Remedios in Valinor: Magical Realism, Transnationalism, and the Historicity of Literary Value

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Victoria Zurita
Stanford University

ABSTRACT: In this article, I contrast two types of transnationalism—regionalism and cosmopolitanism—as they feature in David Damrosch's *Comparing the Literatures*. I do so by assessing Damrosch's arguments on the comparability of magical realism and by teasing out their implications for the book's larger aims. I am interested in Damrosch's arguments to the extent that they exemplify what I believe is an unexamined assumption of some of the major voices in the transnational turn, especially in the field of global modernism.

1. INTRODUCTION

In *Transnational Literature: The Basics* (2021), Paul Jay offers an introduction to the transnational turn in literary studies.[1] In the first chapter, "The Nation and Beyond," he describes the transnational as an internal and external challenge to the purity and integrity of the nation. For Jay, the transnational names the de facto heterogeneity of any national collective, as well as external forces such as migration, travel, and exchange that continually reshape the

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[1] Paul Jay, *Transnational Literature: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

nation's boundaries and composition.[2] In his account, the transnational is also an epistemic orientation, a shift in attention from the universal to the particular, a sensitivity to difference, and the conviction that any identity—individual or collective—develops dialectically.[3]

In line with the commitment to difference that Jay posits as a defining feature of the transnational, I contrast in this article two types of transnationalism—regionalism and cosmopolitanism—as they feature in David Damrosch's *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age*.[4] I do so by assessing Damrosch's arguments on magical realism as a basis for comparison and by teasing out the implications of these arguments for the book's larger aims. I am interested in Damrosch's arguments to the extent that they exemplify a trend in the transnational turn in literary studies. As a measure to decenter the canon, valorize marginal literary production,[5] and bear witness to global power dynamics, World Literature scholars (e.g., Pascale Casanova and Stefan Helgesson) and Global Modernists (e.g., Eric Hayot, Susan Stanford Friedman, Aarthi Vadde, and Jeanne-Marie Jackson)[6] have advocated for or carried out a reengineering of the conceptual tools of literary history.[7] Yet, in some cases, this conceptual reengineering leads to the reaffirmation of the Euro-Anglo-American perspective it is meant to provincialize. What follows is an attempt to understand this performative contradiction and to advance two modest suggestions for conceptual reengineering from the vantage point of epistemic justice—that is, one concerned with the credibility and equitable participation of writers and scholars belonging to an international community defined by the uneven distribution of resources and prestige across departments, academic institutions, and countries.

This article elaborates on a paper delivered at the 2021 conference, "Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age," organized by Stanford and Tel Aviv University. While *Comparing the Literatures* is the primary focus of the first two sections, the third section and conclusion widen the scope of my arguments by drawing examples from other scholarship in World Literature and Modernist Studies. My suggestions are based on the observation that while scholars who propose to redefine literary historical concepts ("magical realism," "literature," "modernism/modernity," "romanticism," "realism," "naturalism," and so on) are aware of the limitations of their own epistemological frameworks in dealing with cultural production in other languages and their biases about what counts as literary value lead them to propose research programs that are not only Anglo-Eurocentric but also possess some of the features of epistemological extractivism: an approach to knowledge where the cultural and linguistic others are treated as resources to be transmuted into academic capital through the mediation of disciplinary and aesthetic values unilaterally defined.[8] To avoid such extractivism, two preventive measures can be taken: a careful historicization of literary value—understood as a complex web of normative assumptions, literary and extra-literary, differently instantiated in different works, and changing over time—and an honest appraisal of the pragmatic consequences of our new concepts in the terms of the quality of readerly attention they invite and the institutional and geographic location of the scholarship they promote.

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[2] Ibid., 10.

[3] Ibid.

[4] David Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

[5] I understand marginality as a relative and dynamic term as argued by Costica Bradatan and Aurelian Craiuti. See "Introduction: The Paradoxes of Marginality," *European Legacy*: *Toward New Paradigms* 17, no.6 (2012): 721–29.

[6] See Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Stefan Helgesson, *Decolonisations of Literature: Critical Practice in Africa and Brazil after 1945* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022); Jeanne-Marie Jackson, *The African Novel of Ideas: Philosophy and Individualism in the Age of Global Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021); Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Aarthi Vadde, "Scalability," *Modernism/modernity Print Plus* 2, no. 4 (January 2, 2018), https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0035.

[7] Sally Haslanger characterizes conceptual (re)engineering as an ameliorative project where the goal is not only to elucidate the meaning of a concept already in use but to redefine it to serve "our legitimate purposes"—in Haslanger's case, "promot[ing] greater justice." See Sally Haslanger, "Going On, Not in the Same Way," in *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, ed. Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 230.

2. *COMPARING THE LITERATURES*: FOR THE MORE PERFECT UNION OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

David Damrosch's *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* gives an overview of comparative literature's disciplinary history. A sprawling account of the lives of its central figures and a synthesis of the issues that besiege it, Damrosch's tome takes stock of the discipline's past and points to new directions while seeking to balance its antinomies. As Alexander Beecroft notes in his book review, Damrosch's approach is meant to be inclusive and pluralistic.[9] He proposes as a basic principle for conducting comparative research "that any literary theory or critical method is valuable if it enables us to expand our archives in useful ways, and to read newly recovered as well as long-familiar works with appreciation, deepened understanding, and a critical edge. Conversely, any theory or any method whatsoever is problematic if one of its prime results—or its goal—is to wall off entire corridors of the library."[10]

Damrosch demonstrates this ecumenical approach by embroidering into an impressive textual tapestry the portraits of writers and scholars while reflecting on their legacy, establishing similarities and differences, finding unexpected resonances, moving forward and backward in time and across space. He is, unsurprisingly, a dexterous weaver. In his tapestry, all ideological, aesthetic, theoretical, and historical differences are mitigated once the works and the personalities find their place in a global intellectual history lightly sketched. The assumption seems to be that we can shoulder all the difference in the world, as long as each difference is accounted for.11 It is a testimony to Damrosch's erudition that very few have shoulders like his.

That said, if we take a step back, we can perceive the patterns in the weaving. If I had to choose a word to summarize the animus of the book, it would be "recovery": recovery of the lives and work of previous comparatists, which can provide "insight into the personal and political stakes in the longstanding debates over comparative studies";[12] recovery of conservative writers (Kukrit Pramoj, Yukio Mishima, J. R. R. Tolkien, for example), neglected by a discipline overly concerned with "racism, imperialism, and . . . speciesism";[13] and finally recovery of Anglo-European academic and intellectual life, whose importance to non-Europeans Damrosch often underscores. Thus, he lists Hu Shih, Lin Yutang, Anna Balakian, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Karuo [*sic*] Watanabe,[14] and Roberto Schwarz, among others, as having an intense (if sometimes troubled) love affair with Europe, or at the very least owing their academic careers to prestigious North Atlantic institutions. Europe is in fact almost everywhere in *Comparing the Literatures*, if not as a set of canons and locales, then at least as a series of features that it happens to share with its peripheries. Thus we learn that Apuleius provincialized Rome way before Dipesh Chakrabarti did,[15] that from a literary perspective Amsterdam can be as peripheral as Brasilia,[16] and that the feminism that Revathi Krishnaswamy finds in Bhakti poetry "doesn't look so different after all from contemporary Western concerns."[17] Lest we forget how *central* Europe still is, Damrosch reminds us that "Ismail Kadare, Milan Kundera, and Oe Kenzaburo could fully describe the impact of world literature on their writing, and on their culture, by talking about a selected set of canonical Western figures"[18] and that "world literature is no longer coextensive with Europe, but European literature remains a world literature of compelling interest for many writers, readers, and scholars."[19]

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[8] Here, I am adapting Linda Martin Alcoff's theorization of extractivist epistemologies. See Linda Martín Alcoff, "Extractivist Epistemologies," *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology, and Society* 5, no 1 (2022), https://doi.org/10.1080/25729861.2022.2127231.

[9] Alexander Beecroft, review of *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age, Modern Philology* 119, no. 2 (November 1, 2021): E1–4.

[10] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 344.

[11] For this reason, it can be said that *Comparing the Literatures* is another example of what Gayatri Spivak identified in *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) as "the scopic ambitions of mapping the world's literatures and bringing it under Euro–U.S. rational control," which she ascribes to the program of distant reading.

[12] Ibid., 8.

Beecroft calls this approach "even-handed."[20] In effect, Damrosch's recovery of conservative authors and his insistence on the similarities and imbrications between European and non-European sites seems to stem from his impatience with an excessive scholarly focus on marginality. The reasons for his impatience are not, strictly speaking, political (Damrosch is a self-declared "liberal humanist"[21]) but intellectual. His polite yet persistent disapproval of some progressive scholars—such as Pheng Cheah and the Warwick Research Collective—suggests that the problem with the current mood in regard to all things transnational is that by centering on racial, gender, and geopolitical margins (and, importantly, by refusing to read more texts, primary and secondary, in the original), scholars in comparative literature are "walling off entire corridors of the library:"[22] "What comparatists do not need in the future are yet more restrictive position takings insisting that only one kind of literature, one theoretical approach, or one brand of politics is intellectually or ethically worth our while."[23] In Damrosch's vision of comparative literature's striving toward never-ending and more-genuine inclusion, the overcoming of national, linguistic, and geopolitical barriers leads to a homogenized disciplinary formation, in which current distinctions have become obsolete: "A prime use of cross-cultural comparison—whether labeled as postcolonial, comparative, transnational, or world literary studies—is to open out and test our concept against a wider range of historical and cultural forms of expression."[24] It's worth noting that the term "decolonial," which naturally belongs to this list, appears in *Comparing the Literatures* only once.

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[13] Ibid., 9.

[14] Spelled "Karuo" in Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, but correct spelling is "Kazuo."

[15] Ibid., 322.

[16] Ibid., 326

[17] Ibid., 155.

[18] Ibid., 284.

[19] Ibid., 285.

[20] Beecroft, "Comparing the Literatures," E2.

[21] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures,* 8.

[22] Ibid., 344.

[23] Ibid., 337.

[24] Ibid., 317.

Now the question is: What does an ecumenical comparison look like, one devoid of "restrictive position taking"? Let's consider one example. In chapter 7, "Worlds," Damrosch invites his readers to compare Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* with García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), placing them both under the conceptual umbrella of magical realism of which he gives a new, minimalist definition. After praising Tolkien's skills as a worldmaker and making a few remarks about fictional worlds and contexts, Damrosch enumerates possible yet unexpected comparisons. His aim is to push against "widely held but too rarely questioned assumptions: for example, that 'popular' literature lives in a different universe from truly *literary* writing; that canonized postmodernists have little in common with contemporaries who aren't engaged in rewriting Proust, Joyce, or Cervantes; that politically progressive writers form a closed circle into which antiprogressive writers need not be invited." Damrosch continues to explain that these exclusions "limit our understanding of modern fiction's varied aesthetic and political relations to the postwar world."[25] Therefore, he urges his reader to acknowledge the "mixture of magic and realism" in *The Lord of the Rings* and *Cien años de soledad* by reading both works in each other's light:

> A comparison of Tolkien to his Latin American contemporaries would situate *The Lord of the Rings* more fully in its midcentury literary and political context, helping us to understand its remarkable worldwide success. *The comparison would also underscore the fact that a mixture of the magical and the realistic isn't the special province of third-world indigenes who take flying carpets in stride. Nor does it reflect some uniquely Latin American reality—a neo-Orientalist claim that García Márquez made in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "The Solitude of Latin America."* As comparatists have often recognized, García Márquez can best be understood not only in relation to his Latin American interlocutors but within the supranational contexts of the postwar era and of the modern novel.[26]

Damrosch's redefinition of magical realism ("a mixture of the magic and the realistic") is ultimately strategic. Tolkien, he laments, has not received sufficient scholarly attention: "García Márquez and Tolkien each have upward of two thousand entries in the *MLA Bibliography*, but though four dozen entries compare García Márquez with Faulkner, there isn't even one for him and Tolkien. To judge from Tolkien's neglect by comparatists, he might as well have written his trilogy in Elvish."[27]

Now, whatever sympathies the reader may have for Tolkien's body of work or for the idea of putting both authors in conversation, from the viewpoint of Latin America's literary history, Damrosch's arguments are perplexing. For starters, it is unclear in what sense "La soledad de América Latina" ("The Solitude of Latin America") is a neo-Orientalist statement, at least if we understand Orientalism, as Edward Said did, as "a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" that justified and sustained European domination over parts of Africa and Asia.[28] There is an emerging subfield in Latin American studies devoted to the region's encounters with the East, often but not always mediated by European perspectives.[29] But Damrosch does not seem interested in such triangulations, and neither Africa nor Asia make an appearance in García Márquez's acceptance speech.

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[25] Ibid., 261.

[26] Ibid., 263–64 (my emphasis).

[27] Ibid., 265.

[28] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, reprint with new preface (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 2.

We can infer from Damrosch's ventriloquizing of the most negative stereotypes about magical realism (his citational yet no less problematic "third-world indigenes who take flying carpets in stride") that his target is essentialism, a simplification of collective identity that confirms long-standing cultural hierarchies and turns magical realism into, as Mariano Siskind puts it, a "particularistic aesthetic that satisfies a demand for local color from marginal cultures in the global field of world literature."[30] Yet, *pace* Damrosch, "La soledad de América Latina" is not essentialist (the speech would be rather hopeless if that were the case) and its set of concerns is very different from his own, which are primarily literary. García Márquez's regionalism, his anchoring of magical realism in Latin America's reality, is not due to an incapacity to understand and represent his art outside of stereotypes. Rather, his redefinition of magical realism in the speech is partly justified by its perlocutionary effects. Like Damrosch seeking to raise Tolkien's popularity among comparatists, García Márquez is writing strategically. Magical realism in "La soledad de América Latina" indexes the region's colonial and postcolonial history: the incomprehension and greed of the colonizers, the murderous eccentricities of Latin American politicians and military leaders, and the countless deaths that García Márquez poeticizes by confronting his audience with an avalanche of statistics:

> There have been five wars and seventeen military coups; there emerged a diabolic dictator who is carrying out, in God's name, the first Latin American ethnocide of our time. In the meantime, twenty million Latin American children died before the age of one—more than have been born in Europe since 1970. Those missing because of repression number nearly one hundred and twenty thousand, which is as if no one could account for all the inhabitants of Uppsala. Numerous women arrested while pregnant have given birth in Argentine prisons, yet nobody knows the whereabouts and identity of their children who were furtively adopted or sent to an orphanage by order of the military authorities. Because they tried to change this state of things, nearly two hundred thousand men and women have died throughout the continent, and over one hundred thousand have lost their lives in three small and ill-fated countries of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. If this had happened in the United States, the corresponding figure would be that of one million six hundred thousand violent deaths in four years.[31]

The magic in "La soledad de América Latina" is therefore not, as it is often thought, the residue of a "premodern" belief in the supernatural but "an outsized reality":

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[29] See, for instance, Ignacio López-Calvo, *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond* (Newcastle, UK: 2007); and Erik Camayd-Freixas, ed., *Orientalism and Identity in Latin America: Fashioning Self and Other from the (Post)Colonial Margin* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2013).

[30] Mariano Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires: Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 59.

[31] Gabriel García-Márquez, "The Solitude of Latin America" (Nobel lecture, Stockholm, December 8, 1982), https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1982/marquez/lecture/.

> A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.[32]

"La soledad de América Latina" can thus be read as an attempt to steer the attention of García Márquez's European audiences away from his literary achievements and toward the problems of his region. His aim is to elicit solidarity from a paternalistic European leadership which, in his eyes, struggles to recognize the validity and singularity of Latin America's quest for social justice. "La soledad de América Latina" is also a celebration of life, of resilience, and of poetry as a means of survival. If there is anything in common between García Márquez and Said, besides their brief encounter at a UNESCO conference in 1993, it is the knowledge that literature is bound up with history and that these histories have coloniality at its center.

Ironically, Damrosch's other Latin American reference on magical realism, one he cites approvingly, is arguably the most concerned with regional consciousness and identity and the least amenable to a globalizing reuse. The central thesis of Alejo Carpentier's "De lo real maravilloso Americano" ("On the Marvelous Real in America")[33] is that by reflecting Latin America's convulsed history, exuberant landscape, syncretic culture, and indifference toward metaphysical dualisms, the marvelous real constitutes nothing less than the region's essence and its cultural patrimony: "What is the entire history of America if not a chronicle of the marvelous real?"[34] In "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" ("The Baroque and the Marvelous Real"), Carpentier is even more direct: "The marvelous real that I defend and that is our own marvelous real is encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent, in all that is Latin American."[35]

Furthermore, in taking a *very* restrictive position, Carpentier contrasts Latin America with Europe by arguing that while in the former region, the marvelous is a lived reality, in the latter, the marvelous is just a series of increasingly rote and ineffective literary conventions meant to re-enchant a cultural space devoid of genuine belief. Haiti's Mackandal gave the world a revolution, while France's Lautréamont (inspired by his Uruguayan roots) only produced a literary school. The concept of the marvelous real entails the dismissal of the entire European literary tradition, from Arthurian romances to surrealism, through gothic novels and Sade. Tolkien, who wrote about elves and dwarves in the twentieth century, would have also come under Carpentier's fire.

Finally, as we consider Damrosch's decision to place his attempt to extend magical realism as a scholarly category under the sign of *lo real maravilloso*, we do well to consider that Carpentier's article-turned-prologue also expresses skepticism about a certain cosmopolitan ideal regarding the accessibility of foreign cultures. After traveling to China, the Middle East, the USSR, and Central Europe, Carpentier admits that he saw a lot but understood very little.[36]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Alejo Carpentier, "On the Marvelous Real in America," in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, ed. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Duke University Press, 1995), 75–88.

[34] Ibid., 88.

[35] Alejo Carpentier, "The Baroque and the Marvelous Real," in *Magical Realism*, ed. Zamora and Faris, 104.

[36] See, in particular, Carpentier, "On the Marvelous Real in America," 77, 79.

3. *COMPARING THE LITERATURES'* TWO AXIOMS: AUTOTELISM AND COSMOPOLITAN UNIVERSALISM

I want to propose now that Damrosch's loose approach to critical terms and to Latin America's literary history reveals non-evident normative assumptions about the ends of transnational literary studies. There is more than a passing resemblance between *Comparing the Literatures'* recuperative mood and Damrosch's dismissal of García Márquez's regionalism. Both are reactions against what Damrosch thinks is a noxious new trend in the discipline that leads to insularity and to an excessive interest in the marginalized to the detriment of Europe, conservative writers, and literature predating the nineteenth century. His suggestion that comparatists study Tolkien alongside García Márquez is indeed one of several attempts to restore the ideological balance of the field. He draws attention to a neglected "conservative Catholic devoted to lost ages of the world"[37] by showing his unsuspected affinities with a popular "progressive leftist."[38]

At both the macro- and microlevel, then, *Comparing the Literatures* follows a similar logic that I will henceforth characterize in terms of its two normative axioms: 1) autotelism and 2) a Casanovian cosmopolitan universalism.

Héctor Hoyos characterizes autotelism in his critique of World Literature as a scholarly paradigm. In chapter 3 of *Things with a History*, Hoyos argues that, as it is currently practiced, World Literature suffers from a lack of purpose accompanied by an unwarranted confidence in its intrinsic necessity and goodness. He writes, "What currently defines the telos of World Literature is its own dynamism, rather than a specific goal, even one broadly defined. At best, this amounts to a celebration of the converging creative energies of scholars; at worst, one sees a bias towards action for its own sake, scholarly busyness."[39] A few paragraphs later, he continues: "World Literature deserves to be taught because it is worth studying. There is not much room left for literature outside of institutions, or for the referential in literature, that is, how it connects to the world at large, to be front and center."[40]

This autotelism is visible in Damrosch's archival expansionism, his projection of a disciplinary future that prioritizes the production of an "ever-widening range of comparisons."[41] Damrosch claims in his conclusion that "to continue to thrive, comparatists need to continue to scrutinize our practices, to reach more effectively to colleagues beyond our programs and to the public beyond our campuses, and to work together in ways that create synergies among disparate perspectives."[42] In other words, comparatists need to keep the conversation going, if only for its own sake, by bringing in more texts, more languages, more periods, and more disciplinary approaches. Such conversations, he adds, should take the form of an integrated disagreement: "Different strands of comparison that we find today have long been intertwined, including philologically based close reading, literary theory, colonial/postcolonial studies, and the study of world literature. They can and should become better integrated than they have yet been, even while their practitioners maintain significant differences in archives, approaches, and perspectives."[43] The meaning of "integrated" here is left to the imagination, yet we can infer that it excludes whatever hinders expansion.

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[37] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 264.

[38] Ibid., 263.

[39] Héctor Hoyos, *Things with a History: Transcultural Materialism and the Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 105.

[40] Ibid., 107.

[41] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 5

[42] Ibid., 336.

To be fair, many passages in *Comparing the Literatures* address what Hoyos calls "the referential in literature." [44] Damrosch dedicates an entire chapter ("Politics") to the influence of the US political landscape on comparative literature's institutions and to five politically engaged scholars: Anna Balakian, Thomas Greene, Northrop Frye, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak. But this history and these portraits do not add up to a vision of the relationship between literature and the social world. Rather, they fulfill the same function as the Tolkien/García Márquez comparison. They redress the discipline's ideological biases by complicating political labels. Thus we meet Anna Balakian, an émigré victimized by Turkish nationalism who championed radical aesthetics but was skeptical of radical politics; Thomas Greene, a liberal philanthropist who not only produced "open-ended scholarship"[45] but also knew how to keep the literary and the political apart; Northrop Frye, an unexpected activist who, like Greene, "left his political activism outside the classroom";[46] Edward Said, the secret conservative;[47] and Gayatri Spivak, who, though a pupil of Said and Derrida, performed a critique of deconstruction and post-coloniality from the vantage point of gender and class.

In the book's introduction and the conclusion, we also find a sprinkle of comments on the role of comparative literature in opposing ethnonationalism and on literature as a remedy for the bad habits fostered by capitalist societies (short attention spans, cheap cultural consumerism, and so on), but none of them take up more than a few sentences. (*Comparing the Literatures* would look very different if any of these were Damrosch's main concern.) Despite assertions that his latest monograph has a "much more pronounced political cast," [48] Damrosch's intuitions about the relation between the literary and the nonliterary remain subordinated to the monograph's unstated aim: defending the infinite and self-justifying task of discovering and rediscovering the globe from what he sees as an excessive and misguided concern with the margins.

The second normative axiom of *Comparing the Literatures* concerns the relationship between geoculture and literary value. In this regard, Damrosch seems to subscribe to Pascale Casanova's idea that good literature is essentially "autonomous—that is non-national, international."[49] By conflating the national and the political, the descriptive and the prescriptive, and myths and facts about Paris, all while collapsing the many meanings of literary autonomy, Casanova gives the impression that the only plausible motivation for writing literature in the modern world is the accumulation of international prestige; that local particularity (however locality is defined) is either a burden or a bankable resource in the quest for Parisian approval; and that literary history moves from particularity to universality and from realism and political commitment to aestheticism. Only by endorsing such views (whereby localism is equated to cultural submission) is it possible to see "La soledad de América Latina" as Damrosch does—a regression, a refusal by García Márquez of the autonomy/universality conferred upon him by the Nobel foundation, an aping of stereotypes meant to please the metropolitan gaze, *liqui liqui* and *sombrero vueltiao* into the bargain. For what can a neo-Orientalizing "Third World indigene" do other than Orientalize himself?

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Hoyos, *Things with a History*, 107.

[45] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 101.

[46] Ibid., 108.

[47] Ibid., 110.

[48] Ibid., 8.

[49] Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 22.

There is, however, a different, more charitable reading of García Márquez's affirmation of regional particularity, one that would acknowledge the validity and the value of his orientation toward the world. Such a reading would make space for simple human motivation—in García Márquez's case, the desire to write about his childhood in Colombia's Caribbean region,[50] which he realized was different from most other places he had come to know through his readings.[51] It would admit a reasonable, though fallible, generalization (Macondo's history as a synecdoche of Latin America's),[52] and it would have empathy for the strategy García Márquez pursued in "La soledad de América Latina": using his literary capital to advocate for his own region, one in which he saw (rightly or wrongly) new paths toward social justice.[53] None of this would imply a denial of the geographical and historical array of influences behind *Cien años de soledad* (from his grandmother, Tranquilina Iguarán Cotes de Márquez, to Virginia Woolf, colonial chronicles, and Caribbean folk music), of the independence of the literary imagination (which García Márquez defended),[54] of the problematic commodification of magical realism, or of García Márquez's inconsistent cultural politics. Such a reading would, however, require a proper historicization, like the one Mariano Siskind undertakes in *Cosmopolitan Desires*: a description of magical realism's material trajectories that acknowledges its international origins, the singularity of its practitioners, its affordances as a genre that marginal voices worldwide have successfully appropriated, and its limits as a literary commodity.[55] Still alive and well, magical realism produces in the twenty-first century gems such as Mati Diop's film *Atlantique* (*Atlantics*) (2019). At its worst, it produces Disney's *Encanto* (2021).

4. INCLUSION, EXCLUSION, AND THE TRANSNATIONAL TURN: WHY NEW CONCEPTS ARE NOT ENOUGH

I have dwelled on a few pages of Damrosch's lengthy tome because I believe that—other than providing insight into *Comparing the Literatures*' overall structure—his critical gesture exemplifies a wider phenomenon in transnational literary studies, especially in the area of Global Modernisms, which is of special interest to me. I want to return once more to Damrosch's justification for comparing Tolkien and García Márquez to assess it not in terms of its relation to *Comparing the Literatures* as a whole but in terms of what its author asks us to read and, implicitly, not to read.

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[50] Gabriel García Márquez, *El olor de la guayaba: Conversaciones con Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza* [The scent of guava: Conversations with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza] (Bogotá: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial, 2020), 103.

[51] Ibid., 72–74.

[52] Ibid., 104.

[53] Ibid., 142, 144.

[54] Ibid., 81–82.

[55] Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires*, 61 (see also 59–62): "Only a historical narrative of the actual spread of a given genre across the globe, an account of material and concrete encounters, appropriations, resignifications, and transformations, can inform its world literary stature. Genres and texts belong to world literature not because of what they are but rather because of what they do: because they perform global desires, because they further transcultural goals, and because they resist the immediacy of meaning as a function of the local, whether national or regional. Or rather, they are made to behave like this, under the gaze of world literary critics. This is why I insist on the notion of world literary interventions, world literary disruptions that alter the epistemic geographies of literary history to produce new, contingent (ephemeral or not) large-scale spatial assemblages, redrawing the boundaries of the world with each utterance."

I mentioned above that Damrosch is preoccupied with comparatists' neglect of Tolkien, a situation he describes with statistical precision.[56] His solution is to reengineer the concept of magical realism by providing a minimal definition ("a mixture of the magic and the realistic"[57]), further globalizing the term at the cost of diminishing its discriminatory power. But to do this, he must separate history from semantics; this means, in this case, discrediting García Márquez's cultural politics and obliviating Carpentier's strong regionalism. This separation entails not only a misreading of certain texts ("La soledad de América Latina" and "De lo real maravilloso Americano") but also the minoration of the individual structures of desire, belief, value, and justification that underlie them. These structures, moreover, acquire their meaning and become operational within that selfsame reality that García Márquez claims to index with his "magic." This reality is, for Damrosch, a secondary quality of magical realism as a literary phenomenon and a secondary concern, perhaps even an obstacle, for the literary scholar.

The evacuation of history becomes evident in Damrosch's minimalist definition, which refers to the transcendental domains (epistemology and ontology) while leaving the empirical (geopolitics) aside. What is thereby discarded from Damrosch's reconceptualization is not only the lives that García Márquez chose to evoke in his speech but also questions about peripherality and cultural identity that, for many Latin American writers, were in fact constitutive of the endeavor of writing and reading from the wars of independence to the mid-twentieth century.[58]

Given this hierarchy of domains, it is not surprising that for Damrosch the turn toward the marginal represents the unfortunate disruption of "integrated disagreements" between cosmopolitan academics. The problem, however, is that through its numerous references to postcolonial scholarship, *Comparing the Literatures* proudly telegraphs its own awareness of postcoloniality as a critical paradigm, yet the erasures I just described can be read as so many accidental disavowals. Damrosch submits that comparatists should transcend disciplinary labels, but his own approach to texts in *Comparing the Literatures* suggests there are differences in perspective and conviction—in other words, differences about *value*—that cannot be ecumenized. Indeed, despite its supposed neutrality, *Comparing the Literatures* is ultimately in the business of defending internal standards of literary and academic excellence (Tolkien's "greatness," the comparatist's "appreciation, deepened understanding, and … critical edge")[59] from the unsavory realities of culture as well as the aspiration to change those realities, however minimally. Autotelism then rejoins the supermarket fantasy of "cultural equivalence and substitutability" [60] by shunning principled discussions as to why one should take interest in the literatures of the world and therefore take a position ("restrictively" by definition) on the kind of person one wants to become by doing so and the kinds of communities one wishes to live in. It can therefore be said that while *Comparing the Literatures* hasn't strayed too far from the consumerist ethos for which World Literature has been criticized since Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* appeared in 2003, it has now absorbed present-day anxieties about humanists becoming too politicized.

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[56] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 265.

[57] Ibid., 263.

[58] See Carlos Alonso's brief historical introduction to the *criollista* novel (Carlos Alonso, "The Criollista Novel") in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Roberto Gonzalez Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 195–212.

[59] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 344.

[60] Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2013), 2.

To return to this article's initial concern, Damrosch's redefinition of magical realism raises questions about the nature of conceptuality, the interactions between the emic and etic dimensions of literary research, and whether literary scholars owe anything to a concept's history. It is also a case of a more general trend: the promise of greater plurality based on the reengineering of the conceptual apparatus of literary history (periodization, for instance) that ultimately reasserts, despite all good intentions, the linguistic and institutional dominance of the scholars putting forward the new concepts. This is so because their beliefs about literary value remain unchanged even as they alter their epistemological frameworks.

In the face of such a trend, I want to offer a consideration: when redefining literary historical notions such as "magical realism" it is helpful to ponder the redefinition's motivational structure as well as its pragmatic consequences. In this case, we could put two sets of statistics on a scale. On the one side, the number of *MLA* entries for Tolkien, representing his academic capital; on the other side, the lives tallied by García Márquez in "La soledad de América Latina." Then, we could consider that Damrosch's aim in divesting magical realism from its historical content is to raise Tolkien's academic capital by counterbalancing existing ideological biases. García Márquez's aim in identifying magical realism with Latin America's history, on the other hand, is to elicit solidarity with his region. Having established this, we could compare the pragmatic outcomes: in Damrosch's case, a renewed attention to Tolkien reflected in an increase of *MLA* entries; in García Márquez's, a heightened awareness of Latin America's issues, which recent events show are at once local and global. (I'm thinking, for instance, of Venezuela's migrant crisis, Chile's constitutional convention, and the rise and fall of Bolsonaro in Brazil.)

What to choose? More comparatists reading Tolkien, an author whose posterity is secured for the foreseeable future? Or a social and geopolitical awareness (ours, our students') regarding foreign lands (for Americans) that may or may not translate into meaningful change? The choice, of course, is up to each. My rather obvious point, however, is that what's at stake in our conceptualizations is not only, as with any concept, criteria for establishing identity and difference but also principles that guide what we read (more Tolkien, less García Márquez, less Carpentier), how well we read (what kind of evidence we appeal to and how much of it we think validates our claims), and finally how we imagine the effect of reading upon the world beyond the page.

To drive the point home, I want to offer a few additional examples in which implicit normative assumptions, sometimes bolstered by bold reconceptualizations, have resulted in "the exclusion" of marginal literary and scholarly production. Damrosch asserts that "American comparatists can be farseeing in their literary vision but oddly myopic in their scholarly attention, largely ignoring the world of comparative work beyond our borders."[61] If we agree with that observation and feel it is desirable not only to read more primary texts from around the world—and to read them well—but also to foster the circulation of more peripheral scholarship (theory, yes, but not just),[62] it might be advisable to develop as a first step some reflexivity about our normative assumptions.

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[61] Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 6.

[62] By using the term "world literary knowledges," Krishnaswamy attenuates the distinctions between "theory, poetics, aesthetics [and] criticism" (401). In so doing, she's inviting her readers to interrogate the meaning of theory and to make room for other modalities of thought: "The conceptual contributions of diverse cultural traditions across the globe, I contend, cannot properly be recognized or evaluated unless the domain of theory is extended beyond the formal explicit systematic meta-discourses of dominant, prestigious, textual traditions to include regional, subaltern, and popular epistemologies that may be 'emergent' (more informally

In the case of *Comparing the Literatures*, autototelism, a cosmopolitan universalism, and a strong admiration for Tolkien's achievements as a writer (per the opening section of "Worlds")[63] resulted in the underestimation of García Márquez's and Carpentier's statements about their own literary production and about the place of Latin America in the literary world. Similarly, in *The World Republic of Letters*, Casanova's wide-ranging account of the international distribution of literary prestige (what Christopher L. Hill has described as her "spatialized teleology"[64]) sometimes requires her to "[bend] the evidence to suit the model."[65] Subscribing to "the myth of autonomy"[66] while also redefining it in geocultural terms, Casanova gives an appearance of necessity to an aesthetic belief by approaching marginal texts selectively.

For example, she introduces Nicaragua's Rubén Darío as an example of a writer who imported the literary resources of the French language to increase the literary capital of Spanish American letters. While this characterization of Darío is correct, Casanova's claim that Darío coined the term *galicismo mental* (mental Gallicism) is false.[67] The term was coined by Juan Valera, a prominent Spanish critic. Having read Darío's *Azul . . .* (*Blue . . .*), the collection of poems and short stories that launched Darío's literary career, Valera wrote two letters to the writer that

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formulated; less fully systematized) or 'latent' (embryonic; embedded in praxis). This is not a call to abandon the study of formal poetics; rather, it is a call to expand the definition of theory and to relocate its study in the broader field of world literary knowledges." I would supplement Krishnaswamy's call to develop a more flexible concept of theory by advocating for the valorization of marginal scholarship that is not theory *at all*, that is, that does not seek to produce new concepts or offer generalizations. To the extent that description, interpretation, and theory are part and parcel of any intellectual endeavor, there is no self-evident reason why the circulation of scholarship across disciplinary, geographic, and linguistic boundaries should privilege the theoretical.

[63] The first section of "Worlds" is, in part, an encomium of Tolkien and his narrative achievements. For example: "Tolkien prepares for this dramatic event with *a carefully orchestrated crescendo* of details that he narrates in a mode of everyday realism, ensuring that we are fully inside his imaginary world before Hobbiton is invaded by dark forces of which most hobbits know nothing" (253); "Tolkien's hobbits, dwarves, and wizards are *compellingly believable* thanks to the *remarkable amplitude and completeness* of their world" (254); "More provided Utopia with a history, a map, and even a page showing the Utopian alphabet. *Yet Tolkien went far beyond him (and quite likely beyond any writer before or since) in creating an entire world beyond the pages of his novel*" (ibid.) (my emphasis).

[64] Christopher L. Hill, *Figures of the World: The Naturalist Novel and Transnational Form* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 16.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Jerome McGann, "Pseudodoxia Academica," *New Literary History* 39, no. 3 (2008): 651: "The factive inadequacy of Casanova's account does not measure a failure of scholarship, it marks her ideological purpose. Like the artwork that interests her, Casanova's discussion 'escape[s] the ordinary laws of history.' It isn't a history at all, it is a theory, and 'Paris' for her is a myth, 'a modern myth created by literature.' 'It is for this reason,' she then adds, 'that historical chronology is of little importance' (WRL 27). But if Paris is a myth escaping the ordinary laws of history, the myth is itself a historical formation and is important as such. It is clearly important if people put faith in the myth—or if they don't. Casanova's belief allows her to distinguish commercialized literary simulacra that 'mimic' the real thing—at any rate, allows her to believe that the myth of autonomy has this distinguishing power. But faith in the myth of autonomy has waned dramatically since 1930, even in the sphere of literature, as the names of Laura Riding, Flann O'Brien, and Nathanael West (among many others) testify. And it could easily be shown that a host of unbelievers throve very nicely throughout the Age of Aesthetic Faith. Contemporary art long since went so completely pagan that aesthetic autonomy shifted from an end to be sought to a stylistic resource—a set of procedures to be used as needed. This is the great insight and argument of Johanna Drucker's recent study, *Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity*. The book's cover design—Gregory Crewdson's stunning C-print Untitled (Ophelia)—tells the whole story. And of course there are the movies—the twentieth century's greatest scene of artistic practice: utterly commercial and profane in Casanova's frame of reference."

[67] Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 19.

were simultaneously complimentary, condescending, and filled with anxieties about Spain's cultural authority. Darío subsequently published those letters as a preface to the second edition of *Azul . . .*, giving a positive spin to what was originally meant as a barb. This abridgment of the history behind Darío's *galicismo mental* might seem harmless. Yet by taking Valera out of the picture, Casanova effaces the central role that the Spanish reception of Darío played on the first internationalization (in her terms, "autonomization") of Spanish America's literary production. Further, she makes no mention of Darío's literary trajectory, especially of his late poetry. Beginning with *Cantos de vida y de esperanza* (*Songs of Life and Hope*) (1905), his later work is characterized by an increased interest in political issues and in Spanish America's cultural identity. These few, well-known facts about Darío's career weaken the image of Paris as the prime meridian of literary development. They separate the city's privileged position within the nineteenth-century cultural imaginary from its institutional power as a granter of international prestige, well before Barcelona became the alternative literary capital of the Boom writers. They also reverse the teleology of *The World Republic of Letters*, with Darío becoming increasingly regionalist and politicized, especially after the Spanish-American War in 1898.[68]

To return to a shared example, Casanova also treats Carpentier's writings with convenient selectivity. To represent his ideas about the necessity of producing a Latin American vernacular literature, she chooses an early text, "América ante la joven literatura Europea" ("America Facing Europe's Young Literature") (1931), instead of his most famous programmatic statement, "De lo real maravilloso Americano" (1948).[69] Like the later essay, "América ante la joven literatura Europea" insists on the need to produce a literature that gives expression to a specifically Latin American sensitivity. However, "América ante la joven literatura Europea" proposes a less antagonistic relation to Europe. In this essay, the old continent comes to the assistance of the new one by offering a repertoire of techniques and sundry models of literary excellence to its writers. The choice of this early essay reinforces Casanova's depiction of France (here, Europe) as a necessary and paradoxical oppressor that lends the literary resources needed for the emancipation of dominated cultures via "the importation of literary techniques and expertise."[70]

A few additional examples, this time from modernist studies, follow. As Bashir Abu-Manneh notes in "Global Capitalism and the Novel," there exists a value differential between modernist and realist texts, whereby modernism is deemed to have "a monopoly on experimentation and literary innovation."[71] This hierarchy is reflected in remarks such as those of Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers in *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea*: "For our part, we will remain agnostic about the term 'modernism' and we will not seek to provide or privilege a single definition of the term. Instead, we will offer a history of the way it has been used, of its power and its incoherence, both of which have traveled globally in ways that a term like 'Naturalism' did not."[72] But these prejudices regarding the global travels of Naturalism as a term and as a literary school don't match any historical reality. As Christopher Hill shows in *Figures of the World: The Naturalist Novel and Transnational Form*, Naturalism, which presents definitional challenges similar to those described by Latham and Rogers, also circulated widely. In addition to France, many countries—Portugal, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Serbia, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the United States, Japan, China, and Korea—fell to its sway to varying degrees.[73] Latham and Rogers's implicit beliefs about the prestige and circulation of modernism consign to oblivion entire swaths of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century realist fiction (broadly defined) from across the world.

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[68] Cathy Jrade, "Modernist Poetry," in *Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Echevarría and Pupo-Walker, 7–68.

[69] Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 222–23, 232–35.

[70] Ibid., 232.

[71] Bashir Abu-Manneh, "Global Capitalism and the Novel," *Modernism/modernity Print Plus* 2, no. 4 (January 4, 2018), https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0034.

[72] Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers, *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 13.

Another work we can productively put into conversation with Hill's monograph on Naturalism is Susan Stanford Friedman's *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time*.[74] As Christopher Bush has pointed out in his gracious book review, Friedman's expansive definition of modernism and modernity partly rests on another unwarranted normative assumption—that to recognize the agency and innovativeness (in other words, the aesthetic value) of, say, Congo's Mbuya masks or Japan's Ukiyo-e paintings, one needs to call them "modernist."[75] On this point of contention, Bush observes the following:

> Does not the notion of planetary modernisms across time risk becoming the ultimate form of cultural imperialism? Do all non-European people and places want to be or have been "modern," much less for their cultures to be or have been "modernism"? It is one thing to oppose denying "modernity" to those who value and claim it, but quite another to tell more or less everyone that they have more or less always been modern. Friedman is well aware of the concern, but concludes that it is "better to risk expansionism than to perpetuate the Eurocentric box" (317). But surely same-old, same-old Eurocentrism and a time-and-space-slaying universal modernity are not the only two options. Worse still, aren't these sometimes the same thing?[76]

Indeed, Friedman's conceptualization of literary modernity, meant to make modernist studies more inclusive,[77] is, *nolens volens,* perilously close to intellectual imperialism. This imperialism is mirrored in *Planetary Modernisms*' conclusion, titled "A Debate with Myself." In a performance of intellectual vulnerability, Friedman anticipates objections to her research agenda, framing a scholarly dialogue as a troubled inner monologue and presenting questions of investigative soundness as a matter of individual resolution. And in the same way that Friedman's conclusion is monologic, her list of secondary sources—largely composed of Anglo-American secondary texts, French theory, and non-Western texts translated into English—is monolingual. Friedman vindicates this monolingualism by underscoring the creative power of translation and its role in making new archives available. She also emphasizes the advantages of having English as an academic lingua franca.[78] But she forgets to mention that "most often, theoretical work written in the marginalized languages of the world republic of theory does not get translated into major languages and does not circulate, thus being left in its national arena, to be a part of the study of national literature in those countries," as Chen Bar-Itzhak reminds us in "Intellectual Captivity: Literary Theory, World Literature, and the Ethics of Interpretation."[79] Friedman's *Planetary Modernisms*, then, advocates for the constitution of a maximal modernist archive, while remaining epistemically circumscribed to what is available in English ("world lit without world lit crit"[80]). The outcome is a theorization of literary modernity that occurs without the intellectual participation of those whose social and aesthetic experiences the concept of modernity supposedly elucidates. In contrast, Christopher Hill's *Figures of the World*, with its inductive approach, is more modest in its conceptual claims: "Regarding 'world literature,' theory is best when it follows practice. Let's do some research, then start talking."[81] Yet the monograph's geographical scope is wide (France, the United States, and Japan), it pays careful attention to interactions between narrative form and context, and its conclusions are grounded in a substantial archive of secondary scholarship written in three languages (French, English, and Japanese).

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[73] Hill, *Figures of the World*, 7–9, 17–38.

[74] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[75] Ibid., 66–68.

[76] Christopher Bush, review of "Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time," by Susan Stanford Friedman, *Modernism/modernity* 23, no. 3 (2016): 687.

[77] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms,* 311: "Planetary Modernisms is not a manifesto, though it may at times read like one. My intent has been to provoke more debate, not close it off. The book is an effort in speculation, where the central task is how to move from a provincial Western perspective with a predetermined archive of modernism to a more expansive—indeed, planetary—perspective that opens doors for a cosmopolitan framework that resists homogenization and recognizes the heterogeneity of geohistorical patterns of different modernities and their modernisms in the longue durée."

A final case, the most interesting by far, is Eric Hayot's decade-long endeavor to rethink some of the basic concepts of literary history. In *On Literary Worlds* (2011), Hayot opens with the claim that the most insidious aspect of Eurocentrism is Eurochronology, a developmentalist perception of historical times that leads "the profession" to valorize originality ("being first") and therefore take less seriously all the literary production that resulted from "the non-West": "As long as the categories governing the profession's sense of literary history insist on the vital importance of such notions as originality, novelty, progress—being first, in short—then we are essentially doomed by the fact that Haroldo de Campos read James Joyce, and not the other way around, to tell a progressive history of aesthetic innovation in which the contributions of the non-West remain supplemental, or constitute thematic appendixes to form."[82] His solution is to complement our current literary-historical vocabulary with a "system of structural differences" that, through a redistribution of the narrative features Hayot associates to each periodizing terms ("realism," "romanticism," "modernism"), defamiliarizes literary history and opens up new possibilities for research.

I will not engage here with the intricacies of Hayot's arguments about modernity, worldedness, and literary form. I will only observe that the research program laid out in *On Literary Worlds* has little appeal outside of the disciplinary space Hayot occupies as a comparatist studying Western perceptions of China, who is also theoretically grounded in the Franco-Anglo-German tradition. I struggle to imagine someone, say, in a Spanish and Portuguese department aching to find out whether the regionalist novel is world-affirming (realist) or world-creating (romantic), or anyone being particularly anxious about the reputation of Haroldo de Campos, whose work, for Brazilianists, needs no justification (the popularity of Portuguese in a college setting and its academic capital are another matter).[83] The reason is not a possible lack of dialogue between scholars in different literature departments, nor the unenlightened state of those laboring in the fields of foreign languages in the United States. It is rather that the set of questions that generally moves one foreign language department does not necessarily move another (there are, of course, many overlaps, though "the profession," it seems, is less unified than Hayot allows). This is due, at least in part, to differences in the historical experiences, values (again), and intellectual frameworks underlying the formation and transformation of these fields, which are compounded by their minoritarian status.

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[78] Ibid., 315.

[79] Chen Bar-Itzhak, "Intellectual Captivity," *Journal of World Literature* 5, 1 (2020): 86.

[80] Revathi Krishnaswamy, "Toward World Literary Knowledges: Theory in the Age of Globalization," *Comparative Literature* 62, no. 4 (2010): 400.

[81] Hill, *Figures of the World*, xiv.

[82] Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, 6.

Scholarly indifference does not seem to matter much for the research agenda Hayot advances in *On Literary Worlds*, which could conceivably be carried out by a single scholar, not necessarily a specialist, with the help of a good translation and much time on her hands. Indeed, linguistic specificity and contextual granularity carry little weight in Hayot's neostructuralist agenda for modernist scholars, a bug (or a feature) he acknowledges in his introduction and more obliquely in later essays such as "Against Historicist Fundamentalism." But one doesn't need to side with Hayot's foils (close readers in the introduction and "historicist fundamentalists") to notice that some modes of reading are more conducive than others to the genuine ignorance, receptivity, and transformation that constitute one of the promises of transnational and crosslinguistic humanistic work. Less loftily, some modes of reading do require an open-ended dialogue with an other (even if that other is but the colleague in Spanish and Portuguese typing away next door) and therefore promote greater circulation of ideas that are foreign to one's habitual intellectual space. It is telling that Hayot feels the need to test his system of structural difference against "established classics of the modern European canon" and that the book's list of references is dominated by Anglo-American scholarship and French and German philosophy in translation, most of it thematizing the European literary tradition. It follows that the "non-West" is something to think about but not necessarily to think with. Hence, *On Literary Worlds*, like Friedman's *Planetary Modernisms*, promises greater inclusion but ends up legitimizing a strange conceit of Global Modernisms at its earliest moments: to wit, that the existence of a field with such a name in English makes its practitioners potentially responsible for and entitled to all the literature from the fifteenth century onward.[84] As a consequence, the drive to decenter the Anglo-European literary canon paradoxically reasserts its epistemic dominance.

Things are changing, however. Global Modernisms is currently morphing into Comparative Modernisms, which means, in practice, that modernity and its cognates are just another basis for comparative work.[85] Hayot himself took a different direction when he edited *A New Vocabulary for Global Modernism* with Rebecca Walkowitz in 2016.[86] It is nonetheless instructive to elucidate the set of values that might have led Hayot to devise *On Literary Worlds*, which appears most clearly in Hayot's polemic against Pauline Yu, Michelle Yeh, Cecile Chu-chin Sun, and Stephen Owen in "Against Historicist Fundamentalism," published in 2016.[87] Following a Derridean line of argument, Hayot rightly remarks that difference (in this case, between Chinese and "Western" poetry) is a matter of scale and classificatory frameworks:

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[83] Among foreign languages, Portuguese is ranked eleventh in terms of enrollment numbers according to an MLA report published in 2016. See Dennis Looney and Natalia Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Final Report*, Modern Language Association, June 2019, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED599007.pdf.

[84] In the most expansive formulations of the transnational turn, such as Friedman's and Hayot's.

[85] See Jeanne-Marie Jackson's "Modernism after Modernism," her editorial statement for *Modernism/modernity*'s "Field Reports," *Modernism/modernity Print Plus* 4, no. 3 (October 25, 2019), https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/modernism-after-modernism.

[86] In *A New Vocabulary for Global Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), editors Eric Hayot and Rebecca Walkowitz seek to find out "what happens to the foundational concepts of modernism and to the methods we bring to modernist studies when we approach the field globally." Here, Hayot takes the opposite approach to the one he advocated for in *On Literary Worlds*. But now he and Walkowitz face a new challenge, since

> the distinction between multiplicity and singularity, in profane space, is essentially a matter of the distribution of available categories and a set of preferences for analysis at a certain level. Apples and oranges are only fundamentally different if one groups them by taste, color, or species; classed as fruit they resemble each other more than either resembles the Taj Mahal or a goat. Whether things are the same or different does not depend on a fixed idea in the world. It depends on the way of taking.[88]

Armed with this observation, Hayot proceeds to chastise the editors of *The Lyric Theory Reader*, Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins,[89] for "the exclusion of the classical poetry of Africa, East Asia, and South Asia from the theorization of the lyrics as such."[90] Respect for difference, the argument goes, amounts to solipsism, as it "reproduces the picture of the world we already have"[91] by denying foreign objects the power to change thought. In other words, theorization is the ultimate gesture of inclusion and intellectual hospitality; becoming the object of theory, made in USA, the most desirable badge of recognition for peripheral literatures. It is in a similar spirit that Hayot declares in *On Literary Worlds* that his aim in redefining realism, romanticism, and modernism is to "lay out a minimalist set of *logical* responses" to what he calls "the modern worldview,"[92] a set that contains nothing less than "the empty slots and possibilities that necessarily obtain in relation to all propositions, and hence to all human communities in which propositions are made."[93] Such ambitions reveal Hayot's disciplinary values in 2016 (i.e., the valorization of theory), which, like Friedman's choice of modernism as a term of aesthetic praise, legitimize the transmutation of marginal literatures into the global modernist's academic capital in a way that's reminiscent of Moretti's problematic dictum: "foreign lit" and "US theory." In an interview for this journal, Hayot declares that the Wallersteinian prospect of "the center extract[ing] resources (. . . ideas, local color, etc.) from the periphery and turn[ing] those into finished products that it then sells back" misrepresents the logic of literary circulation. He admits nonetheless to be sensitive to its appeal.[94]

My purpose here is not to reassess works whose strengths and weaknesses have been, for the most part, firmly established. I only wish to surmise that while we might be aware of the

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what the concepts gain in this new vocabulary in scholarly refinement, they lose in portability. "Context," "Form," and "War" read less as encyclopedic entries than as essays centered on a modernist topos and therefore can't work as "paradigms," though they might be excellent introductions to a series of relevant topics. Further, the volume is still firmly rooted in the anglophone sphere, with ten of its contributors researching Anglo-American literatures.

[87] Eric Hayot, "Against Historicist Fundamentalism," *PMLA* 131, No. 5 (October 2016): 1414–22.

[88] Hayot, "Against Historicist Fundamentalism," 1416.

[89] Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

[90] Hayot, Ibid., 1418.

[91] Hayot, Ibid., 1419.

[92] Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, p. 121.

[93] Idem.

[94] Eric Hayot and Rebecca Walkowitz, "Peripheral Modernisms: Editors' Roundtable," *Dibur Literary Journal* 9–10 (2021): 241–46, https://arcade.stanford.edu/dibur/peripheral-modernisms-—-editors-roundtable.

epistemic and ethical risks we incur in projecting our conceptual frameworks onto distant places and times, in some circumstances, our aesthetic and intellectual values continue to shape our archives in ways that "exclude through inclusion."[95] This is especially the case whenever those values are seemingly validated by the historical shorthands (such as autonomy and originality) that have traditionally subtended our attempts to characterize aesthetic modernity. The consequences of these exclusions are not only the perpetuation of a mindset that denies marginal cultures and institutional spaces the capacity to produce knowledge but also the loss of epistemic qualities such as accuracy and the richness and plurality of world literary knowledge, which is a source of innovation and complexity.[96]

5. CONCLUSION: HISTORICIZING LITERARY VALUE

In "Intellectual Captivity," Bar-Itzhak urges literary scholars to follow the footsteps of anthropologists and become reflexive about their own positionality, the state of the field, and the influence of both on their choice of archives.[97] I would add that to do so, we might need to give more credit to the idea that literary works are artifacts meant to serve a wide variety of purposes and therefore should be submitted to equally various literary and extraliterary standards. This proposition has been advanced most forcefully by Barbara Herrnstein Smith in "Contingencies of Value"[98] and has been recently reformulated by Nicholas Paige in the introduction to *Technologies of the Novel*.[99] Its corollary, I believe, is that those seeking to make descriptive claims about the social embeddedness of literary works distant in time and space must be sensitive to and curious about the mesh of functions and standards belonging to their normative horizons, or what Herrnstein Smith calls "value" tout court.

> Like its price in the marketplace, the value of an entity to an individual subject is also the product of the dynamics of an economic system, specifically the personal economy constituted by the subject's needs, interests, and resources—biological, psychological, material, and experiential. Like any other economy, moreover, this too is a continuously fluctuating or shifting system, for our individual needs, interests, and resources are themselves functions of our continuously changing states in relation to an environment that may be relatively stable but is never absolutely fixed. The two systems are, it may be noted, not only analogous but also interactive and interdependent; for part of our environment is the market economy, and, conversely, the market economy is comprised, in part, of the diverse personal economies of individual producers, distributors, consumers, and so forth.[100]

To the extent that the functions and standards we attach to literary works are responsive both to the economy of needs and desires of individuals and to larger economic, cultural, and sociopolitical structures, this normative horizon cannot be reduced to the judgements and overall psychology of an author (to the extent we have access to them); rationalizing programmatic statements; the axiological force of literary devices; or historical categories such as periods, movements, and abstract ideological formations. Rather, the normative horizon of a literary work is shaped by the intersection of the contextual, the formal, and the explicitly prescriptive; it is rife with contradictions and ironies and continuously shifting, even within the body of work of a single writer; it is plural and contingent.

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[95] Hoyos, *Things with a History*, 108.

[96] Bar-Itzhak, "Intellectual Captivity," 106.

[97] Ibid., 101.

[98] Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 1 (1983): 1–35.

[99] Nicholas D. Paige, *Technologies of the Novel: Quantitative Data and the Evolution of Literary Systems* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[100] Smith, "Contingencies of Value," 11–12.

A sensitivity to the normative horizon of literary works necessitates those cognitive acts that Glenn Most has identified with historicization (to be distinguished from historicism): defamiliarization, recontextualization, and narrativization.[101] However, the sensitivity I am advocating for does not presume that the "essence" of a literary text is determined by where it came from historically.[102] It does not require that we establish a hierarchy between the context of origin and the potentially infinite contexts in which a work is reactualized and resignified for readerly, creative, or intellectual purposes. It also does not entail a vision of "history as a box," as Rita Felski proclaims.[103] On the contrary, my emphasis on the ethical and, under certain circumstances (certainly not automatically), political import of historicizing literary value as a way of keeping our normative biases in check is a presentist argument.[104] It is concerned with the question of epistemic justice, in other words, of how nationally, linguistically, culturally, and institutionally marginalized perspectives are denied credibility (testimonial injustice) and remain uninvited to the conversations where comparatists fashion their shared hermeneutic resources to make sense of a variety of social experiences (hermeneutic injustice).[105]

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[101] Glenn Most, "Historicization Reconsidered," in *Historisierung: Begriff—Geschichte—Praxisfelder* [Historicization: concept—history—fields of practice] (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2016), 37: "Historicization can be defined as a specific mode of cognitive activity which defines a body of knowledge and in so doing determines that it is constituted in its essential meaning by its temporal structure. This cognitive activity has three moments or aspects which may be termed defamiliarization, recontextualization, and narrativization. In the act of defamiliarization one takes out of the world within which one lives an element whose validity can be said to have been unquestioned up to a certain point, and instead one finds it strange. One no longer accepts its validity as self-evident or natural on the basis of previous legitimations; one declares that it is in need of new explanation and justification. Then, in a second step, one provides an explanation for that defamiliarized element by recontextualizing it, that is, by depreciating the present context within which it was located and putting the emphasis instead upon a different explanatory context. There are any number of such explanatory contexts that one might think of; what is specific to the act of historicization is that it resituates the defamiliarized element within the context of its origin and asserts that its essence is determined by where it came from historically, its moment of origin. This removal of an element from the present and its recontextualization within the situation of its origin creates a temporal gap between two moments, the present in which one finds oneself and the past which one has reconstituted as an origin. Such a gap inevitably creates a pressure to develop narratives which could bridge the distance between that past and this present, both small narratives about the particular situation of the origin in which the questionable element came about and larger narratives linking that origin to the present. Whether or not there is a necessary and intrinsic link between historicization and narrativization (as some have questioned but as I for one tend to accept), there is certainly an observable and explicable tendency for the two to be strongly correlated with one another."

[102] Ibid.

[103] Rita Felski, "Context Stinks!" *New Literary History* 42, no. 4 (2011): 577.

[104] In the sense advocated for by Wai Chee Dimock in "Historicism, Presentism, Futurism," *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 133, 2 (2018): 257: "Unlike mainstream historicism, however, presentism turns to the past not as a discrete object of knowledge but as a relational process, interactively generated through the connectivity as much as the gulf between two poles of analysis. Capturing this two-way track requires concepts such as resonance, elasticity of scale, and alternating tenses. Going forward by looking back, such a presentism frees itself from its own oppressive moment by 'being in touch with the temporally distant past or future' (110)." An orientation toward the future—an answerability to and a reparative impulse toward what is anyone's guess—might turn out to be the mediating ground on which presentism and historicism could meet, just as it might be the mediating ground on which different subfields of literary studies could be purposefully gathered.

Being sensitive to differences in normative horizons has benefits for comparatists. It can clarify our own normative expectations about the literary works we engage in, about literary activity more generally, and about worldly issues of all kinds. And, more important, it might help us accomplish a constructive goal. In his introduction to *Provincializing Europe*, Chakrabarty explains the meaning of "provincializing" as follows: "The point is not to reject social science categories but to release into the space occupied by particular European histories sedimented in them other normative and theoretical thought enshrined in other existing life practices and their archives. For it is only in this way that we can create plural normative horizons specific to our existence and relevant to the examination of our lives and their possibilities."[106]

I want to end by making a connected suggestion. Yes, accessing a plurality of normative horizons can help us better understand what we individually value. It can also prompt us to undertake a second-order evaluation of our normative commitments—be they epistemological, aesthetic, ethical, or political—and thereby help us to envision new possibilities for our individual and collective lives. Such reevaluations might be important, especially if we agree with Boaventura De Sousa Santos's contention that the contemporary world is continually raising "strong questions" that need "strong answers," answers that implicate "the societal and epistemological paradigm that has shaped the current horizon of possibilities within which we fashion our options, the horizon within which certain options are possible while others are excluded or even unimaginable."[107] In that case, thinking transnationally could help us move beyond valuing what we already know (or understanding better what we already value) and assist us in learning to value what we cannot fully understand. A

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[105] I draw the concepts of "testimonial" and "epistemic" injustice from Miranda Fricker's *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

[106] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, reissue, with a new preface by the author (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 20.

[107] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 20.