguin), and Frances Steegmuller (Modern Library) are among those who have provided the better-known and best-circulated English translations of *Madame Bovary*.

6 See Faith Evans, "Eleanor Marx and Gustave Flaubert," in John Stokes, ed., *Eleanor Marx (1855–1898)*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000; Hannelore Lee-Jahnke, ["Eleanor Marx, traductrice militante et miroir d'Emma Bovary," in Jean Delisle, ed., *Portraits de traductrices*, Ottawa: Presses Universitaires d'Ottawa; Denise Merkle, *Madame Bovary*, in *Babel: International Journal of Translation* 50: 2, 2004, 98–111; Denise Merkle, "Gustave Flaubert et Emile Zola devant la censure française et britannique," unpublished dissertation, Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University; Graham Falconer, "*Madame Bovary* and the Translators," *Significations: Essays in Honour of Henry Schogt*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 40–1; Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, London: Routledge, 1996; Sheila Rowbotham, *The Daughters of Karl Marx (Family Correspondence 1866–1898)*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982; Michelle Perrot, *Histoire des femmes en occident: Le XIXe siècle*, Paris: Plon, 1991; Michelle Perrot, *Histoire de la vie privée: De la révolution à la Grande Guerre*, vol. 4, Paris: Seuil, 1987.

7 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Eleanor Marx Aveling, with corrections and modernization by Charles I. Weir Jr., New York: Rinehardt, 1948; Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers, New York: Harcourt, 1980, 173.

8 Paul de Man, "Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" in *The Resistance to Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 205.

9 Neil Hertz in an email letter to Emily Apter, March 1, 2005; Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Paul de Man, New York: W. W. Norton, 1965, 3; Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Eleanor Marx Aveling and Paul de Man, ed. Margaret Cohen, New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.

10 Paul de Man's daughter Patricia confirmed by phone in 2009 that when her father's revised copy of Eleanor Marx's translation got lost in the mail (en route to Norton from where it was sent in Europe), he was so discouraged that he turned the project over to his wife. Patricia de Man *mère* came from a long line of women

translators. Three of them—Mary Elizabeth Wormeley, Katherine Prescott Wormeley and Ariana Randolph Wormeley—translated many of the major works of nineteenth-century French literature (by Lamartine, Balzac, Mérimée, Dumas, Lautréamont, Sand, Hugo, and Daudet, among others) at roughly the same time that Eleanor Marx was working on *Madame Bovary*.

11 See Flaubert's letter 1867 letter to Eugène Crepet, as cited by Yann Leclerc, "'L'auteur c'est bien moi': Gustave Flaubert ou l'écrivain-manuscript," in *Revue Flaubert* 2: 3, 2002.

12 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. de Man, 3.

13 Ibid., 200; "Here and there around her …" ("Des taches lumineuses tremblaient … Le silence était partout."), 130, 228, 131; "She was entering upon a marvelous world …" ("Elle entrait dans quelque chose de merveilleux où tout serait passion, extase, délire; une immensité bleuâtre l'entourait …"), 229; Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 1922, repr., in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, London: Hogarth, 1995, 38; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. de Man; "Why not end it all? …" ("Pourquoi n'en pas finir? Qui la retenait donc? Elle était libre. Et elle s'avança, elle regarda les pavés en se disant: '—Allons! Allons!' Le rayon lumineux qui montait d'en bas directement tirait vers l'abîme le poids de son corps. … Elle se tenait tout au bord, presque suspendue, entourée d'un grand espace. Le bleu du ciel l'envahissait, l'air circulait dans sa tête, elle creuse…"), 274; ibid., 165.

14 *Madame Bovary*, Garnier-Flammarion, 325; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. by Marx Aveling, 277; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Davis, 224; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Adam Thorpe, London: Vintage, 2011, 241.

15 This surfaces in the post-mortem cliché at the beginning of Chapter 9: "There is after the death of anyone a kind of stupefaction; so difficult is it to grasp this advent of nothingness and to resign ourselves to believe in it" ("Il y a toujours après la mort de quelqu'un, comme une stupéfaction qui se dégage, tant il est difficile de comprendre cette survenue du néant et de résigner à croire"). It also occurs in Homais's defiantly secular homily—"Nothingness does not frighten a philosopher" ("Le néant n'épouvante pas un philosophe")—in response to the horrific black liquid that spurts from Emma's mouth when her head is raised to accommodate the funeral wreath); Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling, 358 and 363; *Madame Bovary*, Garnier-Flammarion, 401 and 406.

16 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling, 282; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Nabokov copy, 266; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. de Man, 203.

17 Lydia Davis's translation thematically emphasizes silence over stillness, though it makes music with the rope lapping in the water: "They would remain deep inside, the two of them hidden by the darkness, without talking. The square oars would creak between the iron thole pins; and this would mark the silence like the beat of a metronome, while at the stern the mooring rope that trailed behind them never ceased its soft little lapping in the water." Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Davis, 228.

18 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Thorpe, 245.

19 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling, 289–90; (original French text: "Puis, d'un seul coup d'oeil, la ville apparaissait. Descendant tout en amphithéâtre et noyée dans le brouillard, elle s'élargissait au-delà des ponts, confusément. La pleine campagne remontait ensuite d'un mouvement monotone, jusqu'à toucher au loin la base indécise du ciel pâle. Ainsi vu d'en haut, le paysage tout entier avait l'air immobile comme une peinture; les navires à l'ancre se tassaient dans un coin; le fleuve arrondissait sa courbe au pied des collines vertes, et des îles, de forme oblongue, semblaient sur l'eau de grands poissons noirs arrêtés … Parfois un coup de vent emportait les nuages vers la côte Sainte-Catherine, comme des flots aériens qui se brisaient en silence contre une falaise. Quelque chose de vertigineux se dégageait pour elle de ces existences amassées, et son coeur s'en gonflait abondamment, comme si les cent vingt mille âmes qui palpitaient là eussent envoyé toutes à la fois la vapeur des passions qu'elle leur supposait. Son amour s'agrandissait devant l'espace, et s'emplissait de tumulte aux bourdonnements vagues qui montaient. Elle le reversait au-dehors, sur les places, sur les promenades, sur les rues, et la vieille cité normande s'étalait à ses yeux comme une capitale démesurée, comme une Babylone où elle entrait." Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Garnier-Flammarion, 335–6).

20 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. de Man, 207; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Davis, 233; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Thorpe, 251; Paul de Man, "Literature and Language: A Commentary," included as appendix B in *Blindness and Insight*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, 283; De Man, "Literature and Language," 284, 285.

21 The phrase "Seen thus from above, the whole landscape seemed frozen, like a picture; the anchored ships were massed in one corner, the river curved around the foot of the green hills, and the oblong islands looked like giant fishes lying motionless on the water" unfurls as a memory-trace leading to illustrated tales read in childhood of shipwrecks and buccaneers. In a letter written to Louise Colet in March of 1852 describing his arduous progress on *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert mentions rereading these tales "for his novel" and stumbling on a cache of engravings that he had colored as a child of seven or eight: "There are rocks painted blue and trees painted green. At the sight of some of them (for instance a scene showing people stranded on ice floes) I re-experienced feelings of terror that I had as a child. I should like something that would put it out of my mind; I am almost afraid to go to bed. There is a story of Dutch sailors in ice-bound waters, with bears attacking them in their hut (this picture used to keep me awake) … My travels and my childhood memories color off from each other, fuse, whirl dazzlingly before my eyes, and rise up in a spiral" ("Letters about *Madame Bovary*" in the de Man Norton edition, 302). Flaubert was certainly far from being the only nineteenth-century author to sublimate the terrifying imprint of an engraving into literature, or, for that matter, to have fun with the arch-rivalry between visual and verbal mediums. Many experimented with virtuoso executions of *ut pitura poesis* in an effort to enable literature to best the pleasures of the eye; pleasures optically delivered so easily by painting, drawing and photography. J. K. Huysmans's decadent prose rendition of Gustave Moreau's Salomé paintings in *À rebours* stands as a classic example of such competitive *écriture artiste*. But Flaubert's use of illustration as a literary device is distinctly associated with the *techne* of intermedial reproducibility and as such carries interesting implications for contemporary translation theories that focus on transcoding.

22 *Madame Bovary*, Garnier-Flammarion, 401, 404–5; English translation: Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling, 361; "The weight of infinite masses": Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling, 370; ("Les porteurs fatigués se ralentissaient; et elle avançait par saccades continues, comme une chaloupe qui tangue à chaque flot."); *Madame Bovary*, Garnier-Flammarion, 413; Roland Barthes, *The Neutral*, trans. Rosalind Krauss and Denis Hollier, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, 16.

23 Richard Terdiman writes, "Beyond such chronological parallels, the two [Flaubert and Marx] came together in their object, as Flaubert put it, of *sinking* their civilization. They seem not to have heard of each other, at least no trace of any mutual recognition has been found. All the better: investigation of their respective compendia of the stupidity, cupidity, and morbidity in which they felt their period was drowning them can proceed without fear that the convergences in their tactics might have had a merely anecdotic source. On the contrary, their intertextualities *signify*. And their peculiar castigating humor stands as a central sign of such signification." Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/ Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985, 199–200. On Marx/Flaubert parallels, Edward Ahearn has written: "Parcelization of land, the persistence of the peasant class, the exploitation of it and elements of the lower middle class through taxation and through 'secondary forms' of capitalist expropriation, features studied by Marx in his analyses of events in mid-century France, are strikingly evident in *Madame Bovary*." Edward Ahearn, *Marx and Modern Fiction*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989, 7.

24 Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, 33; Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, trans. Saul K. Padover from the German edition of 1869/1995/1999; Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, 1939, repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, 229.

25 George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, 376. Steiner compares the Marx translation to Gerard Hopkins's 1948 translation, deemed an improvement on grounds of accuracy even if it caters to the "world classics" model by naturalizing the language.

26 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling, 55–6; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Davis, 44; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Thorpe, 47; "Her heart was like these …": Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling, 61 ("Son coeur était comme eux: au frottement de la richesse, il s'était placé dessus quelque chose qui ne s'effacerait pas": Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*, 116–17); Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Alan Russell, London: Hammondsworth Penguin, 1952, 69.

27 Eleanor Marx undoubtedly appreciated the etymological proximity of luxury to *luxure* (lasciviousness, sex addiction) prominent in the blasphemous scene of extreme unction where the priest touches the crucifix to Emma's mouth "qui avait gémi d'orgeuil et crié dans la luxure …" Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 1857, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1986, 399; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Marx Aveling; in the Marx version, we read: "that had curled with pride and cried out in lewdness" (356); Marx translated *luxure* as "lewdness," in syntactic alignment with the "'worldly pomp' (*somptuosités terrestres*) coveted by Emma's eyes" (355).

28 "Ce fut une tante qui s'en chargea. Elle est pauvre et l'envoie pour gagner sa vie, dans une filtature de coton", Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. de Man, 275.

29 In this excerpt cited by Henri Mittérand, one sees very clearly how Zola mulled over different narrative strategies for making *Germinal* an affecting and politically effective novel about labor and capital: "Le roman est le soulèvement des salaries, le coup d'épaule donné à la société, qui craque un instant: en un mot la lutte du capital et du travail. C'est là qu'est l'importance du livre. Je le veux prédisant l'avenir, posant la question qui sera la question la plus importante du XXe siècle. Donc, pour établir cette lutte, qui est mon noeud, il faut que je montre d'une part le travail, les houilleurs dans la mine, et de l'autre le capital, la direction, le patron, enfin ce qui est à la tête. Mais deux cas se présentent: prendrai-je un patron qui personnifie en lui-même le capital, ce qui rendrait la lutte plus directe et peut-être plus dramatique? Ou prendrai-je une société anonyme, des actionnaires, enfin le monde de la grande industrie, la mine dirigée par un directeur appointé, avec tout un personnel, et ayant derrière lui l'actionnaire oisif, le vrai capital?" Extracts from this preparatory dossier published in *La fabrique de Germinal*, ed. Colette Becker, Paris: Sedes-PUL, 1986, 56, and cited by Henri Mittérand in *Le roman à l'oeuvre: Genèse et valeurs*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998, 70.

30 Alex Woloch locates "the minor character at the junction between implied person and narrative form." He maintains that "the minor character is always drowned out within the totality of the narrative; and what we remember of the character is never detached from how the text, for the most part, makes us forget him … The strange significance of minor characters, in other words, resides largely in the way that the character disappears, and in the tension or relief that results from this vanishing." See Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, 38.

31 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. de Man, 44.

32 Peter Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat," in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, ed. Patricia Spyer, London: Routledge, 202.

33 William Pietz confirms this formulation, arguing that the value of commodity fetishes derives not from their physical existence, but from their exchange-value and

masked social character. William Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism," in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, eds. Emily Apter and William Pietz, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993, 129.

34 See the Avant-Propos of Pierre-Marc de Biasi, in *Carnets de travail de Gustave Flaubert*, Cher: Balland, 1988, 9. On Eleanor's translations of Ibsen see Sally Ledger's "Eleanor Marx and Henrik Ibsen," in *Eleanor Marx (1855–1898): Life, Work, Contacts*, ed. John Stokes, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000, 53–68.

35 Eleanor Marx Aveling, Introduction, *Madame Bovary*, xxi–xxii.

36 S. S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, 418; S. S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature*, 311–2; Werner Hamacher, "Lingua Amissa: The Messianism of Commodity-Language and Derrida's Specters of Marx," in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker, London: Verso, 1999, 179; ibid., 179, 180.

37 Frances Ferguson, *Pornography, the Theory: What Utilitarianism Did to Action*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 104 and 101, respectively; Gilles Philippe, in *Sujet, verbe, complément: Le moment grammatical de la littérature française 1890–1940*, Paris: Gallimard, 2002; Philippe Hamon, *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptif*, Paris: Hachette, 1981, 26. The translation/paraphrase is my own.

38 Barnes writes: "Research means jotting down possibly useful names (he likes the sound of Cahours as a place; Tardival and Vaudichon as surnames; relishes a prostitute who calls herself 'Crucifix'). It means tramping the countryside until you find the right cliff for Bouvard and Pécuchet to be terrified (he enlists Maupassant's help on this quest), and the correct *plateau stupide* on which to site their village. It means reading enormous quantities of books, and even—if we interpret correctly a couple of brief notes—relying on the loathed craft of photography ('which is never what one has actually seen'…)" (242). Julian Barnes, *Something to Declare: Essays on France*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002, 243–4.) "Flaubert, in his letter scorning Goncourt's skip-hunting type of research, states very clearly that 'I regard technical and local details—the precise, historical side of things—as very much of secondary importance.' If Goncourt found satisfaction in picking up a tasty word, Flaubert found it, by contrast, 'when I have written a page which avoids assonance and repetition.' This ought to be clear enough, and indeed Flaubert's denials of realistic intent are frequent: he sought only beauty. But writers' declarations of intent and writers' practices don't always match up."

39 The bibliography on this strain of French genetic criticism is quite vast, and has been particularly rich in the field of Flaubert studies. I will restrict myself to signaling the work of Jacques Neefs, Pierre-Marc de Biasi, Ann Herschberg Pierrot, Yann Leclerc, Raymonde Debray-Genette, and Jean Bellemin-Noël.

40 J. M. Coetzee, review of Michael Hamburger's translation of Friedrich Hölderlin's *Poems and Fragments*, in *The New York Review of Books* 53: 16, October 2006, 70.

41 Jacques Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*, trans. Beverly Bie Brahic, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 1.

42 See *Pourquoi la critique génétique? Méthodes, théories*, ed. Pierre-Marc de Biasi et al., Paris: CNRS Editions, 1998, 197.

43 Antoine Berman, "L'Age de la traduction: 'La tâche du traducteur de Walter Benjamin, un commentaire," in *La traduction-poésie* à Antoine Berman ed. Martine Broda, Strasbourg: Presses de l'Université de Strasbourg, 1999, 17. All English translations from this work are by Richard Sieburth. See Richard Sieburth, *Antoine Berman: The Benjamin Seminar and Other Writings on the History and Theory of Translation*, ed. and trans. Richard Sieburth, unpublished manuscript.

44 Berman, "L'Age de la traduction," 31–3.

45 Ibid., 30, 28, 30, 35.

46 Berman, "L'Âge de la traduction," 29. See "Chronology" for 1926 in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 1913–1926, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, 513; Richard Sieburth, *Antoine Berman*; Berman, "L'Age de la traduction," 36.

47 Hamacher, "Lingua Amissa," 192.

48 See the chapter "The Geography of the *Communist Manifesto*" in Martin Puchner's *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, 47–68. According to Puchner, Marx's conception of World Literature—an updated Goethean model emphasizing the circulation of difference rather than sameness—is a global one in the contemporary sense. Puchner clarifies how translation functions in Marx's work as an analogue to value general-equivalence: "Borrowing from *Das Kapital*, we can say that translation or translatability provides what Marx calls the 'form of equivalence' (*Aquivalentform*), which is the condition and form of exchangeability. World literature, in this view, sets the value of a given translation not according to its relation to the original text (use value) but according to the market of translation (exchange). Where Goethe leaves the production of literature to the national literatures and restricts world literature to their translation and exchange, for Marx this world of exchange and translation begins to encroach on production as well" (51). Puchner's interpolation of Marx's "translatability without enslavement to capitalism" (I paraphrase Puchner's phrase) is conditional on the *Manifesto*'s circulation in all the languages of the world (57).

II

What Is Yours, Ours, and Mine

Item: New York City, June 28, 2009. The streets are blaring "Thriller" and are full of people "being" Michael Jackson. What's the ownership stake of Michael impersonators in his image? Do Jackson impersonators who make their living by copying his dance moves and songs (e.g., Joby Rogers or Britain's NAVI) infringe on the star's legal title to his self- and creative property? Are there conditions under which impersonation qualifies under the law as a form of identity theft or celebrity plagiarism?

Item: From the *New York Times*, June 29, 2009: "Durango, Colo.—For the first time since territorial days, rain will be free for the catching here … Precipitation, every last drop or flake, was assigned ownership from the moment it fell in many Western states, making scofflaws of people who scooped rainfall from their own gutters … Who owns the sky anyway? In most of the country, that is a question for philosophy class or bad poetry. In the West, lawyers parse it with straight faces and serious intent."[1]

Item: June 2, 2009: J. D. Salinger, the reclusive ninety-year-old author of *Catcher in the Rye* files suit in a Manhattan federal court to stop the publication, sale and advertisement of *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye*, a parodic *canular* written by a Swedish author going by the name J. D. California. The suit affirms that"the Sequel infringes Salinger's copyright rights in both his novel and the character Holden Caulfield, who is the narrator and essence of that novel."

Each of these "items," pulled out at random from media coverage in June of 2009, exposes the fungibility of boundaries between free and private property, individual and government ownership, self and creative properties. As Stephen M. Best observes in his book on the fugitive slave (cast as "equal parts pilfered property and indebted person"), there is something within slave law and intellectual property law that is "eccentric to the law of real property." Deferring to Aristotle's figure of "thinking property," Best sheds light on historical connections between antebellum law and intellectual property law, unearthing obscured reasons for the intuitive sense that there is something inherently wrong with "property that behaves like a person."[2] Though the items above are frivolous by comparison with the example of slavery's legacy in American property law—they qualify nonetheless as similarly "eccentric" cases insofar as they also examine the limits of legal theory in dealing with ambiguities of "thinking property."

The established and robust field of "law and literature" has a long history spanning the 1710 Statute of Anne,[3] Benjamin Cardozo's 1925 essay "Law and Literature," and the 1971 amendment of the the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (unrecognized by U.S. Law), which affirms the *droit moral d'artistes* (moral rights of the author).[4] As an academic specialization straddling legal studies and the humanities, "literature and law" traces back to James Boyd White's 1973 *The Legal Imagination*, a textbook designed to refine understanding of the language of law, its professional rhetoric, the imagination of the lawyer, the judicial opinion and the poem, and legalistic versus literary approaches to language control. Nourished by a triennially published journal (*Literature and Law* published by the Cardozo Law School), the huge gamut of topics addressed includes inheritance law, music plagiarism, deception and art forgery, and the relationship between property and selfhood in the work of specific authors.[5] Much of this field has been shaped by "eccentric" cases that parse the shifting, evolving, overlapping criteria applied to fair use (traditionally governed by a rule of access without permission for citations under four hundred words); copyright (which protects exact expression, not ideas); plagiarism (the non-transformative, derivative appropriation of "original" material); and intellectual property title (a vast catchall covering artistic work, ideas, patents, discoveries, phrases, symbols, trade secrets, designs and trademarks).[6] Cases involving the harsher treatment of satire than of parody by the courts (the former in its dependency on the original deemed to be harmful to the market of the original; the latter judged to be more of a product in its own right) are especially interesting not just because they demonstrate how legal scholars must perform like literary critics in the application of hermeneutical techniques of close reading but also because they extend questions of ownership beyond authorship into matters of form, genre and expressive medium.

In an era in which lawsuits abound involving contentions of creative property theft, plagiarism, and infringements of fair use, questions that formerly might have seemed frivolous or peripheral to aesthetic theory are thus increasingly freighted with juridical consequence: Who owns your life story? This question supplied the satirical conceit of a 2006 Hollywood movie *Stranger than Fiction*, in which the protagonist discovers that he has become the main character in a work of fiction, subject to the author's manipulation, and thus he is no longer in possession of his own biographical trajectory. A similar concern was raised by an actual lawsuit brought by original cast members of the musical *A Chorus Line*, convinced that producer Michael Bennett had insufficiently remunerated them for a script built on their oral histories of childhood abuse, marital woes, and professional struggles. Should writers be held liable if they lift episodes from the lives of others (at issue in the controversies surrounding Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, alleged to have plagiarized Lucilla Andrews's 1977 memoir *No Time for Romance*, or Bryony Lavery's play *Frozen*, reliant on Malcolm Gladwell's article in the *New Yorker* that was in turn indebted to a psychiatrist's account of her work with serial killers)?[7] Would literature be possible if writers were proscribed from "translating" reality-based experiences and real-life human interest stories into fiction? This last query was answered vehemently in the negative by writers polled on the McEwan case: Zadie Smith, Margaret Atwood, Colm Tóibín, and Kazuo Ishiguro. Can readers stake a legal claim to an author's life story? This question animated the controversial case of James Frey when it was revealed that he had fictionalized portions of his drug recovery memoir, *A Million Little Pieces* (2003). Readers did not stop at outrage over Frey's violation of what critic Philippe Lejeune has dubbed "the autobiographical pact" (grounded in the presumed credibility of the auto-text and the guaranteed match of proper name to authorial subject); they sought legal damages for consumer fraud. Class action suits in California, Washington and Illinois were brought against Random House alleging breach of contract, and in 2007 a settlement was reached whereby refunds would be paid to any reader who had purchased the book prior to Frey's disclosure. In this instance, well-rehearsed debates over acceptable quotients of literary fabrication in a documentary text, or what Lejeune calls the reciprocal "interference" of writing and reality, were upstaged by legal ones.[8] The plaintiffs brought to bear on literature the regulative logic of the "lemon law" stipulating that the reader should be protected against specious life stories much like the buyer of a faulty car.[9]

The proliferation of lawsuits by individuals suing writers for their stories, or readers suing writers for marketing fake memoirs, has been complemented by class-action suits staking claims to collective culture (as in a case filed retroactively after China introduced new copyright laws in 1991, brought by a Chinese national minority community against a filmmaker who had used their folktales in a popular 1961 film).[10] The new litigiousness of individuals and groups, and the extension of copyright restrictions in an era of heightened media access to text and image, compounds the need for new parameters of fair use.[11] And as this agenda presses, the legal field of intellectual property law comes ever closer to poststructuralist theory, with its long history of engagement with aesthetic appropriation, plagiarism, pseudo-translation, copyright, signature, and authorial possession.[12]

Translation offers a particularly rich focus for discussions of creative property and the limits of ownership because it is a peculiar genre; one that, counter to Romantic values and myths of avant-garde originality, exalts the art of the copy, flaunts its derivativeness, and proudly bears the lead weight of predication on literary antecedent.[13] In what is perhaps a unique case of art as authorized plagiarism or legal appropriationism, the translation is encouraged to pilfer the original with no risk of copyright infringement or allegations of forgery. It is granted this license because it implicitly claims to be *of* the original; that is to say, possessed of no autonomous textual identity. Translation thus challenges legalistic norms of ownable intellectual property. The terms in which Judith Butler has interrogated gender possession are applicable here:

> What I call my "own" gender, [she writes,] appears perhaps at times as something that I author or, indeed, own. But the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author (and that radically contests the notion of authorship itself).[14]

Implicit in Butler's language is the detachability of gendered properties from possessive persons, a condition that throws the whole assumption that individual persons can "have" sexual identities into arrears. Similarly, translation throws into arrears the whole idea that authors of "originals" are the sole owners of their literary property.

Authorial ownership, even if it is considered without the benefit of Butler's heuristic, is a complex problem that has been approached in multiple ways by historians of book and print culture. Robert Darnton (*The Business of Enlightenment*), Mark Rose (*Authors and Owners*), Meredith McGill (*American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*), Jody Greene (*The Trouble with Ownership*), and Adrian Johns (*Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates*) are among those who have brought renewed focus to the shifting legal determinations of literary property, emphasizing how in Britain and France it was often publishers or booksellers rather than authors who were held liable in cases involving literary censorship.[15] The fact that Flaubert, and not *La Revue de Paris* (which had published *Madame Bovary* in serial form in 1856), stood trial for obscenity is significant in this regard. The trial became so integral to the novel's reception that most editions included its transcript. In these terms, to own a text is to own up to it under fire, to assume liability for it under adverse legal circumstances. But what about a translation? Where does it sit legally between publisher and author(s)? Who lays ultimate authorial claim to it? As Jody Greene notes in *The Trouble with Ownership: Literary Property and Authorial Liability in England, 1660–1730*, the watershed case in England over author/publisher liability involved, interestingly enough, a translation. In *Burnet v. Chetwood*, the estate of the author George Burnet (author of a work on natural history and theology titled *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* that was published in Latin in 1692) filed for an injunction against William Chetwood, a representative of a group of English publishers who wanted to publish an English translation of the work. Greene observes:

> The first case brought on behalf of an author under the Copyright Act thus involved the difficult question of whether a translation constitutes a new work or simply a version of an existing one.
>
> The booksellers argued in court that a translation "may be called a different book, and the translator may be said to be the author." On this textual argument, they grounded their case that the injunction against them should not be granted. The presiding judge, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Macclesfield, concurred with them, arguing that "a translation might not be the same with the reprinting of the original, on account that the translator has bestowed his care and pains upon it." Macclesfield thus made the Lockean argument that the translators had mixed their labor with the text in question and thus could be said at least in some degree to be the new work's proprietors.[16]

By this Lockean principle, Eleanor Marx (daughter of Karl Marx and the first recognized English translator of *Madame Bovary* in 1886, discussed in the previous chapter), having mixed her labor with the text of *Madame Bovary*, becomes in effect the proprietor of the text's English translation; itself accorded the copyright status of a new or separate work.[17] But to make this argument is to fly in the face of Eleanor Marx's very un-Lockean attitudes toward ownership and private property. A good Marxist, she coauthored an essay titled *The Woman Question* (1886) with her common-law husband Edward Aveling condemning the commercialization of kinship in capitalist society and militating against the legal treatment of women as a form of private property. This opposition to women-as-property, and to property as the general equivalent for transacting abiding connubial bonds, may be carried over to the Marx-Aveling joint signature, which reinforced an ideal of deowned intellectual property in its practice of collaborative authorship. Here, the anti-Lockean, Marxist position disputes the whole idea that textual property of any kind—authored or translated—can or should be owned.

The concept of textual de-owning has no obvious source but may be grafted from Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, in which he writes, "The living body, the 'mine,' 'my property' returns by annulling or taking back into it the phantomatic projections, the ideal prostheses."[18] Derrida imposes a logic of subtraction and partition onto the concept of signature. Texts are thus imagined within a mass of "readings" and tenuously attached to the supports or supplements of proper names. Mallarmé, Ponge, and Freud are "authors" for Derrida only insofar as they are markers of endless citationality and iterability. Their names are posed as the problem of copyright itself.

For Derrida, language maintains copyright on all originals, rendering words that are fundamentally untenable by any author. Jacques Lacan made a similar argument in his seminar on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter." As Fritz Gutbrodt has commented:

> While the "Seminar" leaves little doubt that the letter, as an object, cannot be taken possession of, Lacan tries hard to present the struggle for its possession among the figures in the narrative as the function of an imaginary desire. His question is to be addressed to both Poe as the author of the original and Baudelaire as its translator: "To whom does a letter *belong*?" … In a more acute sense than perhaps any other form of language, translation enacts a *longing* in language to be*long* to language.[19]

Here, translation is defined as the disavowal of linguistic dispossession.[20] As with plagiarism, it marshals a theft narrative to sustain the illusion that literary property is ownable in the first place.[21] According to this view, there can be no such thing as artistic robbery since all texts are essentially thievable pieces of language.

Poe was and remains at the roiling center of property disputes that have shaped literary history in dissolving the lines between literary- and self-properties. Rumors that Poe had stolen "The Raven" (poem) were rife even during his lifetime.[22] Eliza Richards has tracked the plagiarism allegations that beset the poem's reception, ranging from those of well-known English writers (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Dickens, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett) to obscure Italian, Persian and Chinese sources that Poe putatively translated into English. She makes the interesting observation that "The Raven" cultivates its reception as stolen or "borrowed" words.[23] The raven, after all, mechanically repeats the word of an unknown person to profound effect.[24] The charge of plagiarism was so contagious, it seems to have infected Charles Baudelaire, who wrote in a letter to his friend Théophile Thoré that he often felt that Poe had stolen from him!

> I myself am accused of imitating Edgar Poe! Do you know why I've translated Poe so patiently? Because he was like me. The first time I opened one of his books, I saw, with horror and delight, not only topics I had dreamed of, but *sentences* I had thought of, and that he had written 20 years before.[25]

Baudelaire's plagiarism pleasantry confirms his proprietary stake in "French Poe." As is well known, his biographical portrait of Poe and translations of his stories and poems launched the myth that the Americans were unable to appreciate a literary genius in their midst and required the French to recognize their patrimony. Meredith McGill argues that the traits considered defects by the American critics—Poe's "estrangement" from his own work, his "exaggerated awareness of cultural borrowing," and his "inauthentic relation to literary tradition" were precisely those that commended him to Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry. Taking her cue from Jonathan Elmer, McGill maintains that the mere prospect of reprinting his oeuvre in one large volume created an uncanny sense of disinheritance from his own literary property. Poe, she writes, was "forced to abandon the position of author and to regard his work from a distance 'as the composition of another.'"[26] This distance seems to account, at least in part, for the complex history of disputed attributions, print-mimetic manuscript copy, autographic ruses, plagiarism charges, and all manner of literary fake-outs that dogged his career as both writer and editor.[27]

French translations of "The Raven" by Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé add layers of complexity to strictly legalistic accounts of authorial ownership, authorship, and intellectual property more generally. Mallarmé, perhaps even more than Baudelaire, stamped his signature translation on "The Raven." The poem's famous final word, "Nevermore," translated as*jamais* or *jamais plus*, was taken over as creative property by Mallarmé when he made the typographically enlarged word "JAMAIS" the pivotal word of the title phrase of his most famous poem "Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard" ("A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance" [1897]): As if leapfrogging over Baudelaire to establish his own privileged connection to Poe, Mallarmé sutured his name to Poe's with his verbal fixation on "Never." He further cemented the connection with a consecrating sonnet that mentioned Poe by name in its title: "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe" ("The Tomb of Edgar Poe" [1877]). Earlier in his career, Mallarmé had also encroached on Baudelaire's exclusive "French Poe" territory by producing an 1875 luxury edition of "Le Corbeau," illustrated by Édouard Manet. Tempting though it may be to regard these details as evidence of a familiar pattern of poetic rivalry, I think that what Mallarmé really proved was that nobody—including, as we have seen, Poe himself—could fully own "The Raven"; a text whose literary history over time became synonymous with the idea of a translation machine that slips out of the grasp of each and any given writer.

"The Raven" tests the limits of textual ownership not least because as a work of genius, it was regarded as there for the taking by an international confederacy of "stellar" poets. By Poe's own logic, an elite class of poets was thus entitled to the property of another poetic genius. Baudelaire's Poe and Mallarmé's Poe fall, according to this criterion, under the same entitlement that governed Chapman's Homer, Goethe's Diderot, Stefan George's Baudelaire, Valéry Larbaud's Joyce, Ezra Pound's Li Po, or Paul Auster's Mallarmé. The compound signature guarantees value-added literary capital, a joint-stock interest, or co-ownership of creative property.

The example of Poe-in-translation points to the fungible boundaries between translation and plagiarism. Translation, as we have already suggested, is in many respects the legal form of plagiarism. In Michael Henry Heim's succinct formulation: "Translation is imitation to begin with—legal and highly necessary imitation, but imitation nonetheless." This stigma of imitation haunts translation. Despite its legal sanction, despite its special dispensation as a textual practice that discloses an indexical relation to the original, translation is in the end a plagiary. And as such, as Nick Groom would have it, it arouses fears of "body-snatching" and "occult reanimation." Classed as a soft crime, plagiarism's threat stems from its ostensible perversion of authenticity. Groom observes that plagiarism is often treated "like a virus that debilitates culture, a crash than can bankrupt cultural value."[28]

Critics have coined the term "translation plagiarism" in an attempt to keep translation clean of the plagiarism taint. The term is routinely applied to examples of textual theft that can rarely be condoned. M. H. Shakir's translation of the Qur'an, determined to have been plagiarized from Maulana Muhammad Ali's 1917 English version is a frequently cited example.[29] Punishment for translation plagiarism (which is often harder to detect than same-language thefts) can be severe: South African poet Melanie Grobler had her Eugène Marais award revoked after it was revealed that her poem "Stad," composed in Afrikaans, was a word-for-word translation of Anne Michael's 1999 poem "There Is No City That Does Not Dream.[30] More run-of-the mill cases involve the failure of professional translators to acknowledge the footwork that has come before. "In what ways," Lauren Leighton asks, "may a translator legitimately use a predecessor's work? And when does the use of an existing translation become plagiarism?" After all, as Terry Eagleton points out, "As the business of looking things up in the dictionary suggests, all words are stand-ins for other words, and all our language is filched and forged, reach-me-down rather than bespoke."[31] Where then does one draw the line? As these questions attest, the technical legal definition of translation plagiarism is a matter of pressing concern for writers, translators and publishers operating in the "real world" of signature marketing. But the questions themselves are problematic insofar as they foreclose a discussion of whether literary property or, for that matter, self-properties, should be treated analogously to other forms of private property. As long as they are, we will be mired in a strange psychic economy whose cardinal principle is: "I am therefore I am owed."[32] Put to everyday use, this principle translates as: How much is my life-story worth? Virtually everyone could become either the subject or object of a legal shakedown under these terms. The commercialization of self literalizes the fiduciary accounting of artistic debt, forcing writers and artists to face the prospect of ballooning remittances and unending copyright fines.[33]

Contesting the privatization of property in all its guises, a number of artists and writers have availed themselves of translation plagiarism, or plagiarism tout court, in the interests of a piratical economy. In this spirit, Kathy Acker famously lifted fifteen hundred words from Harold Robbins's 1974 novel *The Pirate* for her 1975 book *The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec by Henri Toulouse Lautrec*. Yambo Ouologuem's 1968 *Le devoir de violence* (*Bound to Violence*)—a major novel of African independence that contained French versions of verbatim English text drawn from Emily Dickinson, Graham Greene, T. S. Eliot, and others, as well as Francophone authors—was thought to have conscripted plagiarism in the cause of deconsecrating the Western canon with its enshrined values of authorial originality.[34]

Ricardo Piglia, an Argentine Maoist at the time he wrote the 1975 novella "Homenaje a Roberto Arlt," also mobilized translation and plagiarism to such ends. The novella's narrator, "Ricardo Piglia," is a sleuth on the trail of an unpublished manuscript authored by the real-life working-class Argentine novelist Roberto Arlt, most famous for *Los siete locos* (*Seven Madmen*), a novel of 1929. After paying top dollar for the unpublished excerpt to his friend Kostia, a disreputable fellow writer, the narrator secures his prize only to find himself in a strange double bind—textual ownership holds him hostage to his desire to plagiarize: "I was trapped by a strange feeling of possession, as if the text were mine and I had written it." This onus of ownership is soon dispelled, however, when he learns that the untrustworthy Kostia has published the Arlt fragment under his own name (or claims he has; Piglia isn't entirely convinced that Kostia is not himself the author). Kostia insists that since the manuscript was flawed, he was merely sparing Arlt a blot on his literary reputation. Then he drops the pretense: "You and I are thieves." According to Bruno Bosteels's astute reading, this story articulates "a challenge to literary property in the name of a new 'aesthetic' of plagiarism or of intertextuality." In reference to Piglia's practice of plagiarizing Borges—Borges himself being a writer who famously built up fictions from translation plagiarism and played up the plagiaristic fundaments of all literature to satirical effect—Bosteels discerns a militant purpose traceable to Alain Badiou, the philosopher whose work Piglia was steeped in at the time: "By critically belaboring the idea of plagiarism," Bosteels maintains,

> the story coins a series of concepts that, once they are extracted from the domain in which they operate in a privileged if not exclusive manner, are also capable of reconfiguring the modes of being of politics in what we might call its Maoist, or post-Leninist, sequence.[35]

This new mode of politics stakes an alternate economy on expropriated intellectual property. Access to beauty must no longer be blocked by

price or by authorial proprietary right; beauty must be turned over to the commons via militant acts of plagiarism. All forms of artistic theft—translation included—are justified as weapons against the corporate policing of creative property.

Though far less radical than the early Piglia, the novelist Jonathan Lethem drafted a manifesto for the commons titled "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism" (2007). Lethem inveighs against Disney's outrageous landgrab of intellectual property:

> The Walt Disney Company has drawn an astonishing catalogue from the work of others: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Fantasia, Pinocchio* … a legacy of cultural sampling that Shakespeare, or De La Soul, could get behind. Yet Disney's protectorate of lobbyists has policed the resulting cache of cultural materials as vigilantly as if it were Fort Knox—threatening legal action, for instance, against the artist Denis Oppenheim for the use of Disney characters in a sculpture, and prohibiting the scholar Holly Crawford from using any Disney-related images—including artwork by Lichtenstein, Warhol, Oldenburg, and others—in her monograph *Attached to the Mouse: Disney and Contemporary Art*.
>
> This peculiar and specific act—the enclosure of commonwealth culture for the benefit for a sole or corporate owner is close kin to what could be called *imperial plagiarism*, the free use of Third World or "primitive" artworks and styles by more privileged (and better paid) artists.

While not prepared to relinquish the principle of authorial copyright, Lethem comes down hard on the abuse of copyright, trademark and patent law:

> The case for perpetual copyright is a denial of the essential gift-aspect of the creative act. Any text is woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony… The kernel, the soul—let us go further and say the substance, the bulk, the actual and valuable material of all human utterances—is plagiarism … Don't pirate my editions; do plunder my visions. The name of the game is Give All.[36]

Lethem's plunderer is not unlike McKenzie Wark's hacker. In his *Hacker Manifesto* (2004), Wark endorsed an Internet commons, an open-source utopia, free intellectual property, and authorial deownership. He also put his theory to work by writing a book on the Internet whose contents evolve according to the collaboration of online readers (*Gamer Theory*), and by performing in a piece called *This Situation*. Orchestrated by the Berlin-based artist Tino Seghal, the work's running theme at the January 2007 session I attended at the Marian Goodman Gallery in New York was the critique of private property. As the visitor enters the bare gallery room, she is greeted by the words "Welcome to this situation." The "situation" resembles a seminar in which spontaneous dialogue is generated from collective responses to quotations of unspecified provenance. The deattributed citations thus activate an experiment in making communal intellectual property or a site that resists becoming private property (the site comes to exist, rather, in the spirit of what Lawrence Weiner identified in a project of 1968 called *Statements*, as "the public freehold domain").[37] The work's repudiation of capitalization and commodification is further bolstered by Seghal's ban on pictures and press kits. Though *This Situation* can be sold, the buyer obtains only the right to re-perform the piece (hence the title of Anne Midgette's *New York Times* review "You Can't Hold It, But You Can Own It").[38] Though it remains unclear whether the performers maintain collective copyright or whether there is a patented concept attached to the name Tino Seghal, at the very least one can say that Seghal's project interrogates, in a strategy that has been familiar since Duchamp signed the urinal, what kind of property an artist can put a signature to; what is the limit case of the signable. Gordon Matta-Clark extended these questions to whether the commons could be signed in *Fake Estates*. He purchased tiny parcels of deaccessioned city property—curbs, sidewalks, alley-ways—and returned them to the public domain in the form of an art piece. More recently, Guy Ben-Ner appended his name to an act of spatial appropriationism in the video "Stealing Beauty" (2007). Here, the artist and his family are shown occupying various showroom floors of the Swedish furniture and household product chain IKEA. Sleeping, eating, masturbating, arguing, showering and reading in the store's publicly displayed yet privately owned commercial galleries, the family essentially squats in full view as customers walk by. "Stealing Beauty" challenges the codes of decorum that reinforce the boundaries demarcating public and private space while pushing the envelope of IKEA's legal tolerance for the despoiling of store property. As the family engages in domestic interactions among a sea of objects with their price tags dangling down like a kind of capitalist garniture, ordinary living becomes an expropriative gesture, a truculent performative of Proudhon's maxim "Property is theft" (underscored by the father's proclamation: "Property is like a ghost. You can possess property without being possessed by it").

If I have incrementally shifted from translation as a peculiar form of authorized plagiarism to plagiarism as one of many effective tactics aimed at radical deownership, it is because I think this shift itself points to an increasingly fraught condition of confusion over what is "yours," "ours," and "mine" in contemporary culture. As Pierre Bayard has argued:

> That the parts of ourselves, gestures, words, thoughts, phantasms (not counting the body …), are not our property, that we are never entirely *separated* from others—prior, parallel or posterior—is an obvious point that psychoanalysis would not be alone in admitting. We constitute ourselves as autonomous subjects, but we continue to carry within us fragments that do not belong to us.[39]

Bayard articulates the psychic ironies of possessiveness: "mine" is a state of being badly separated from others; or worse, a state of mind that disavows the subject's theft of others' self-properties.

Bayard's remarks on possession occur in the context of a short study of Romain Gary, a writer hoisted on the petard of his own plagiarism hoax. A Lithuanian Jew brought up in France, whose career included the roles of resistance fighter, Gallimard author, and French attaché in Los Angeles, Gary received the Goncourt Prize in 1958 and published nineteen novels by the age of seventy-three. At the moment when his career was on the wane, Gary published four novels under the pseudonym Emile Ajar, one of which—*La vie devant soi*—garnered the Goncourt Prize (which legally cannot be accorded the same author twice). Gary persuaded his nephew Paul Pavlovitch to impersonate Ajar. Pavlovitch became so enamored of his role that he tried to blackmail his uncle into writing more Ajar books so that he could bask in the public limelight indefinitely. This was a case of literary *supercherie* gone terribly wrong; Ajar had essentially usurped Gary's copyright. The nadir arrived when Gary, who had self-plagiarized in several Ajar novels, found himself in the ludicrous position of having to defend himself against the charge that *he* was plagiarizing Ajar. What had begun as an amusing literary exercise to get past a depressive phase of boredom with being himself, ended in the unnerving experience of self-dispossession. In 1979, shortly before committing suicide (and in the spirit of his mother's arrangement to have her letters posthumously dispatched to her son so as to sustain the illusion that she was still living during his time in the Resistance), Gary wrote a literary testament that appeared after his death under the title *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar* (1981). Here, Gary exposed the Ajar imposture and spoke of a "reckoning with myself" that in essence justified his suicide as a murder of Ajar.[40] In converting the ultimate piratical act—self-theft—into a ritual of authorial self-repossession, Gary demonstrated the persistence of the ownership model of authorial identity.

The late Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño satirized the ownership model of authorship in a number of stories built around Gary-like characters, both victims and victors in the plagiarism game. "Alvaro Rousselot's Journey" (published in the *New Yorker* in 2007) features an Argentine writer whose unsuccessful novel *Solitude* ("about daily life in a remote Patagonian penitentiary") gains attention only after it appears in French translation as *Nights on the Pampas*. This gain converts to a loss, however, when the author discovers that the translation has been plagiarized in a French film ironically titled *Lost Voices*. The final blow comes when Rousselot's friends dissuade him from bringing a lawsuit against the filmmaker on the grounds that there is something inherently pathetic about writers obsessed with the belief that their creative property has been stolen. In Bolaño's *Nazi Literature in the Americas* [*La literatura nazi en América*] (built around fictitious author "bios", Max Mirebalais is an Aryan-obsessed aspiring writer who is professionally rewarded only after becoming a plagiarist of the masters

of *négritude* literature from Aimé Césaire, to René Depestre, to Édouard Glissant: "With the passage of time he became expert in the art of breaking down the work of another poet in order to make it his own."[41] The language of "breaking down" and "making it his own" underscores the more sinister recesses of plagiarism; its affinities with enslavement, sadism, torture, and a violent appropriationism that expunges the name of the original author from cultural memory.

With mixed degrees of humor and pathos, Gary and Bolaño deal with the theft of literary property as a matter of legal damages and property restitution. While both satirize the rituals of redress to injured authorial egos, their texts point more symptomatically to the critical problem of whether art, ideas, and personhood can be free if they remain tethered to a private property paradigm of individual ownership, authorship and copyright. As long as they do, the following questions will be increasingly frontloaded as the subject matter of artistic practice, critical theory and case law: Is free property definable only as *freedom from* the legalistic strictures that privatize and corporatize signature? Is creative work thinkable outside the order of capitalization or is the aesthetic simply a disavowal of "the price of everything"?[42] Do you own yourself or your life properties (from DNA to biographical datum)? How does one deal legally with the ephemeral ownability of language and creative property? What are the ethical and political consequences attendant on the border policing of the creative commons by copyright and patent holders? How will knowledge production be affected by the shrinking field of free intellectual property at the very moment when planetary access to the open source has expanded and when apparitions of anonymous, deowned, collective intellectual property (blogs, Wikipedia, group art) are legion? Should life stories be considered plagiarizable creative property given that they are not copyrightable forms of exact expression? To what extent is the notion of authorial property, particularly as it is defined by international copyright law in matters pertaining to plagiarism cases, a highly culture-bound, Eurocentric concept predicated on Western notions of owership? And, finally, can stealing from oneself or self-plagiary (defined in Stirnerian terms as a form of egoic divestiture) provide a way to undo the possessive individualism that subtends the trademark status of signature and authorial title? If you subscribe as I do to Étienne Balibar's view that possessive individualism is a setback to the "collective and communitarian dimensions of life," then opposition to ownership models based on limiting property access or "disfruting" the other's right to enjoyment become critical.[43] As never before, the commodity nature of the aesthetic artifact has become paramount: the work of art *is* (that is to say, exists or has a specific status or identity as art), insofar as it is possessable; insofar as its signature brand can be trademarked and legally protected; insofar as shares of it belong to an author, a reader, a publishing house, a distributor, or an Internet domain.[44] As intellectual property has become increasingly the default paradigm for all art, literature has followed the lead of film, music and visual media in allowing itself to be defined as "content" for the purposes of monitoring copyright infringement. By extending the notion of untranslatability to include withheld, subtracted intellectual property, there is not only the potential for activist deowning as a critical practice but also a case to be made for orienting World Literature around the problem of having or not having properties.

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1 Kirk Johnson, "It's Now Legal to Catch a Raindrop in Colorado," *New York Times*, June 29, 2009, 1 and 14.

2 Stephen M. Best, *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, 16.

3 On April 10, 1710, the first copyright act was passed in London: "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of Such Copies," known as the Statute of Anne.

4 Article 6(bis)1 of the 1971 amendment to the Berne Convention states: "Independently of the author's economic rights, and even after the transfer of the said rights, the author shall have the right to claim authorship of the work and to object to any distortion, mutilation or other modification of, or other derogatory action in relation to, the said work, which would be prejudicial to his honor or reputation."

5 For an excellent polemical overview of the "literature and law" tendency in recent work in the humanities, see Julie Stone Peters, "Law, Literature, and the Vanishing Real: On the Future of an Interdisciplinary Illusion," *PMLA* 120: 2, March 2005, 442–53.

6 A benchmark book of the intellectual property field is William M. Landes and Richard A. Posner's *The Economic Structure of Intellectual Property Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

7 Malcolm Gladwell, "Something Borrowed," *New Yorker*, November 22, 2004.

8 Gladwell, "Something Borrowed," *New Yorker*; Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, Paris: Seuil, 1975; sequel text *Moi aussi*, Paris: Seuil, 1986, 41.

9 In adopting an activist approach in the claim that they were text owners, Frey's readers revoked his right to the term "memoir." Here, genre assumes the value of trademark, a seal or guarantor of authenticity that regulates how forms of literature can be used. If the trademark fails to safeguard the textual properties it guarantees, then the literary works become legally vulnerable to "truth-in-advertising" regulations. What is starkly revealed is the extent to which signature and genre both serve to "propertize" literature. On the problem of what trademark guarantees as intellectual property and the expanded field of its applications, see Rob Walker, "Can a Dead Brand Live Again?," *New York Times Magazine*, May 18, 2008, 50–3.

10 As Lydia Liu notes, "The anachronism of the lawsuit implies that the collective authorship of the script had been an original act of creation and ignores the fact that the Liuzhou writers had appropriated something collectively owned." See Liu, "A Folksong Immortal and Official Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century China," in *Writing and Materiality in China*, ed. Judith J. Zeitlin and Lydia Liu, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003, 587.

11 See Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*, London: Penguin, 2004.

12 I like to think of this emergent field as anchored on the postructural theory side by Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 142–9) and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" (trans. José V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1986, 101–20); and on the legal theory side by Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1821); William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (New York: W. E. Dean, 1846); C. B. Macpherson's *Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1978); Margaret Jane Radin's "Property and Personhood," *Stanford Law Review* (34: 5, May 1982, 957–1015); Lawrence Lessig's *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World* (New York: Vintage, 2002) and *How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Stephen Weber's *The Success of Open Source* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Yochai Benkler's *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

13 Jack Lynch reminds us that "it was only during the eighteenth century that 'originality' in the modern sense became an ideal." An important milestone is Edward Young's *Conjectures Concerning Original Composition*, which appeared in London in 1759. There, Young celebrates novelty and attacks imitation: "*Originals* are, and ought to be, great Favourites, for they are great Benefactors; they extend the Republic of Letters, and add a new province to its dominion: *Imitators* only give us a sort of Duplicates of what we had, possibly much better, before." Good authors are original, bad authors copy, and copying is no better than "sordid theft." See Jack Lynch's "The Perfectly Acceptable Practice of Literary Theft: Plagiarism, Copyright, and the Eighteenth Century," in *Colonial Williamsburg: The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* 24: 4, Winter 2002–2003, 51–4.

14 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, London: Routledge, 2004, 1.

15 In Britain, the Copyright Act of 1710 (often referred to as the Statute of Anne) invigorated an author's proprietary claim but made him or her more personally vulnerable to censorship charges.

16 Elisabeth Ladenson, *Dirt for Art's Sake: Books on Trial from Madame Bovary to Lolita*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007, 18; Greene, *The Trouble with Ownership*, 147.

17 On the Eleanor Marx translation, see previous chapter.

18 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, New York and London: Routledge, 1994, 128.

19 Fritz Gutbrodt, "Poedelaire: Translation and the Volatility of the Letter," *Diacritics* 22: 3–4, Fall/Winter 1992, 53.

20 On Poe and plagiarism, see further: John Muller and William J. Richardson, ed. "The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and the Psychoanalytic Reading," Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988; K. K. Ruthven, *Faking Literature*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Stephen Rachman, "Es lässt sich nicht schreiben," in Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman, ed., *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; J. Gerald Kennedy, "The Violence of Melancholy: Poe against Himself," *American Literary History* 8: 3, 1996: 533–51; and Fritz Gutbrodt, *Joint Ventures: Authorship, Translation, Plagiarism*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2003.

21 Terry Eagleton, "Unhoused," in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 30, no. 10. May 22, 2008, 19. Eagleton stresses that writing (as opposed to speech), "is meaning that has come adrift from its source." The detachability of a text from its origin—a perfectly straightforward truism—qualifies as another way in which texts can be seen as unownable.

22 Eliza Richards, "Outsourcing 'The Raven': Retroactive Origins," *Victorian Poetry* 43: 2, 2005, 210. Fritz Gutbrodt argues in a complementary vein that "plagiarism plays a pivotal role in 'The Raven' after all … In order to understand the amazing ferocity and seriousness with which Poe hunted down plagiaries in his journalistic work we must address the seemingly contradictory and no less amazing tendency of his writing to usurp or incorporate without acknowledgment texts, images, props and properties that seem to belong to other authors or sources. To Poe, authorship and originality are some form of outsourcing." Fritz Gutbrodt, *Joint Ventures: Authorship, Translation, Plagiarisms*, 262.

23 Eliza Richards, "Outsourcing 'The Raven': Retroactive Origins," 210.

24 Fritz Gutbrodt makes a similar argument: "Imitating human speech, the bird acts as an interlocutor. For the question of plagiarism the notion that to speak a language is to parrot language is of great significance. Like the orangutan that speaks all languages and no language at all in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' the raven is set up as a medium through which language speaks itself, mysteriously." Gutbrodt, *Joint Ventures*, 251.

25 Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire*, ed. and trans. Rosemary Lloyd, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, 206.

26 McGill, *American Literature*, 172.

27 Ibid., 177. McGill is fully wise to how difficult it is to control the metaphoric valences of "possession" and "ownership" language. While she provides a materialist corrective, grounding the plagiarism debates in a well-researched history of copyright law and antebellum print culture, ultimately, it would seem, the Poe case gets away from strict historical and legal referentialism as she evokes "the subjection of authors to propertyless dissemination and the invisibility of editorial ownership."

28 Poe-in-translation: Gutbrodt, *Joint Ventures*, 303; Michael Henry Heim, "Pushkin Englished," *Nation* 235, October 9, 1982, 342; Nick Groom, *The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature*, London: Picador, 2003, 131; ibid., 25.

29 Shakir's Qur'an is available online: http://etext.virginia.edu/koran.html.

30 See "Translation Plagiarism" on the *Plagiarism Today* Web site: plagiarismtoday.com.

31 Lauren G. Leighton, "Translation and Plagiarism: Puškin and D. M. Thomas," *Slavic and East European Journal* 38: 1, 1994, 69; Terry Eagleton, *Guardian*, June 6, 2002.

32 For a discussion of artists who have worked conceptually with the problem of self-sale, see Emily Apter, "*DanGrahamInc* and the Fetish of Self-Property," in *The Lure of the Object*, ed. Stephen Melville, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006, 15–38.

33 Jonathan Lethem works preemptively against this fate by offering almost-free intellectual property on his Web site under the rubric of "The Promiscuous Materials Project": "These stories are for filmmakers or dramatists to adapt. They're available nonexclusively—meaning other people may be working from the same material—and the cost is a dollar apiece." See http://www.jonathanlethem.com.

34 Joseph Slaughter writes: "Sellin was careful to avoid the charge of plagiarism, suggesting merely that Schwarz-Bart's novel provided a 'blueprint' for Ouologuem's; however, on May 5, 1972, the *Times Literary Supplement* referred to Sellin's article to corroborate its evidentiary presentation of two 'comparable' passages from *Le devoir de violence* and Graham Greene's *It's a Battlefield* (1934). The scandal gained momentum as readers from Africa, Europe, the U.S., and Australia contributed their own discoveries in letters to the editors of newspapers and journals based in London, Paris, and Austin: Ouologuem takes a page from Proust's *Le Temps retrouvé* and a scene from Guy de Maupassant's 'Boule de suif'; he borrows verses from T. S. Eliot and Emily Dickinson as well as lines and 'accents' from Zola, Hugo, Robbe-Grillet, and Godard's films; he echoes Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir* and Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambigue*; he incorporates passages from the Bible and the Qur'an that he mixes with cheap devices imported from popular detective fiction; he lifts histories from Jean Suret-Canale and the Arabic chronicles of the old Sahelian empires—Tarikh el-Fettach and Tarikh es-Soudan; etc." Joseph Slaughter, "Critic-Detectives Putting Yambo Ouologuem in His Place," unpublished manuscript.

35 Ricardo Piglia, "Homage to Roberto Arlt," in *Assumed Name*, trans. Sergio Gabriel Waisman, Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1995, 127, 128; Bruno Bosteels, "In the Shadow of Mao: Ricardo Piglia's 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt,'"*Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 12: 2, 2003, 231, 234.

36 Jonathan Lethem, "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism," *Harper's*, February 2007, 65, 65.

37 *This Situation* explicitly recalls work of the '60s, such as Allan Kaprow's "happenings" or Lawrence Weiner's 1968 *Statements*, in which the owner-producer of the artwork was supplanted by the "receiver." See Benjamin Buchloh's discussion of Weiner's *Statements* in *Art Since 1900*, ed. Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, London: Thames and Hudson, 580.

38 Anne Midgette, *New York Times*, November 25, 2007.

39 Pierre Bayard, *Il était deux fois Romain Gary*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990, 59.

40 Romain Gary, *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar*, Paris: Gallimard, 1981, 22. Translations from the text are my own.

41 Roberto Bolaño, *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, trans. Chris Andrews, New York: New Directions, 2008, 128.

42 The Whitney Museum of American Art, *The Price Of Everything: Perspectives On The Art Market*, ed. Martin Braathen et al., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

43 Étienne Balibar, "'Possessive Individualism' Reversed: From Locke to Derrida," *Constellations* 9, 2002, 300. Balibar disallows a model of ownership based solely on "disfruting" the ability of the other to enjoy property on the grounds that, in Lacanian terms, the self is barred access to the object (*das Ding*). When the political institution says to man, "Thou shalt never enjoy," it prescribes, Balibar maintains, "legitimate 'private' property as the renunciation of real or intimate enjoyment" (306–7).

44 In its enhanced propertization, literature comes increasingly to resemble the modern body of bioscience. As Ed Cohen has argued: "As more and less than a natural phenomenon, the modernized body arises as an artifact of intense human interest and investment. Informed by a confluence of finance capital, philosophical reflection, and scientific theory, not to mention military formations, colonial relations, religious reformations, technological developments, kinship dynamics, industrial processes, educational regimes, health care protocols, among many other factors, the modern body aspires to localize human beings within an epidermal frontier that distinguishes the person from the world from the duration which we call a life. If we think of Mikhail Bakhtin's 'grotesque body'—a body radically open to the world both temporally and spatially, simultaneously eating, shitting, fucking, dancing, laughing, groaning, giving birth, falling ill, and dying—as an icon for a nonmodern or premodern body, then by contrast the modern body proffers a proper body, a proprietary body, a body whose well-bounded property grounds the legal and political rights of what C. B. Macpherson famously named possessive individualism." Ed Cohen, *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body*, Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2009, 7.

III

Dispossessive Collectivism

Despite the tendency to think of World Literature as a politically abstracted meeting ground—the anthology or university course syllabus—where the languages and cultures of all peoples freely mix, in my view we should do more to frame world literatures as a parlous collection of national canons each dedicated to "possessive collectivism." Rebecca Walkowitz used this expression to speak of the nation's association "with permanent, unique qualities such as a soul, spirit, and personality," and contrasts it with Benedict Anderson's paradigm of "imagined communities," which, she suggests, "associates the nation with the experience of simultaneity among people who never meet." Possessive collectivism points to an arena of translation theory that focuses on how communities treat language as a form of exclusive cultural property that entitles them to impose monolingualism, or a policy of other-language abstinence, on its speakers. Relevant here are studies in art and archaeology that focus on patrimonial claims to heritage. Explicit attention is paid to the diplomacy necessary for access to cultural property; whether it is the complex negotiations between museums and governments over liens on displaced and disfruted art treasures, or discrepant ethical codes of stewardship, or the politics of incursion into native art production. The ethics of access are at the heart of Michael Brown's book *Who Owns Native Culture*?, in which Brown maintains that "Hopi anxiety about use of their traditional images in the world beyond their isolated mesas is a local expression of global concern about the disposition of cultural heritage." He reviews the efforts of the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office (HCPO) to contest a ruling in the 1990s that undercut "existing laws governing Hopi tribal ownership and control" (laws that guaranteed the Hopi an "exclusive right to produce Kachinas [paintings or carvings representing Pueblo spirit-beings]"). The determination to control the Kachina heritage extends in many cases to cultural information that anthropologists have gathered that is deemed private:

> When indigenous activists demand new controls on the kind of cultural information gathered by H. R. Voth and Frances Densmore, they often struggle to identify an appropriate rationale. Their rhetoric moves restlessly from references to copyright and intellectual property to ideas of blasphemy and misrepresentation. Also common in recent years are allusions to a principle known as the "right of cultural privacy." … A right to cultural privacy is presented as self-evident and morally unassailable, even if its scope remains unspecified.[1]

The right to cultural privacy—manifest in actions designed to keep outsiders at bay or assert a moral perimeter against affront—is an important problem for the teaching of world literatures, especially in cases where the incompatible logics of copyright and blasphemy come up against each other. How one adjudicates the decision on when a text should be off-limits for instruction (because to teach it would violate cultural secrecy or access restrictions placed on certain kinds of cultural property) depends on how one centers, or de-centers, the place from which one speaks and reads. In the academy, it is often difficult to develop the right GPS because of the prevalence of "hegemonic secularism"; a secularism that sanctions the right to traduce another's right to cultural privacy. Religious reason, in these circumstances, is ignored or dismissed, and the politics of moral injury and blasphemy oversimplified. As Talal Asad surmises, "The charge of blasphemy is said to be an archaic religious constraint, and free speech a principle essential to modern freedom … [but] are there any resemblances between the idea of blasphemy and the prohibitions established by secular law?"[2] The answer to this question is surely affirmative, and leads us to perceive more clearly the extent to which so-called "archaic" religious notions of "property blasphemy" haunt secular/legal claims to heritage and patrimony.

Property blasphemy, as a site of contestation and mistranslation, has roiled the world of the global museum, vexing its institutional practices of acquisition, gifting and loans. The very word "acquisition" is particularly rife with controversy, suspected of being little more than a euphemism for transgressive appropriation. Drawing on the example of the Memnon head, offered as a "gift" to the British Museum, Elliott Colla charts the "new set of values" that emerged to legitimate the traffic in antiquities and provide a revisionist narrative for the history of colonial spoliation and plunder:

> The traffic continued apace and even increased. However the *meaning* of that traffic changed with the emergence of artifact discourse. Excavation and transport now took place in the name of disinterested management and study, that is, "acquisition." This new way of speaking about and treating Pharaonic antiquities enabled Europeans to gain control over antiquities sites throughout the nineteenth century, and its logic expanded British and French power and profit even as it disavowed both. Once generalized, the discourse of the artifact gave both shape and substance to later forms of colonial discourse about managing *all* the resources of modern Egypt.

Acquiring artifacts from conquered territories and piling them up in national museum collections enhances the possessive collectivism of imperially aggrandized nation-states. Similarly, archaeological sites become crucial to "owning" a national identity, especially in regions of contested ground. As Nadia Abu El-Haj demonstrates in*Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, the

> significance of archaeology to the Israeli state and society and the role it played in the formation and enactment of its colonial-national-historical imagination and in the substantiation of territorial claims … The convergence of the nation-form with historical scholarship fashioned the perspective through which the past would be viewed.

El-Haj confirms how archaeology was used both to justify Israeli expansionism in the Middle East and to provide a territorial imaginary for the fashioning of a modern state, in this case an "old-new Jewish national home (the *altneuland*)" and "a wider cartographic project that was very much about 'world-making.'" In "Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran," Kamyar Abdi traces a similar pattern in modern Iran's self-fashioning. Here, too, claims to the ancient past are politicized within the vocabulary of modern nation building: "The Near East, owing to its rich archaeological and historical past and its contemporary sociocultural diversity, has been particularly interesting for exploring connections between nationalism, archaeology, and political manipulations of archaeological record to advocate nationalist agendas." Historical nationalism, he argues, "is characterized by an elaborate, and sometimes crude attempt to glorify the history and culture of ancient Iran."[3]

In *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage*, James Cuno emphasizes the complicity of archaeologists in these kinds of nationalist heritage politics. To maintain the privilege of working at a site, he suggests, they are willing to support "retentionist" national policies:

> The real argument over the acquisition of undocumented (unprovenanced) antiquities is not what it appears to be. It is not really between art museums and archeologists, about the protection of the archaeological record from looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities. It is between museums and modern nation-states and their nationalist claims on that heritage. Archaeologists are part of the argument as allies of those states (or "source" nations; those with ancient remains within their jurisdiction). Archaeologists encourage the institution of nationalist retentionist cultural property laws.

Cuno's skepticism toward heritage claims informs a 2009 article in the *New York Times* by John Tierney chronicling the efforts of Egypt's Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Zahi Hawass, to repatriate the Rosetta Stone from the British Museum and a bust of Nefertiti from Berlin's Neues Museum:

> Science and curators have generally supported the laws passed in recent decades giving countries ownership of ancient "cultural property" discovered within their borders. But these laws rest on a couple of highly debatable assumptions: that artifacts should remain in whatever country they were found, and that the best way to protect archaeological sites is to restrict the international trade in antiquities.

Tierney endorses the theory that European museums have an equal right to these treasures since the modern state of Egypt did not exist when when the stone was discovered in 1799 by Napoleon's soldiers (let alone when it was inscribed in 196 BC during the Hellenistic Era). He insists that it is thanks only to Europe's invention of modern Egyptology that the Rosetta Stone acquired its great value. Tierney is seemingly impervious to the possibility that Egypt might have a legitimate interest in the stone regardless of whom invented Egyptology. Thus, he reads Hawass's threat to museums to withdraw permits to archaeological sites in Egypt if treasures were not returned simply as evidence that "cultural-property laws have turned archaeological discoveries into political weapons."[4] While it makes sense to counter that no country or international body arbitrates the right to cultural property with neutrality—ownership claims are always weaponizable—Cuno and Tierney make some important points: countries are mutable entities whose property claims shift strategically, and retentionism is increasingly a force to be reckoned with in the marketplace of world exhibitions and international research, a means of asserting national privilege and the primacy of indigenous site-specificity.

While clashes over the repatriation of antiquities have no exact correlative in the literary field (unless we are talking about bids to return manuscripts or tablatures valued by epigraphy to their countries of origin), there are similiar concerns. Texts celebrated for depicting homeland, context, setting and habits of cultural belonging are especially vulnerable to charges of cultural betrayal and loss of authenticity once they are transported into the canon of *Weltliteratur*. The attack on mixed-blood writers by Santee Sioux writer Elizabeth Cook-Lynn "for losing sight of 'tribal realism' and national sovereignty," or C. K. Stead's dispute of the award of the Pegasus Prize to Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (on the grounds that it was written by a white person and contained inauthentic elements in its description of the Maori), exemplify this vein of critique.[5] Similarly vulnerable to these charges are the debates regarding the claims of essentialism surrounding the reception of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*—a work, according to Nirvana Tanoukhi, whose "fusion of description and ethnography," and representation of Igbo oral culture and kinship traditions, induced critics to anoint *Things Fall Apart* the first African novel."[6]

The values of "authenticity," "tribal realism," and nativist reception are seemingly at odds with the cosmopolitan principles of World Literature. David Damrosch notes that one of the key ways a work of literature becomes World Literature is its circulation "beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin." Circulation along with what he calls the "detached engagement" of the reader are crucial indices of this transition in addition to the work's "ellipitical refraction of other national literatures" and high incidence of translation. Yet it is precisely this *detachment*, or *disengagement*, as much physical as it is affective, that ignites opposition. Vilashini Cooppan describes how "literary globalism" has come to be associated with

> a suspect ethics of *(dis)engagement* in which other literatures and cultures are recognized, even valorized, in order that their existence in some temporal anteriority or spatial exteriority may rehabilitate, shore up, and, to use a popular term, globalize the privileged narratives of the west.[7]

Severed from place, thrown into the maw of the global culture industry or survey course, and subject to pedagogical transmission by instructors with low levels of cultural literacy and nonexistent knowledge of a translated work's original language, local or native literature relinquishes its defining self-properties once it is exported and trafficked like an artifact.

World Literature, institutionally speaking, increasingly resembles the global museum in its practice of curatorial salvage. It gathers up swaths of literary culture deemed vulnerable to extinction and performs preservational intervention. The analogy between UNESCO-decreed world heritage sites—Pompei, the Silk Road, Angkor Wat, the Bamiyan Cave Buddhas—and classical languages and literatures is hardly a stretch. As Mary Beard notes in the essay "Do the Classics Have a Future?" in the *New York Review of Books*:

> In November 2011 an international petition was formally launched to ask UNESCO—in the light of the increasing marginalization of the classical languages—to declare Latin and Greek a specially protected "intangible heritage of humanity." I am not sure what I think about treating classical languages as if they were an endangered species or a precious ruin.[8]

Beard's fear need hardly be restricted to the classics. Modern European languages and literatures—to wit, the closing down of programs in French, Italian and German in the United States—and countless non-European area studies fields are similarly "endangered." The point here, though, is not to bemoan the vulnerability of rarefied fields of the humanities but to emphasize the extent to which World Literature rests on a conservationist attitude (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak would call it "arrogance") that, by default, conceives of the art work as protectable property. In this scheme, the salvaged text is effectively signed over to the critic who is now, properly speaking, a curator, charged with conserving it and appraising its worth.

Designating works of literature heritage-grade properties is made possible, as Pascale Casanova has suggested, by Eurocentric gold standards of excellence and structures of legitimation endorsed by the media (publishing, criticism, prize-granting). The result is a collection of "best-ofs" cherry-picked from national canons; crowned as "classics"; and, if we believe Peter Hitchcock, tailored to please "the drab hierarchization of petty-bourgeois desire."[9] Ankhi Mukherjee, in her article "'What is a Classic?': International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question," draws a distinction between the "classic" and "the canon," but when it comes to World Literature as global heritage property, the aesthetic singularity of the classic *and* the perennialism of the canon would seem to have equal traction:

> The classic is primarily a singular act of literature, while the canon, John Guillory states, is "an aristocracy of texts." Canonicity implies the formation of a corpus, the congealing of the "literary art of Memory" (Bloom), the making up of a list of books requisite for a literary education, and the formation of an exclusive club, however painstakingly contested the rules of inclusion (and exclusion) may be. The classic, however, is inseparable from the endless and unresolved contestations of the question What is a classic? and belongs to what Guillory calls "the conflictual prehistory of canonformation." If the canon implies continuity with the past or a perpetuation of tradition, the classic is all that and something else: the survival of the classic, according to Frank Kermode, depends on its possession "of a surplus of signifier."

The Iliad, Beowulf, Gilgamesh, The Tale of Genji, the *Mahabharata, The Divine Comedy, Don Quixote*, the plays of Shakespeare and

Racine, *Vanity Fair, War and Peace, Things Fall Apart, Midnight's Children*—such works are often seen not as belonging to a cultural commons, or set of all literature, but to a class of limited-edition properties targeting elite cultural consumers. As Mukherjee queries rhetorically:

> If the classic ideal could be renovated for a postcolonial, global world, would it inevitably replicate global capital and what Ian Baucom calls the "globalizing imaginary" by synchronizing and homogenizing historical difference or differentiation and creating a centralized (not constellated) literary studies?[10]

Homogenizing difference, flattening forms, and minimizing cultural untranslatability, these are familiar critiques leveled at World Literature. They constitute a significant aspect of what makes its "upscaling of the humanities at a global level" problematic. I have emphasized a related but rather different issue: the extent to which World Literature, like the world-class museum or art collection, affirms a psychopolitical structure of possessive collectivism normally associated with smaller-scaled collectivities like the nation or some other politically affirmed form of community. Writ large, that is to say, scaled up to the proportions of World, possessive collectivism resembles "possessive individualism," with its self-regarding notion of personhood (of "self" as self-ownership) and happy fit with neoliberalism.

Bruce Robbins provides a way of thinking about why a critique of possessive individualism is necessary to the critique of World Literature. In search of a cosmopolitan ethics of reading, he endorses Damrosch's definition of a world-literary text as that which estranges a reader from her or his own nationality (in *What is World Literature*?); this estrangement, he feels, encourages an ethical relation with the entire world. But Robbins is less comfortable with Damrosch's concession that since "we never truly cease to be ourselves as we read," this estrangement can only be partial. He questions whether "it may not after all be a crippling limitation to remain in some sense 'ourselves.'" "Being-a-self-in-the-presenttense," he worries, can signify "the burden of a provinciality or partiality or self-interestedness from which one may need and even want to be released."[11] Here, Robbins opens up the possibility of a dispossessive ethics of reading that challenges the presumptive self-interest and self-having assumed to condition the reader's relation to cultural property. This dispossessive stance casts World Literature as an unownable estate, a literature over which no one exerts proprietary prerogative and which lends itself to a critical turn that puts the problem of property possession front and center. In *The Afterlife of Property*, Jeff Nunokawa heralded this "critical property" discourse in an analysis of Dickens and Victorian culture more generally. "However else we may have broken from the Victorian frame of mind," he writes,

> its outlines remain visible in our apprehension, traumatized or routine, that the commodity form, like a triumphal army or a thief in the night, has entranced regions of the psyche, precincts of culture and forms of labor whose worth had been measured by their distance from market value.[12]

Nunokawa offers no explicit theory of dispossessiveness, but it is there by implication in his dissection of a society in the thrall of commodities and the propertization of life, from mercenary marriage to the family melodrama structured according to the fate of entailed estates.

The narrative curiosity *Manituana* (2007), a group-authored novel by an Italian collective based in Bologna that signs itself Wu Ming, might be seen as part of a large body of world literatures built on the chassis of dispossessive collectivism. The opening epigraph from Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* glorifies the agent pledged to the collective good:

> A solitary man may be sober, pious, he may wear a hair shirt, and he may very well be a saint, but I will call him virtuous only when he has performed some act of virtue from which other men will benefit. While he remains alone he will be acting neither well nor ill; for us he is nothing.

This view of the solitary as worthless without the multitude can be heard in Wu Ming's credo: "People think each author has his or her own voice, one voice. We think that each author has many voices."[13] The name Wu Ming is a double dispossessive: a Chinese disguise donned by Italian authors and a word meaning "anonymous," or "no names" in Mandarin. By calling itself Wu Ming, the group telegraphs its solidarity with Chinese dissidents (whose posts were routinely signed "anonymous") and its resistance to classification as *Italian* literature. It could well have signed itself *Anonimo* (or Anonymous, in sympathy with the international hacktivist group of that name, which in 2010 successfully defenestrated Italy's cyber-crime unit), but that might have reduced the impact of its mystifying setup. A novel in Italian plus a Chinese signature plus a narrative about colonial America, how could that possibly add up? All the usual cues of reception are trumped in what amounts to a strategy designed to frustrate the reader's hunger for writerly identity or the marketer's ploy to trade on the typecasting of national authors. The same shock tactic was deployed in the group's earlier incarnation as Luther Blissett. Spurred by their research on English sects in the Civil War, they brought out *Q* in 1999, "a 650-page historical spy novel that used the Reformation as a multivalent allegory for the ups and downs of 20th-century anticapitalism." If there is a "world" that can be identified in this model of world literature, it is defined by a structure of address—to the Left worldwide—and by a concerted effort to map oneworldedness as a network of political conspiracies and masterminded interests.

Like *Q, Manituana* uses the past to critique the historical present, in this case the post-9/11 period, in which, as it happened, there was a spike in books on pre-Revolutionary America: "It's as if the Americans after September 11, asked themselves some questions about their own warmongering origins, about the source of the 'clash of civilizations' and the subsequent extermination of entire nations," Wu Ming told Marco Philopat.[14] Following the attack on Afghanistan, in the months preceding the second Gulf War, Wu Ming 1 (Roberto Bui) noted in another interview:

> When there was a sharp difference of opinion about the "war on terror" between the U.S. and Europe, there was a journalistic metaphor: "The Atlantic Ocean is widening." We started to reflect on that, and so we went back to the beginning of the relationship, when the U.S. became the U.S.—when it separated from Europe, in a way.[15]

Manituana explores the dawning of American imperialism, in the parodoxical way in which it developed out of the desire to be liberated from British imperialism while suborning native populations. As a study in the complexity of what it means to "have world," it is especially revealing, for it takes as its main subject the politics of territorial claims and land expropriation in colonial America. Set in 1775, just two years after the Boston Tea Party (where the rebel colonists had costumed themselves ironically enough as Mohawks), the novel depicts a violent real estate tragedy. Joseph Brant, a Mohawk prince also known as Thayendanegea (based on an actual historical figure who was received in 1776 by the King of England) is bent on redress. His dispossession notice was a "legal" testament to property theft written by the settler Jonas Klug in the following scene:

> Klug had got the right Indian drunk, the stupidest, most boastful one, Lemuel, Lemuel something, and friends of his, as stupid as he was. After they'd got drunk, before they threw their guts up, they had signed the transfer papers. With a lovely illiterate "X," which came to the same thing …
>
> In the contract, Lemuel and company declared themselves legal representatives of the inhabitants of Canajoharie, owners of the land. A kind of tribal council, an Indian thing. Thereunder, they yielded four thousand acres in return for two cases of rum.
>
> "X," "X" and "X," in front of witnesses.
>
> Beneficiary: Jonas Klug.
>
> Shortly afterward, on a night when the moon was full, he had sent a surveyor friend, who set out to map the territory. A thousand acres more than was stated in the contract. So he had sent everything to Albany and a year later had received the deed of ownership …

> The Mohawks had taken legal action, saying that Jonas Klug had acted in bad faith, that only the sachems could sign a contract of that kind and that the negotiation had been conducted without an official interpreter. They had moved heaven and earth, they had appealed to their baronet, to Governor Tryon, to the British Crown. Petitions in court, and other protests, and threats to go down the path of war. As if a court could find against an honest farmer with a horde of redskins.[16]

Brandt's land will inevitably be awash in blood. He forms a small delegation representing several of the Six Iroquois Nations and takes his grievance to the British Crown. In London, he encounters a band that calls itself the London Mohocks, stigmatized as mountebanks and "notorious London Indians." Hoping for acceptance as the seventh Iriquois nation, the "Emperor" of the London Mohocks invites Brandt to "imagine the Indians of the Colonies and those of the Motherland joining forces to form a single great nation"; a revolutionary nation united to put an end to forced relocation, property theft, deprivation, abuse, treatment as cannon fodder, and political nonrecognition. This prospect of a transnational movement of the oppressed, though it goes nowhere, is part of a political scene of shifting alliances that arouses the anxiety of the propertied classes:

> "If we guarantee freedom to the Negroes and America to the Indians, what are we left with gentlemen?"
>
> "Indeed. To whom will you sell your African slaves, if the Somerset ruling becomes law?"
>
> "For my part, Mr. Pole, I could ask you where you will get the wood for your building sites in New York, if the inland forests remain in the hands of the redskins."
>
> "*Touché*. But the root of both problems is the same; it is called America."
>
> "Oh no, Mr. Gilbert. America would be the solution. Myopia is the true villain: in trying to get a commercial monopoly, we will end up losing the whole market."
>
> "Come on don't be pessimistic, the spring counteroffensive is under way. His Majesty is sending troops to close the account with these rebels."
>
> "I have heard that. German mercenaries, it would appear. That's what started the decline of the Roman Empire."[17]

This scene portends imperial decline and fall alongside the rise of a multiracial multitude. The fantasy of a trans-Atlantic Mohawk nation founders with Brandt's failure to secure British support. He returns to America just in time to become a victim of George Washington's expedition against the hostile tribes of the Six Nations. Retreating,Brandt makes his way to Canada with a straggling band of survivors. Manituana is the destination, blessed with a creation myth of consecration as a utopia of abundance and harmonious tribal coexistence. But Manituana will be punished for spawning a "bastard" language. Though the new generation is happy to communicate in a common tongue, it threatens the old tribal identifications. War breaks out, and the Master of Life punishes Manituana, throwing it into the St. Lawrence River, where, in a variation of the Babel myth, it shatters into the Thousand Islands. In the novel, the Thousand Islands will become a new national homeland for Brandt's descendants. But Brandt himself returns to Iroquireland to settle scores with Jonas Klug. He kills him and stuffs his mouth with the disputed earth: "You wanted my land, Jonas Klug. Here it is. It's yours now."[18] This dramatic scene of force-feeding the colonizer with the land he has stolen illuminates the violence of property-ownership and points to the folly of trying to "have" property or to possess ground as a property of the person.

A collectively fabricated novel about pillaged native patrimony and the emergent territorial axis of the North American Empire, *Manituana* affords a model of world literatures defined by dis-possessive collectivism. Wu Ming has described its own narrative production as "a world, an example of participatory/transmedia storytelling." As "the architrave but not the whole architecture," *Manituana* invites transmedial appropriation, and so it multiplies and morphs: into a website, a film, a soundtrack, an assemblage of side stories, a prize-winning board game, a sample of New Italian Epic characterized by "unexpected points of view, complicated yet accessible stories, alternative realities, and 'unidentified narrative objects'"; and generic experiments that "combine reportage and fiction in unsettling ways."[19] A text without a national foothold, written by a group that is committed to renouncing authorial claims, *Manituana* asks that we take "ourselves" as readers out of the equation, to become instead, co-workers in acts of world-making.

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1 Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, forthcoming, Columbia University Press; for discussions of possessive cultural attachments to native languages, see Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2012; Michael Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, 15; ibid., 19; ibid., 27.

2 Talal Asad, "Free Speech, Blasphemy and Secular Criticism," in *Is Critique Secular?*, 27.

3 Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity*, Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2007, 28; Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, 2–3, 79; Kamyar Abdi, "Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, 2001, 52; ibid., 52.

4 James Cuno, *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008, xviii; John Tierney, "A Case in Antiquities for 'Finders Keepers,'" *New York Times*, November 16, 2009.

5 Elvira Pulitano, "Writing in the Oral Tradition: Reflections on the Indigenous Literatures of Australia, New Zealand, and North America," in *Teaching World Literature*, ed. David Damrosch, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009, 218.

6 Nirvana Tanoukhi, "African Roads," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, 456–7. Tanoukhi is referring specifically to anti-essentialist arguments made by Abiola Irele in his "The Crisis of Cultural Memory in *Things Fall Apart*,' in *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), and by Anthony Appiah in his *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

7 David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, 6 and 281; Vilashini Cooppan, "The Ethics of World Literature: Reading Others, Reading Otherwise," in *Teaching World Literature*, ed. David Damrosch, 36 (my emphasis added).

8 Mary Beard, "Do the Classics Have a Future?" *New York Review of Books*, January 12, 2012, 50.

9 Hitchcock writes: "The *world* in world literature is studiously neutral and requires no further qualification: it is the twenty-first century ghost of nineteenth-century aestheticism that at once announces the best that has been thought and said. Indeed, for all the assumed neutrality, world literature has the drab hierarchization of petty-bourgeois desire. At the very least it allows one to consume postcolonialism without that nasty taste of social struggle in which a reader's own cosmopolitanism may be at stake." Peter Hitchcock, *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010, 5.

10 Ankhi Mukherjee, "'What Is a Classic?': International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question," *PMLA* 125: 4, October 2010, 1029, 1035.

11 Bruce Robbins, "Uses of World Literature," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, ed. Theo D'haen, David Damrosch and Djelal Kadir, New York: Routledge, 2012, 391.

12 Jeff Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property: Domestic Security and the Victorian Novel*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, 4.

13 Voltaire, cited in Wu Ming, *Manituana*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, London: Verso, 2009; Wu Ming, cited in Christopher Taylor, "A Life in Writing: Wu Ming," *Guardian*, November 13, 2009.

14 Wu Ming, cited by Marco Philput in his review of Manituana in *XL*, manituana.com; Wu Ming, *Manituana*, 13, 201, 225, 88 and 395.

15 Christopher Taylor, "A Life in Writing: Wu Ming," *Guardian*, November 14, 2009.

16 Wu Ming, *Manituana*, 13.

17 Wu Ming, *Manituana*, 225.

18 Wu Ming, *Manituana*, 395.

19 Tayler, "A Life in Writing: Wu Ming," *Guardian*.

IV

Planetary Dysphoria

I have tried to wean World Literature from its comfort zone—its ready promotion of identifying over differing and its curiously impassive treatment of "world" and anemic planetary politics—by pressing on what a world is, philosophically, theologically and politically. In concluding, I will conjecture that theories of cosmos/ *nomos*, planetarity, world depression or dysphoria, and the premonition of earthly extinction (Ray Brassier's "nihil unbound") advocate a shift in the status of the word "world" in World Literature. Fredric Jameson anticipates such a shift in his articulation of "four fundamental threats to the survival of the human race today," specified as "ecological catastrophe, worldwide poverty and famine, structural unemployment on a global scale, and the seemingly uncontrollable traffic in armaments of all kinds, including smart bombs and unmanned drones."[1] Jameson's dystopia belongs to a growing body of theory attuned to geopolitical perturbations, ecoontological imperatives, and the operating premise of a sentient earth. From Peter Fenves's exhumation of Kant's "physical geography" lectures (which followed his master's thesis of 1755, "On Fire," and foreshadowed his meteorological treatises in the 1790s); to Félix Guattari's concept of the "universe" as an autistic, subjectively destituted territoriality; to Eugene Thacker's chthonic divinations of bio-horror; and to Reza Negarestani's "cthulhoid ethics,"[2] in which the planet resembles an environmental death trap afflicted by radiation, pandemics, dust, and stellar burnout.[3] Peter Sloterdijk has pursued the Faustian "philosophical dimensions of globalization" to the "combat of sphere expansion." In the *Sphären* trilogy, he proceeds "psycho-cosmologically," setting renewed value on transference (intersubjective and terrestrial) as the psychic alloy capable of dissolving "cosmic frost," "stellar coldness," and the sensation of "shellessness in space," all effects of the loss of interiority, of the post-Enlightenment "shattering of celestial domes." Quentin Meillassoux cedes the human cognition of a world to an ancestral time of rocks and "arche-fossils" and a cosmic order of *après-finitude*. Timothy Morton speaks of the viral template of "the RNA World." Jane Bennett's recourse to "a materialism in the tradition of Democritus-Epicurus-Spinoza-Diderot-Deleuze" that privileges vitalism and "vibrant matter" supports her conviction that "the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption." Thacker meditates on the poetics of planetary extinction and the mystical call of ungroundedness (*Ungrund*) to ponder the question "Can there exist today a mysticism of the unhuman, one that has as its focus the climatological, meteorological, and geological world-in-itself, and, moreover, one that does not resort to either religion or science?" And in his *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*, Ray Brassier, faulting vitalist eschatology for evading "the leveling force of extinction," invokes "the cosmological re-inscription of Freud's account of the death-drive," Nietzschean nihilism, and Lyotard's "solar catastrophism" to underscore extinction's inexorable "truth." Brassier is interested in nihilism that decouples thinking from the life of the planet, prompting questions like: "How does thought think a world without thought? How does thought think the death of thinking?" Such queries arise from Jean-François Lyotard's concept of "solar catastrophe," which occasions the destruction of thought's "terrestrial shelter." "With the disappearance of earth," Lyotard wrote, "thought will have stopped—leaving that disappearance absolutely unthought of."[4] The fixation on extinction *as thought*—which is to say as the ultimate fulfillment of philosophical nihilism's remit—sets this strain of catastrophism apart from past traditions of Christian eschatology (end-of-the-worldism, end of days) as well as from the old Cold War fear of mutual annihilation or the particular terrors associated with geological mass extinction events and nuclear energy accidents on a scale far surpassing Chernobyl and Fukushima.

In *Nihil Unbound*, Brassier resizes Freud's theory of the death-drive, from germ plasm, individual psyche, and civilization to the scale of a cosmically proportioned ontic subject. Roger Caillois's psychasthenic reworking of the repetition compulsion, where adaptive mimicry is taken to the extreme of an "assimilation to space" (dehiscence), becomes the basis, for Brassier, of "mimicry's non-adaptive *thanatosis*."[5] Brassier's text culminates in a *Gotterdämmerung* moment when philosophy sloughs off meaning, sense, experience and purpose in favor of the "intelligibility of extinction."

Like Brassier, Thacker writes with the chiaroscuro of Goth spiritualism. In *After Life*, he positions "dark pantheism" against theological pantheism ("for which an anthropomorphic God still serves as sovereign Creator and Source"), imputing to it "the challenge of thinking under the sign of the negative" and the challenge of ontologizing "life beyond its physico-biological reduction." Working through a political ecology that assumes a level playing field between human and nonhuman forms of life, Thacker would seem to revel in a possible world uncognized by humans and steeped in "planetary disasters, emerging pandemics, tectonic shifts, strange weather, oil-drenched seascapes, and the furtive, always-looming threat of extinction." The challenge for philosophy, he maintains, is to try to comprehend extinction, and its unthinkability, politically.[6]

It has often been alleged that the speculative materialists—many claiming a pronounced allegiance to Marxism and antiglobalist activism—pay only lip service to politics, but there is arguably a political edge to their hyperbolic evocations of a planet in the grip of revolutionary *ressentiment*: sullen, wounded, and ready to retaliate against the hubris of humans who "forget" that their own psychic fates are tethered to the earth's distressed crust, depleted mineral veins, and liquid, molten nihilism.

Drafted from solar nihilism, from the neo-Romantic return to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* (as exemplified by Ian Hamilton Grant's "transcendental geology"), and from geo-psychoanalysis, this dark ecology may be further unpacked through a construct that I will call "planetary dysphoria," which is a variation on Melanie Klein's "depressive position," suffusing every aspect of economic, social and terrestrial life. Dysphoria, from the Greek δσφορος (*dysphoros*), means to endure that which is difficult. It denotes an unpleasant or uncomfortable mood: sadness, a downer moment, anxiety, restlessness, irritability, spleen, manic swings, withdrawal (from addictive cravings), and the total evacuation of euphoria. It qualifies as an economy contoured more and more by a recessionary drive, and by subjects of melancholia. For Freud, there was in fact a planetary dimension to melancholia: "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself." Melancholia extends the sense of the world as "poor and empty" to the ego. In melancholia, as Freud saw it, the ego was in the grips of

> a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of

punishment.[7]

This internalization of anger against self—masochistic and suicidal at its most extreme—jives with Peter Sloterdijk's civilizational diagnosis of repressed *thymos* (literally, "spiritedness," a term whose Platonic ascription refers to manifestations of pride, indignation, shame and bellicosity). He charts a shift in the Greek psyche from a phase of testosterone-fueled "heroic militancy" to one extolling "civic excellence" in which rage is downgraded as a "charismatic affect" to mere "enthusiasm."[8] In a predictably Nietzschean vein, Sloterdijk sees the modern politics of the general will, pluralism, and liberal consensus-building, as well as therapeutic culture in general, as symptoms of thymotic deprivation. The sole reprieve comes intermittently, either in the form of vulture capitalism ("creative aggression") or as capitalism turned against itself—which is to say, revolution ("the furious resentment against property") and radical movements that provoke "huge releases of rage, resentment, and fantasies of extermination … a chain of *thymos* catastrophes … the organization of a novel economy of rage."[9]

Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia* (2011), whose title refers to the name of a rogue planet that crashes into earth, and whose lowering approach on the horizon tugs at the latent suicidal inclinations of people in depression, is a thymotic tragedy in precisely these terms. The structure adheres to the exigencies of apocalyptic genre, where, as Peter Szendy reminds us, "It is necessary that the last image be the very last image, which is to say the last of them all—of all images past, present and future."[10] Structure is key: *Melancholia*'s division into two parts, titled "Justine" and "Claire," underscores the reliance on structural divisions between the contrasting states of day and night, a blue planet (Earth) and a red planet (Melancholia), euphoria and depression. Justine (played by Kirsten Dunst) is blond, exuberant and willful, and Claire (played by Charlotte Gainsbourg) is dark, recessive, and controlling. But, as we approach the midpoint of Justine's wedding celebration, there is a decided mood swing, with Justine starting her free-fall into catalepsy and Claire opening up to the exquisite anticipation of extinction. The thymotic tipping point comes when guests at the lavish party pass from assurances of Justine's happiness in statements such as "How's your wonderful night going?" to scenes of rage, starting with Justine's mother who remarks at the toast "I don't believe in marriage" and climaxing with Justine's public denunciation of her boss in the words "I hate you … You are a power-hungry little man Jack." By the time we reach Part 2, all traces of Justine's high animal spirits have vanished, and she is like the victim of a gunshot, where the path of the bullet has entered and exited her body, pulling her psyche into the slingshot orbit of the planet Melancholia proceeding on its course closer and closer to earth. Taken into this cosmic force field, Justine becomes a planetary avatar. In one shot, the viscous water of the stream in which she floats reclaims her body, and she morphs into Ophelia, with a baleful stare fixated on an unseen extraterrestrial Hamlet. In another sequence, she moves arduously across the greensward wearing a wedding dress whose skeins grow into moss-like tendrils that act as restraints, restricting her movements and tethering her to the ground as if in chthonic servitude. Yet another scene fixates on Justine naked on the rocks at night, her body radioactively luminescent, communing directly with her planet in a pantomime of Brünnhilde (whose funeral pyre would end up destroying the world in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*). There are also searing moments when her hands become conductors of lightning, and the sky, sensing her moods, rains down dead birds, freakish hail and rain, and clouds of insects. Throughout, von Trier relies on ecological embodiments of the death-drive, conscripting the devices of pathetic fallacy with no apology. And while the film may fall short of Brassier's full-on *solar* posthumanism—there is humanist redemption in Justine's caring preparation for death, easing the way for her sister and nephew—it is arguably just as dysphoric in its *lunar clinamen*; the way the film swivels into position as an allegory of cosmic self-destitution.

Planetary dysphoria captures the geo-psychoanalytic state of the world at its most depressed and *unruhig*, awaiting the triumphant revenge of acid, oil and dust. These elements demonstrate a certain agency; they are sentient materials even if they are not fully licensed subjectivized subjects. McKenzie Wark, with reference to Reza Negarestani's occult treatise on oil "polytics" and Tellurian insurgencies in the book *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, underscores the "abstract" look of the world's "chemical signature" at the end of human time:

> Our permanent legacy will not be architectural, but chemical. After the last dam bursts, after the concrete monoliths crumble into the lone and level sands, modernity will leave behind a chemical signature, in everything from radioactive waste to atmospheric carbon. This work will be abstract, not figurative.

This passage resonates with Brassier's opening quote from Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*, in which the fate of the human is hitched to a gravitational force beyond the earth, symbolized by X: "Since Copernicus, man has been rolling from the center toward X."[11] The "world" in world literatures, I have tried to show, is on a similar flight path; increasingly identified not just with the expansion of canons or with translation technologies that extend the reach of translatability, but with something abstract and Untranslatable; which is to say, with thanotropic projections of how a planet dies.

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1 Fredric Jameson, "Utopia as Replication" in *Valences of the Dialectic*, London: Verso, 2009, 413 and 412.

2 Negarestani defines the cthulhoid ethics as "a polytical ethics necessary for replacing or undermining existing planetary politico-economical and religious systems … characterized by the question 'what happens next?' when it is posed by the other side or the radical outsider rather than the human and its faculties." Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, Melbourne: re-press, 2008, 238.

3 I refer here to Peter Fenves's chapter "Revolution in the Air; or the End of the Human Regime on Earth" in his *Late Kant: Towards Another Law of the Earth*, 136–61; to Félix Guattari's *Chaosmose* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1992); to Eugene Thacker's *After Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and to *In the Dust of this Planet: Horror of Philosophy 1* (Hants, UK: Zero Books, 2010); and to Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia*.

4 Peter Sloterdijk with Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, *Neither Sun Nor Death*, trans. Steve Corcoran, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011, 234; The *Sphären* trilogy: Peter Sloterdijk, *Bubbles: Spheres*, vol. 1, trans. Wieland Hoban, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011, 22 and 24; Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010, 59 and 67; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, xiii and ix, respectively; Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet*, 133 (question italicized in the original text); Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 227 and 204, respectively; ibid., 223, 225; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, cited by Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 225.

5 Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 204, 34 and 238.

6 Eugene Thacker, *After Life*, 229–30; Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet*, 1 and 2.

7 Ian Hamilton Grant, *Transversals: New Directions in Philosophy: Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*, London: Continuum, 2008; Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 1917, repr., trans. Joan Riviere, *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 246, 244.

8 Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time: A Psychopolitical Investigation*, trans. Mario Wenning, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, 12.

9 ibid., 25, 33–5.

10 Peter Szendy, *L'Apocalypse-cinéma: 2012 et autres fins du monde*, Paris: Capricci, 2012, 10.

11 Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia*, 4; McKenzie Wark, "An Inhuman Fiction of Forces," in *Leper Creativity: Cyclonopedia Symposium*, New York: Punctum Books, 2012, 40; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman, New York: Vintage, 1967, 1; cited in Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, x.

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