European Journal of Literary Studies
ISSN: 2601–971X
ISSN-L: 2601–971X
Available on-line at: http://www.oapub.org/lit

DOI: 10.46827/ejls.v6i1.630 Volume 6 | Issue 1 | 2025

'WRITE LOCAL, SELL GLOBAL': ANTHOLOGIZING THE WORLD LITERATURE DEBATES

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Abstract:
This paper is an attempt to draw the contours of the ongoing debates surrounding World Literature, and the multifarious theoretical articulations endeavouring to formulate cogent understandings of the actual global literary ecology. The transnational, translinguistic and transcultural vocation of World Literature as a new field is not only problematized but equally energized by the constant straddling of the 'littérature - monde' over the local and the global. Yet, fascinating as it is, this radiating worlding is not as natural as it might seem, as it thrives on a complex intersectionality, networking monopoly capital, marketeering and cultural mediation. Such a complexity is forcibly transferred to the debates surrounding World Literature, which by and large tend to replicate the theoretical density and looseness rampant in the field, generating not only critical sophistication, but scholarly anxiety as well.

Keywords: World Literature, debates, local/global, anxiety, globalization

1. Introduction

> *"Importing a literary work from one national field to another means that the work will be received out of the context of its creation, opening up a large space for interpretation and strategies of appropriation through labeling, prefaces, critics, etc, which can be understood only in light of the specific issues at stakes in the reception field."* (Bourdieu 'Social Conditions'; Damrosch) (Gisèle Sapiro, 2016 :90)

> *"Writers of postcolonial nations on the periphery of international literary space have to struggle not only against the predominance of national politics, as writers in the richest spaces do, but also against international literary forces. The external forces exerted upon the least endowed literary spaces today assume the forms of linguistic domination and economic domination (notably in the form of foreign control over publishing), which is why proclamations of national independencies do not suffice to eliminate outside pressures. To*

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one degree or another, then, literary relations of power are forms of political relations of power." (Pascale Casanova, 1999: 81).

In the 'World Republic of Letters' to invoke Pascale Casanova's notorious phrase, a conspicuously 'entrepreneurial and bulimic' world (Emily Apter, 2013: 347), minor literatures are gaining substantial visibility in their race to join a 'littérature-monde' which is purposefully stretching the international canon to make room for lesser known authors and literary traditions. While much scholarship of World Literature addresses cultural otherness as a key aspect in apprehending the discourse of globalization, 'a triumphalist discourse' according to Sharae Deckard (2012), this impulse basically translates a demand for otherness to nurture a global market thirsty for exoticism. This literary cosmopolitanism and the contingent fetishisation of 'cultural alterity' it generates, is a rather recent concern in Western academic circles, as we witness in recent debates of World Literature a redirection of emphasis to nascent and rather understudied issues, namely the political economy of literature, market logics and the global commodification of alterity in non-Western fiction, along with the decisive part played by translation in disseminating and circulating off-center literature on a global scale. The irresistible yet highly questionable call to match cosmopolitan market tastes uncovers significant imbalances between major and minor literatures, picking thus on the vexed issue of literary capital formation, for according to Pascale Casanova's contention: 'small literatures are challenged by a problematic relation to world literary space because they lack literary capital.' (Casanova, 1999) Thus, if World literature is 'a spectre haunting the discipline of postcolonial studies' to quote Sharae Deckard's rather dismissive vignette (Deckard, 2014), or else the 'literature of the capitalist world system' (Franco Moretti, 2013), the global literary landscape is manifestly governed by market dynamics that reveal growing literary and cultural consumerism, ultimately reducing fictional works to marketable goods while aiming at the enactment of a hegemonic worldliness within the local/global dialectic.

Substantially, 'The Sociology of Literature' as a new concept first introduced by Pierre Bourdieu in his foundational work *Cultural Capital* (1986)- seems to have inspired a whole generation of critics beyond the hexagonal borders. Scholars as prestigious as Pascale Casanova, Gisèle Sapiro, Graham Huggan, James English, Sarah Brouillette, David Damrosch, Arjun Appadurai, Aamir Mufti, Emily Apter, Djelal Kadir, Theo D'haen, Francesca Orsini, Sandra Pozanesi, Timothy Brenan, Debjani Ganjuli, Franco Moretti, Ana Christina Mendes, Didier Coste or Alexander Beecroft, to name but a few - obviously labouring under a sense of belatedness as much as they are all indebted to Bourdieusian theoretical findings- have all recycled Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, not only in investigating the material conditions of literary creation and its implications on the production, circulation and consumption of postcolonial and diasporic texts, but foremost in enriching the discussion on World Literature and the concomitant nagging controversies over canonization, prize institutions, (un)translatability, etc.

1.1 Damrosch and circulation

It is veritably a genuine theoretical tour de force for any contemporary critic to eschew the 'scholarly panic' David Damrosch (2003) rightly cautions against, since: 'The dramatic acceleration of globalization since their era, however, has greatly complicated the idea of world literature. Most immediately, the sheer scope the term today can breed a kind of scholarly panic' (Damrosch, 2003: 4). In emphasizing the incommensurability of scope and the multiplication of 'perplexities' or the 'epistemological and methodological anxieties'- to borrow from Arjun Appadurai (1996)- that critics, comparatists and World Literature theorists have to grapple with in the age of the 'Disneyfication of the globe' (Damrosch, 2003: 18), Damrosch along with many other practitioners in the discipline obviously point not so much to the complexities and tensions inherent in the province of World Literature, as to the collaborative nature of the field as a fait accompli. Not only does such an inflection in the debate stress the interdisciplinary vocation of the precinct of World Literature, but it also foregrounds its translocal, transcultural, transtemporal and translinguistic concerns. Indeed, 'what World literature needs today is to address the 'megarhetoric' of globalization' (Appadurai, 1996) in the new millennium, an age of rampant literary globalism with emerging literary traditions; in this respect, Indian critic Debjani Ganguli furnishes us with a two-fold reading:

> 'Literary globalism for our age is envisioned in two ways: as a field of transnational production, circulation and reception of literary texts in a world radically transformed by a high-velocity interconnectivity, itself a qualitative innovation that gives this new century its identity: and as a discipline that demands new theoretical and methodological approaches that go beyond the Eurocentric underpinnings of the comparative literature discipline and the Nation/Empire models of the last century.' (Debjani Ganguli, 2008 :119).

What such an understanding underscores is the conception of World Literature first as production that materializes in mobile texts crossing borders, and inexorably managed by market dynamics and global trade, and second as an intellectual enterprise, supposed to address the ramifications and anxieties inherent in the field as such. In this context, circulation becomes a sine qua non condition for inclusion in the international canon, an issue widely addressed by David Damrosch, who is adamant that 'I take World Literature to encompass works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language (…).' In its most expansive sense, World Literature could include any work that has ever reached beyond its home base' (Damrosch, 2003: 4). Conversely, critic Francesca Orsini would not rest content with circulation and translatability as aesthetic parameters to gauge the worldliness of texts, she rightly argues that crossing borders is by no means a valid criterion to acquire recognition:

> 'What is problematic to me in this formulation is the implication that what does not circulate, or is not translated, is not part of World Literature (…….) If the work

> does not circulate even after it gets translated, the implication is that it does not stand on its own in the eyes of 'World readers' (…….) By implication, then, if the world system is indeed one, then what is not translated must be somewhat deficient, speak only to the local or provincial tastes, be distant in space-time from the here-now.' (Orsini, 2018: 349)

In further distilling the wide-ranging array of arguments incessantly animating the polemic on World Literature, Damrosch attends to the much-contested question of canonization in an age that is 'postcanonical in much the same way that it is post-industrial' (David Damrosch, 2006: 44). In *World Literature in a Postcanonical Age Hypercanonical Age* (2006), he actually distinguishes three types of canons:

> 'Our new system has three levels: a hypercanon, a countercanon, and a shadow canon. The hyper canon is populated by the older 'major' authors who have held their own or even gained ground over the past twenty years. The countercanon is composed of the subaltern 'contestatory' voices of writers in languages less commonly taught in minor literatures within great-power languages. Many, even most, of the old major authors coexist comfortably with these new arrivals to the new neighborhood, very few of whom have yet accumulated anything like their fund of cultural capital. Far from being threatened by these familiar neighbors, the old major authors gain new vitality from association with them, and only rarely do they need to admit one of them directly into their club.' (Damrosch, 2006: 45)

There is no doubt that Damrosch's categorization alerts us to the hegemony of the Western hypercanon where 'as in today's economy, the richest of the rich get richer still' (Damrosch, 2006: 40), yet it unequivocally laments the way postcolonial studies and World Literature are replicating the same hypercanonical bias when dealing with minor authors and texts by truncating whole literary traditions for a single author, who comes to be the 'representative' of a whole nation :

> 'The disparities of attention are more dramatic still when it comes to World Literature, given these severe pressures of time and numbers involved. If we define 'World Literature' for this purpose as works that are read and discussed beyond home-country and area-specialist audiences, we see the hypercanon extending far beyond older fields formerly closely held by the New Criticism and its offshoots. In World Literature, as in some literary Miss Universe competition, an entire nation may be represented by a single author: Indonesia, the world's fifth largest country and the home of ancient and ongoing cultural traditions, is usually seen, if at all, in the person of Pramoedya Amanta Toer. Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortazar divide the honors for Mr Argentina.' (Damrosch, 2006: 48)

This deliberately reductionist attitude in dealing with minor literatures compromises Western scholarship, and further problematizes the exclusion and

inclusion processes at work in Western academia through which it continues still today not only to shape the international canon, but also to foster and manipulate tastes globally. So Damrosch asks: 'what does it really mean to speak of a 'World Literature? Which literature, whose world?' (Damrosch, 2003: 1). In trying to draw the contours of a much problematic field, he dispells any misunderstandings from the start:

> …world Literature is not at all fated to disintegrate into the conflicting multiplicity of separate national traditions, nor on the other hand, need it be swallowed up in the white noise that Janet Abu Lughod has called' global babble'. My claim is that world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading that is applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and New discovering alike…… It is important from the outset to realize that just as there never has been a single set canon of world literature, so too no single way of reading can be appropriate to all texts…….The variability of a work of world literature is one of its constitutive features, one of its greatest strengths when the work is well presented and read well, and its greatest vulnerability when it is mishandled or misappropriated by its newfound foreign friends. (Damrosch, 2003: 5)

Such a definition sounds much like an echo of Djelal Kadir's exhortation to 'World' World Literature, which for him is 'nothing more than a product of our engagement in notional or narrative acts of worlding' (Djelal Kadir, 2004: 6). The act of 'Worlding'- antithetical to 'globalizing'- actually bestows 'historical density' on literature. By the same token, Damrosch's rendition problematizes the centrality of canon as a prerequisite in gaining the label of World Literature, and thereby calls into question this latter by shifting the focus on reading or reception and incidentally on production, as mechanisms liable to confer 'density' to minor texts; Damrosch is perfectly aware that: 'the problem of reception is compounded today by questions of production as well. In recent decades, a growing proportion of works has been produced for foreign consumption' (Damrosch, 2003: 18). In another instance, he takes stock of the real incentives behind the production and dissemination of particular texts, and rightly argues that: 'Foreign works will rarely be translated at all in the United States, much less widely distributed, unless they reflect American concerns and fit comfortably with American images of the foreign culture in question' (Damrosch, 2003: 18). While drawing attention to the intricate role of translation and its complicity in disseminating and domesticating peripheral texts, Damrosch timidly engages with market logics or global consumerism, without really exploring the complexities inherent to it. One can safely conjecture that three major features seem to scaffold Damrosch's venture; first the contention that 'World literature is an elliptical refraction of national literatures', second, a text is wordly if it 'gains in translation' and finally 'World literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading; a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time' (Debjani Ganguli, 2008: 123). For Debjani again, 'Damrosch's formulation also situates the practice of World

literature firmly at a distance from canon-making imperatives that either promote a vapid universalism or privilege a particular genre, region or period, both efforts ultimately proving reductive in their outcomes. Again, he resists the dichotomies of centring/ decentring, Western/ non-Western and old world/ new worlds by recommending elliptical modes of circulation and reading that are generated from two foci at once.' (Debjani, 2008 :123). Still, apart from circulation, the question remains what makes a text global? How does a literary work acquire the cachet of World Literature? What aesthetic criteria is a text supposed to meet to become globe-trotting?

In his pioneering study, *What is World Literature* (2003), Damrosch contends that any text is eligible to be a candidate for world literature and earn its global status if it meets specific parameters: interpretive flexibility, liability to alternate readings, and ability to be radically recontextualized. Canadian critic Sarah Brouillette reads Damrosch's championing of the uniqueness of both literary works and reading experiences as totally compatible with the capitalist spirit: 'Indeed Damrosch's own project of insisting that every literary work is unique, and that every act of consumption of a literary work is irreducible to any other, is highly compatible with contemporary capitalism's fetish for particularity and diversity.' (Brouillette, 2014 :1).

Taken as a whole and despite all the charges levelled against it, Damrosch's contribution is beyond doubt an enlightening and perceptive addition to the World Literature debate as it furnishes new paradigms in understanding the complexities of the field, and opens up new vistas in the enquiry about the effects of globalization on literature and reading as a praxis. Theorist Theo D'haen does not miss to laud its dynamic nature when he declares: 'David Damrosch has championed an alternative and dynamic approach to World Literature that focuses on circulation' (Theo D'haen, 2012: 1).

1.2 Pascale Casanova and Literary Space

Four years earlier, in her 1999 monumental study, *The World Republic of Letters*, French critic Pascale Casanova gives the debate a different dimension and situates the stakes in the realm of space and the cartography of literary capital. Thus, she addresses the world of global literature driven by invisible and 'unsuspected' forces through a close scrutiny of the modes of operation underlying its complex structure, while casting a critical eye on the 'unequal trade' at the heart of the global literary scene, a trade which uncovers hierarchies within literary production whereby minor literatures are faced not only with the reality of their belated annexation and entry to the global literary space due to their lack of cultural capital, but also with fierce market competition :

> 'In the world republic of letters, the richest spaces are also the oldest, which is to say the ones that were the first to enter into literary competition and whose national classics came also to be regarded as universal classics (……) It is a consequence of the unequal structure (to recall Fernand Braudel's phrase once again) of literary space, the uneven distribution of resources among national literary spaces. In measuring themselves against one another, these spaces slowly

establish hierarchies and relations of dependency that over time create a complex and durable design.' (Casanova, 1999: 82/83)

This uneveness translates political, economic and linguistic domination, manoeuvered by nations with global cultural might over culturally poor countries with no right to claim literary space, for 'The temporal law of the world of letters may be stated thus: ' *it is necessary to be old to have any chance of being modern or of decreeing what is modern*, in other words, having a long national past is the condition of being able to claim a literary existence that is fully recognized in the present' (Casanova,1999: 89/90). A 'presentness' or modernity otherwise denied to 'poor' literary traditions, which, in contrast, are lacking in cultural capital and are subjected to symbolic violence whereby they are constantly annexed to older and richer traditions. It is hardly surprising that this violence is manifest in the way minor texts are approached within the global literary and economic contexts. Indeed, Casanova remaps the literary space along an imaginary or 'fictive line' which seems not only to represent the center of the world of letters but also to regiment it. It is against this line that all other literatures are gauged, a 'Greenwich-like' measure which estimates both the aesthetic and temporal distances from the center:

> 'Literary space creates a present on the basis of which all positions can be measured, a point in relation to which all other points can be located, just as the fictive line known as the prime meridian, arbitrarily chosen for the determination of longitude, contributes to the real organisation of the world and makes it possible the measures of distances and the location of positions on the surface of the earth, so what might be called the Greenwich meridian of literature makes it possible to estimate the relative aesthetic distance from the center of the world of letters of all those who belong to it. This aesthetic distance is also measured in temporal terms since the prime meridian determines the present of literary creation, which is to say modernity…' (Casanova, 1999: 88)

While this ascendency is claimed by nations with a rich literary background or 'thick soil' in Casanova's borrowing from Henry James, cities themselves stand as centers of credit, banks of sorts, she reminds us, which simultaneously claim their cultural capital and capitalize on it. Accordingly, and:

> 'As against the national boundaries that give rise to political belief and nationalist feeling, the world of letters creates its own geography and its own divisions. The territories of literature are defined and delimited according to their aesthetic distance from the place where literary consecration is ordained. The cities where literary resources are concentrated, where they accumulate, become places where belief is incarnated, centers of credit, as it were. Indeed, they may be thought of as central banks of a specific sort. (Casanova, 1999: 23)

Faithful to the Bourdieusian and Braudelian spirits, Casanova underscores the symbolic function of different urban spaces, and true to her cultural and national affiliations, she stresses the 'unique configuration' of Paris and its far-reaching impact as a literary center, as a matter of fact, the city of light seems to make the consensus of critics and writers alike that it is 'where the twentieth century was' (Gertrude Stein qtd in Casanova, 1999: 88) or a city invested with an establishment-like status if we believe Victor Hugo's notorious portrayal: 'Paris, it needs to be emphasized, is a government. This government has neither judges, nor police, nor soldiers, nor ambassadors, it operates through infiltration, which is to say omnipotence….' (Casanova, 1999 :89)

An omnipotence which posited Paris at the center of the intellectual map of the sixties, a Greenwich line of arts, literature, criticism, philosophy, fashion, etc, a trend-setter in all different fields where modernity was constantly reinvented, good taste manufactured, prestige equally attributed or withdrawn, and being modern constantly redefined. The authority of Paris as the world intellectual epicenter, Casanova concedes, was both real and imaginary since: 'Paris was thus doubly universal, by virtue both of the belief in its universality and of the real effects that this belief produced.' (Casanova, 1999: 30)

Casanova's narrative of the World Republic of Letters is beyond doubt illuminating in many ways, though many critics have discerned the Eurocentric inclination of her analysis and overtly charged it with essentialism. A case to the point is Muhsin J. al Musawi who, in *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters* (2010), interrogates the amnesia of Western theorists in general, and Casanova's in particular, in dealing with the universal literary capital and their deliberate -or not- dismissal of any preceeding literary traditions, and though he borrows Casanova's conceptual framework, he argues that:

> 'My (his) use of this term, given its current association with Casanova's World Republic of Letters, merits further attention, not only to decenter the latter conceptualization of a Europeanized world system, but also, and primarily, to direct attention to traditions that antedate the European model and perhaps problematize a global application of the term. Casanova's World Republic cannot accommodate non-European cultures of the recent past.' (al-Musawi, 2010)

A creative borrowing, as it stands, one that al Musawi aptly extends to the Islamic world of letters to rehabilitate an unjustly undermined legacy, concurrently by Western and Arab critics. Furthermore, Casanova's Eurocentric arguments such as: 'the exceptional concentration of literary sources that occured in Paris over the course of several centuries gradually led to its recognition as the center of the literary world' (Casanova qted in al Musawi footnote 15), obliquely confirm the Western hegemonic discourse, and further lay bare the colonial condescending rhetoric besides seriously compromising Casanova's critical stance: 'Pascale Casanova's argument with respect to Paris and its centripetal and centrifugal roles could have been expanded and problematized, beyond what is a celebratory narrative, in order to account for the

imperial use of native traditions to seduce and lead native elites.' (alMusawi, 2010).

Accordingly, Paris, as a capital, holds, by no means, according to Musawi, ascendancy in the World Republic of Letters. For him, Cairo furnishes a counter-example of a citadel of culture and knowledge, certainly at disparate cultural and political locations, but most importantly at a temporal framework that is prior to the Parisian model. The main thrust of al Musawi's argument is to question the claim of hegemony of the Western cultural prototype and incidentally to problematize its unfounded claims of intellectual ascendency over 'the World Republic of Letters', besides, by challenging Casanova's European template, al Musawi invokes the Arab-Islamic literary tradition, and while re-examining 'the Medieval Islamic republic of letters' with its rich tapestry across an edifice stretching over six centuries, as a site of unprecedented literary genius and creativity, he remaps the universal intellectual geography, and calls for the reconstruction of Western knowledge along new paradigms. Thus, al Musawi's impressive study recuperates the Arabic and Islamic republic of letters across seven centuries to bely Casanova's claim and worse perhaps, to draw attention to her circumscribed ambit, which reveals -if anything- her critical chauvinism and her essentialist outlook.

A continuity of perspective is formulated by another critical voice, Aamir Mufti's, who partly dismisses Casanova's configuration of 'The World Republic of Letters', and if it is true, as Aamir Mufti's reading shows, that Casanova identifies three major stations in the development of the world literary space:

> 'The first, its moment of origin, so to speak, is the extended and uneven process of vernacularization in the emerging European states from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The next turning point and period of massive expansion comes, she argues, again following Anderson 's periodization, is the philological-lexigraphic revolution starting in the late eighteenth century and the widely dispersed invention of national tradition that ensued. (……..) The third and for Casanova, ongoing period in the expansion of this literary space is linked to the historical 'event' of decolonization in the post-World War II era.' (Aamir Mufti, 2010: 459)

She nonetheless commits a 'most consequential misconception' as she fails to acknowledge the Orientalist contribution to the universal literary heritage, for she seems to believe that: '(…..), non-Western literary cultures make their first effective appearance in world literary space in the era of decolonization in the middle of the twentieth century.' (Aamir Mufti, 2010: 459). Mufti is highly critical of her enterprise, for missing to take into consideration the Orientalist role in shaping the world literary space. Such an outspokenly short-sighted Eurocentric attitude, he carries on, is mainly due to the fact that:

> 'Casanova misses this initial charting of non-Western traditions of writing on the emerging map of the literary world (……), such figures as Kateb Yacine, V. S.

> Naipul, and Salman Rushdie and the psychology of assimilation into metropolitan languages and cultures typify the non-Western writer (as they all do for Casanova). Such models of cultural change as creolization and metissage consequently become the privileged mode of understanding literatures originating outside the metropolis, and the far more complex and elusive tensions and contradictions involved in the emergence of the modern non-Western literatures disappear from view altogether.' (Mufti, 2010: 460)

This oblivion of sorts, openly condemned by Mufti, is best illustrated by Casanova's reductionist and selective perspective, whereby non-Western writers and their texts are considered with very little, if no nuance at all, while cultural capital is granted by means of authentification upon 'elected few' authors, the ones who master the assimilation game, the 'prize-friendly', the 'translation-happy' ones to borrow Emily Apter's terminology.

In his essay *Orientalism and The institution of World Literatures* (2010), Mufti revisits Orientalism not only as a body of knowledge and scholarship epitomizing the spirit which reigned in Europe across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but mostly as a key moment for comprehending the complex cultural, literary and linguistic interactions which shaped European tradition. A moment of cross-cultural exchange, yet a historical station which records the appropriation, subjugation and hierarchisation of linguistic and literary world traditions. In further exploring the way Orientalism relates to World literature, which, for Mufti, 'is fundamentally a concept of exchange (….) that recodes an opaque and unequal process of appropriation as a transparent one of supposedly free and equal interchange and communication.' (Mufti, 2010: 488), he then laboriously documents how this actual inequality is far from being accidental, and asserts that it basically stems from the linguistic hierarchies imposed by Western hegemonic scholarship, a hegemony which strenghtened the superiority of cosmopolitan 'major' languages over 'minor' ones, institutionalizing English as the lingua franca of the world, which explains why' (….) English now assumes the mantle of exclusive medium of cosmopolitan exchange' (Mufti, 2010: 489).

The global hegemony of English has in fact contributed to reconfigure the linguistic, literary and cultural geographies of the world to the extent that any textual tradition seeking recognition needs necessarily to engage with the translation process, thus we find: 'Today, readers in India, Pakistan, Iran, or Turkey will typically encounter each other's literatures only in translation in English (or in further translation from English), thus only if the works have received that metropolitan recognition.' (Mufti, 2010: 489). This, in turn, has generated a race towards greater currency on the part of writers with minor linguistic profiles to integrate the international canon, which is typically true for Indo-English writers who have acquired huge valence in the global literary market:

> 'The Indo-English novel has become in recent decades a global form, a tradition with a vast accumulation of cultural capital, with British and American editors

> descending routinely on the major Indian cities in a frenzied search for the next big novel, the next *God of Small Things*, a process that is now a routine part of the lives of aspiring young Anglophone writers, affecting in all kinds of concrete ways that writing that gets produced.' (Mufti, 2010: 491)

Thus, a nursery for young talented writers has mushroomed and flourished, thirsty for the seal of metropolitan authentication, and forcibly entangled within the logics of the global marketplace. This reality is further complicated by the concomitant existence of academic brokers and translators across a literary 'ecology', to borrow from Alexander Beecroft, where prevail opportunism, marketability, prizes and consecration. An ecology where English becomes the 'global language' or a 'hypercentral language' to invoke Beecroft anew, and where we notice: 'The increasing dominance of a handful of languages, especially English. The increasing concentration of the publishing industry and the increasing need for sales in translation to sustain a literary career (….)' (Beecroft qted in McColl Chesney, 2017: 253).

1.3 The Economy of Prestige

According to Alexander Beecroft, the world tendency to posit English as the lingua franca or Esperanto of the age will likely yield the following scenario: 'a global literary ecology will result either in the hegemonic domination of literature in English at the expense of all other literatures (and perhaps many languages), or in the emergence of a sort of standardized 'world novel', designed for easy translation and consumption abroad.' (Beecroft qted in McColl Chesney, 2017: 253). If we believe McColl - quoting Beecroft-, this, in turn, is leading us '…towards an increasingly homogeneous literary world, one in which universality is achieved through the creation of a monoculture.' (McColl/Beecroft,253). This monoculture or 'Mcculture' to use James English's neologism, reckons artistic achievement solely through the prism of 'success and stardom', a world James English apprehends as 'shallow and homogeneous based on the model of network TV prizes…', as opposed to the rich and varied former reality of artistic space. In *The Economy of Prestige: prizes, awards and the circulation of cultural value* (2005), James English summons readers to raise questions such as: 'How is prestige produced and where does it reside? (in people, in things, in relationships between people and things?) What rules govern its circulation?' (English, 2005: 3). In probing what he calls 'the cultural economics of prestige', fundamentally identified as '(….), the very system of valuing and devaluing, esteeming and disesteeming' (English, 2005: 24), English steers away not only from the classical narrative or scenario of what he accurately calls 'the fable of the post-modern apocalypse', a scenario which posits art and intellectual labor as victims of the economic apparatus, but also from the 'the reassuring comedy about the democratization of taste'. Instead, he reorients emphasis on the middle space between those two conflicting poles of interest, the space where all the constituents of the 'machinery of cultural production' are involved i.e rules, strategies, players and agents, who are by large the 'neglected instruments of cultural exchange' or what English aptly calls 'the agents of capital intraconversion'. In affording such an interesting paradigm,

English shifts the parameters whereby cultural capital is understood in contemporary scholarship, and provokes serious reflection not only on the occult forces working at the heart of cultural practice, but on the accompanying discursive manifestations surrounding it. Thus, he defines the very raison d'être of his whole study:

> 'My aim is not to decide whether cultural prizes are a treasure or an embarrassment, whether they are conferred upon deserving or undeserving artists and works, whether they serve to elevate or to degrade the people's taste and the artist's calling. It is rather, to begin an analysis of the whole system of symbolic give and take, of coercion and negotiation, competition and alliance, mutual disdain and mutual esteem, into which prizes are extended, and which encompasses not just the selection processes and honorific ceremonies, but many less central practices, and in particular the surrounding journalistic discourse- all the hype and antihype itself.' (English, 2005: 26)

Accordingly, we need to conceive of intellectual labor not in terms of the Manichean binarism art /economy, but rather situate it within the larger optic of the struggling forces and negotiation taking place in cultural production. This transaction of sorts implicates a plethora of intermediaries, including 'administrators, judges, sponsors and others' (English, 2005: 11). Because prizes are essentially ambivalent, and on account of the prize frenzy particular to our cultural landscape, English cannot help speculating: ' who can possibly keep up or keep track? the sense that the cultural universe has become super-saturated with prizes, that there are more cultural awards than our collective cultural achievements can possibly justify, is the great and recurring theme of prize punditry' (English, 2005: 17). In this light, English points fingers at prize institutions, complicit not only in fabricating literary prestige but in fashioning and manipulating literary tastes, with one particular institution in the crosshairs i.e the Booker Prize. English is hardly unique in criticizing literary patronage institutions; indeed, a number of recent studies have drawn attention to the growing authority of award-winning institutions in refashioning cultural capital. Thus, his views can be readily supplemented with a similarly market-centered vantage point held by Alexander Beecroft in qualifying nowadays' literary landscape and epitomized in the expression the 'Booker Prize literature'. Having said that, English grants that '(…..), prizes are not a threat or contamination with respect to a field of proper cultural practice on which they have no legitimate place.' (English, 26). If the essence of his project is to 'capture the fundamentally equivocal nature' of prizes, which according to him, run the risk of being demonized, we need to be vigilant and perhaps less biased when considering the very notion of 'prize', while what we really need is to posit prizes as a cultural phenomenon within a larger and more complex network of interconnected fields:

> 'Of all the rituals and practices of culture, none is more frequently attacked for its compromising convergence with the dynamic of the marketplace than is the prize, which seems constantly to oscillate between a genuinely cultural event (whose

participants have only the interests of art at stake) and a sordid display of competitiveness and greed whose participants are brazenly pursuing their professional financial self-interests.' (James English, 2005: 7)

1.4 The Postcolonial Exotic

Similarly, grounded in the Bourdieusian legacy, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) by Graham Huggan, carries the debate of World literature beyond the issues of cultural and linguistic domination, and enlarges its scope to encompass problematics of marketability and consumption, by closely scrutinizing the dynamics inherent in the Western literary market, whereby a 'booming alterity business' is appropriating marginal literatures and turning them into commodities. While Huggan acknowledges that 'Bourdieu's model has been attacked for its over-schematized distinctions and, in particular, for its attempt to fix the class positions of different consumer publics', he argues that 'the model is useful, nonetheless, in suggesting how postcolonial writers/thinkers operate within an overarching, if historically shifting, field of cultural production.' (Huggan, 2001: 5) For him, his study: '…..is in part, an examination of the sociological dimensions of postcolonial studies, the material conditions of production and consumption of postcolonial writing and the influence of publishing houses and academic institutions on the selection, distribution and evaluation of these works.' (Huggan, 2001: vii)

In further investigating how this global commodification of cultural difference is promoted by the publishing industry, the award-winning institutions, and academic circles, thus, contributing to confer cultural capital to non-Western authors and texts- the ones which understandably respond to the Western market dictates-, Huggan reflects on the degrees of complicity between 'local oppositional discourses' and the global late capitalist system in which they circulate and are contained'. He further lays focus on what he calls 'the booming alterity industry' and explores how marginal literatures 'are produced, disseminated and consumed, while coming to terms with 'the realpolitik of metropolitan economic supremacy'. Huggan's mapping of the global marketplace along with the codes governing it, and the ultimate uncovering of the implications on the metropolitan literary scene unmistakably translate an anxiety -quite legitimate it seems- about the future of postcolonial scholarship when postcolonialism itself has turned into a 'cultural commodity' and 'Postcolonial Studies, it could be argued, has capitalised on its perceived marginality, while helping turn marginality itself into a valuable intellectual commodity' (Huggan, 2001: xiii). This complicity or 'staged marginality' whereby workers on the postcolonial and diasporic scenes capitalise on their cultural difference 'is in reality a self-conscious process by which marginalised individuals or minority groups dramatise their subordinate status for the imagined benefit of a majority audience.' (Huggan, 9). Adopting an empirical reading of the world marketplace and the concomitant manifestations of 'intellectual tourism', Huggan contends that: '(….) metropolitan book businesses always eager for 'hot' new writers, merchandise the latest literary products from 'exotic' places such as Africa and India, assimilating marginal

literatures to an over-voracious mainstream and playing a moderately lucrative trade' (Huggan, 1997: 20). Accordingly, Huggan calls into question the credibility of Western institutions in authenticating othered literatures, or what he calls 'marketing the margins', recycled by Italian critic Sandra Ponzanesi as 'advertising the margins' or a 'third world memorabilia ornamentalism' of sorts bearing, thus, a troubling homology to Pappelinas' concept 'boutique xenophobia':

> 'The recent commodification and popularization of third-world culture implies treating culture as disposable and replaceable. (……..) The fashionability of a Third World culture/postcolonial culture is a two-way boutique windows, contingent upon the successive approval of and metamorphosing by Western consumers.' (Sandra Ponzanesi, 2014 :2).

Fundamental to Huggan's study is the discrimination he establishes between 'postcolonialism and 'postcoloniality', and while he apprehends the former as an anticolonial discourse with an emancipatory agenda and a rhetoric of resistance, he reads the latter as compatible with the worldwide market machinery promising a value-regulating assimilative potential:

> 'Postcoloniality, put another way, is a value-regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange. Value is constructed through global market operations involving the exchange of cultural commodities and, particularly, culturally 'othered goods'. Postcoloniality's regime of value is implicitly assimilative and market-driven: it regulates the value equivalence of putatively marginal products in the global marketplace. Postcolonialism, by contrast, implies a politics of value that stands in obvious opposition to global processes of commodification.' (Huggan, 2001: 6)

Having said that, Huggan does not fail to stress the inexorable entanglement of both aspects, bound up with each other, as they happen to be, and unquestionably governed by market logics:

> 'It is not just that postcolonialism and postcoloniality are at odds with one another, or that the former's emancipatory agenda clashes with the latter's; the point that needs to be stressed here is that postcolonialim is bound up with postcoloniality-that in the overwhelming commercial context of late twentieth-century commodity culture, postcolonialism and its rhetoric of resistance have themselves become consumer products.' (Huggan, 2001: 6)

Deterministic as this formulation might seem, it nonetheless reveals an unfortunate reality about the quasi-impossibility of escaping the machinery of the global market and much less of standing outside the discourse of what Huggan calls 'neocolonialism' with all 'its continuing modes of imperialist thought and action'. Spivak

lends strength to this view when she calls for '(…..) a constant need for vigilance to neocolonial structures of power' (Spivak 1991 qted in Huggan, 23), because 'when marginality (….) comes with the seal of academic approval, this may only help to commodify it at the University and elsewhere in society' (Spivak 1991 in Huggan, 2001: 23). Spivak's partial rejection begs on the question of marginality, which transcends the superficial commonplace dimension, and actually requires to be viewed with Spivakian lenses as 'a legitimising category for palatable versions of cultural otherness in society at large.' Thus, the margins as a discursive and aesthetic site lose all their subversive potential since they are '(….) being rerouted into safe assertions of a fetishised cultural difference' (Huggan, 2001: 24). What is clear, then, as Huggan contends, is that terms 'as 'resistance' and 'authenticity' and 'marginality' and so on circulate as reified objects in a late-capitalist currency of symbolic exchange' (Huggan, 2001: 29). All these caveats, in reality, concur to revisit the dictionary of postcolonial concepts in the light of the mainstream culture and its logics, and while it is true that such a rereading presupposes the existence of a naive '……somebody, somewhere, engaged in consuming postcolonial texts in ways that are meant to concern an academic reading audience' (Brouillette, 2007: 26), as critic Sarah Brouillette points out, and though she concedes that Huggan's materialist study is quite 'innovative', she faults it for its '(…..) frequent reference to a global market reader, a figure with indistinct identity and agency' (Brouillette, 2007: m15), a fact she finds incompatible with the materialist vocation of Huggan's project which she charges of not adhering to the same logic. In *Postcolonial Writers in The Global Literary Market* (2007), Brouillette casts herself as a vociferous critic of Huggan, on account of this purpose, she does not fail to underscore what she considers critical 'neglect' on his side, and further deconstructs the theoretical armature of his work, a great deal of which she sees as 'a kind of accusation'. In calling into question his unnuanced use of the category of audience, she charges him of '…..identifying readers as guilty of aestheticising, and/or dehistoricising what might otherwise be subject to more legitimate forms of knowledge production' (Brouillette, 2007: 23).

Mainly predicated on the notion of the 'exotic', Huggan extends the logic of tourism to the literary marketplace, and suggests that 'the tourist gaze in global literature is inspired by mechanisms of 'mystification (or levelling-out) of historical experience, imagined access to the cultural other through the process of consumption; and reification of people and places into exchangeable aesthetic goods' (Huggan, 2001). Thus, a clique of well-established cosmopolitan writers in the caliber of Rushdie, V. S. Naipul or Kureishi, superstars of sorts, allegedly complicit with the market machinery and its mandates, in all likelihood thriving on a 'similar overarching system of authentication', come to epitomize commodity fetishism. These instances of 'staged marginalities' whereby peripherality is subtly exoticised are best attended to by Huggan in his two chapters entitled 'consuming India, starting from 1958 up to 2000', and 'African literature and the anthropological exotic'. For him, not only is the onus on award-winning institutions for prizing otherness and creating influential literary patronage, but most importantly for manufacturing global consensus through reviving 'new versions of the Raj' (Huggan, 2001). Brouillette takes her critique a step further to maintain that

Huggan's study is 'a version of what he analyses, subscribing to a logic that separates the authentic form from the inauthentic, the insider from the outsider, in an endless circle of hierarchical distinction and counter-distinction' (Brouillette, 2007: 19), only to come to the conclusion that she sees ' Huggan's work as a symptom of postcoloniality even while it is an assessment of it' (Brouillette, 2007: 26)

It would not be fair to totally endorse Brouillette's vantage point without resituating Huggan's argument within its pertinent context, and doing justice to the subtlety of his reasoning, besides the skepticism he adopts all the way through in addressing the vexed issues of agency and readership. This explicit alertness becomes particularly evident when he maintains that 'To accuse postcolonial writers/thinkers of being lackeys to this system is, as I have repeatedly suggested, to underestimate their power to exercise agency over their work. It may also be to devalue the agency, both individual and collective of their readers, who by no means form a homogeneous or readily identifiable consumer-group' (Huggan, 2001: 30).

In *Postcolonial Print Cultures* (2013), Brouillette reiterates her perception of audience when she avers that 'The manner in which these texts reach audiences involves complex negotiations of political, commercial and cultural boundaries and sensibilities' (Brouillette & Finkelstein, 2013: 3). She actually identifies five disparate constituents in her mapping of postcolonial scholarship namely 'postcolonial literary fields, postcolonial systems, postcolonial contexts, postcolonial archives and postcolonial critiques' (Brouillette & Finkelstein, 2013: 3). Instead of a monolithic homogenizing vision of audiences which she castigates Huggan for, Brouillette conceives of audiences as communities, while she does not miss to acknowledge the material forces that shape intellectual production and writers' efforts to respond to their aesthetic and political interests, while conforming both to the demands of commerce and to the pressures imposed by systems of evaluation.

In *Literary Markets and Literary Property* (2015), she reaffirms that 'literary markets might be studied as sites of conflict and controversy over the ownership of intellectual property.' (Brouillette, 2015 :140). Thus, she engages with the act of reading as a highly measurable and monetized experience, nodding towards E-books on Amazon and its Kindle version, which have radically metamorphosed the geography of reading and even the nature of readers.

In *Postcolonial Literature in the Global Marketplace: A Few Thoughts on Political and Aesthetic Value in the* (2009), which reads like a borrowing from Brouillette, Erik Falk excoriates both Huggan and Brouillette for their heavy focus on the political dimension of literature to the detriment of the aesthetic aspect. If it is true that their approaches are respectively premised on empirical grounds, he recognizes the pressure from globalization theory in the general arc of postcolonial studies, and how the ubiquitous tendency within postcolonial literature '……., is the self-reflecting stages of its entrapment in a commodified culture which amounts to a loss of any real political function' (Erik Falk, 2009: 404). This, in turn, begs the question of marginality as a powerful space with political edge in a world 'increasingly deterritorialized and representativity increasingly complicated' (Falk, 2009: 406)

While Ana Christina Mendes in *The Marketing of Postcolonial Literature* (2016) is much more conciliant, as she retrieves and synthetises both Huggan's and Brouillette's readings of the postcolonial market, she puts particular emphasis on high profile writers originating from South Asia, and highlights their active role in reconfiguring literary topographies by examining how their texts are 'contestations of locality/nationality and global citizenship' (Mendes, 2016: 5). By recognizing the new 'tiger economics', invoking India and China, she draws attention to novel and dynamic flows that undeniably invigorate and refashion the global economic and literary landscapes, while keeping in mind the imbalances of cultural trade. Mendes establishes a direct link between the growingly noticeable marketability of subaltern fiction and a persistent- if age-long- 'post-imperial melancholy fascination with the Orient' (Mendes, 2016: 9)

On the other hand, In *The Postcolonial Culture Industry: From Consumption to Distinction* (2014), which unequivocally reads like an echo of Huggan's work, Ponzanesi recuperates Huggan's central argument and rather than dismissing it in the fashion of Sarah Brouillette, she rests her entire study both in shape and content on a strikingly identical framework if not template. Ponzanesi invokes Theodor Adorno, famous for considering ' ……. 'culture industry' as a persuasive structure that produces cultural commodities for mass audiences' (Ponzanesi, 2014: 2), and while stressing the need for a 'participatory culture' whereby readers, users and audiences are involved in processes of interaction and co-shaping, Ponzanesi takes stock of the literary prize circuit, and the way it cannibalizes cultural otherness in its different strands. She considers a multiplicity of genres within postcolonial literature, such as postcolonial chick literature or feminist literature, and further explores how feminist bestsellers can be complicit in rehearsing colonial dynamics in matching the cosmopolitan call for both local taste and global reach.

An equally important critic of World literature and market dynamics is French theorist Gisèle Sapiro, who investigates throughout her article *How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (Or Not)* (2016), '(….) the factors that trigger or hinder the circulation of symbolic goods in a particular context, (….)' (Sapiro, 2016: 82). In this respect, she recognizes four categories ranging from the political, economic, cultural and social aspects whilst undescoring the role of the state in controlling the circulation of print and publishing, and the way the logics of the market together with the law of profitability govern the distribution and circulation of cultural products: 'Consequently, while the capitalist development of the book industry helped to free it from state control, the market can exert a commercial censorship that is only weakly counterbalanced by sales in independent bookstores and on the internet in the US and UK' (Sapiro, 2016: 87). Sapiro lays great emphasis on the crucial role played by translation in promoting'…… the formation of literary and publishing fields' (Sapiro,88), a role corroborated by many a theorist in the caliber of Casanova who rightly contends that 'the most translated works formed the new canon of literature' (Casanova, 1999).

1.5 Franco Moretti and 'Distant Reading'

Franco Moretti is hard control, Didier Coste and Wai Chee Dimock are soft control, and so is Damrosch. (Spivak, 2012: 455) (…….) World literature is not an object, it's a problem and a problem which calls for a new critical method… (Franco Moretti, 2013: 46)

The author of this well-known quote is a voice that cannot by any means be circumscribed in the World literature debate. In his seminal book *Distant Reading* (2013), Franco Moretti inventively remaps the geography of World literature, acknowledging the colossal scope of the field, and affirming that any coming to terms with the width and reach of its ubiquitous nature necessitates the reconfiguration of its very categories: '…the sheer enormity of the task makes it clear that World Literature cannot be Literature (…….). The *categories* have to be different' (Moretti, 2013: 46). Yet if his prime concern is to revisit the Goethian legacy and to retrieve the true spirit of *Weltliteratur*, Moretti is aware of the predicament of the modern intellectual faced with the quasi-impossibility to read outside and beyond the limits of his own field of expertise, which in turn raises questions as to the very essence and finality of World Literature: '(….) I think it is time we returned to that old ambition of *Weltliteratur*: after all, the literature around us is now unmistakably a planetary system. The question is not really *what* we should do- the question is *how*. What does it mean to study World Literature? How do we do it?.....' (Moretti, 2013: 45). In problematizing reading as a practice, and emphasizing the compulsion to fashion new modes and approaches to address literature, Moretti understates the accumulation of knowledge, and relocates the stakes in a know-how, whereby: 'reading 'more' seems hardly to be the solution especially because we've just started rediscovering what Margaret Cohen calls 'the great unread' (Moretti, 2013: 45).

Distant Reading, which ironically stands for Moretti's 'pact with the devil', is a new paradigm whereby instead of reading texts, we 'learn how not to read them': 'Distant reading: where distance, let me repeat it, is *a condition of knowledge*: ' it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes- or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, less is more.' (Moretti, 2013: 48/49). Seen this way, 'distant reading' comes to function as the antinome of close reading, which Moretti is aware is a salient feature of American and Western academia by and large, and which he charges for its remarkably restricted canon, while what we need is to enlarge and stretch this latter to match the scope of World Literature : The United States is the country of close reading, so I don't expect this idea to be particularly popular. But the trouble with close reading (in all of its incarnations from New Criticism to Deconstruction) is that it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon. This may have become an unconscious and invisible premise by now, but it is an iron one nonetheless: you invest so much in individual texts only if you think that very few of them really matter. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense. And if you want to look beyond the canon (and of course, World Literature will do so: it would be absurd if it didn't), close reading will not do it. It's not designed to do so, it's designed to do the opposite. At bottom, it's a theological exercise- very solemn treatment of very few texts taken very seriously. (Moretti, 2013: 48)

As a true 'enfant terrible' of Western Criticism, Moretti dares to challenge the Eurocentred eclectic canon to be much more inclusive for a' revamped World Literature', to recall Emily Apter's phrase, where '(……) the ambition is now directly proportional *to the distance from the text*: the more ambitious the project, the greater must the distance be' (Moretti, 2013: 48). Yet, if she acknowledges the radical nature of Moretti's argument, Apter cannot restrain from wondering if his thesis is really a consistent alternative framework: 'Does he propose a method? Well, yes and no. He introduces the promising idea of 'distant reading' as the foundation of a new epistemology (echoeing Benedict Anderson's notion of distant e-nationalism), but it is an idea that potentially risks foundering in a city of bits where micro and macro literary units are awash in a global system with no obvious sorting device' (Apter in Prendergast ed. 2004: 78). For Critic Francesca Orsini, Moretti's theory is essentially predicated on mapping cultural space, a reconfiguration clearly inspired by Wallerstein's tripartite 'world system' formula:

> 'Moretti draws on Immanuel Wallerstein's' world system' theory to argue that the onset of capitalism and European empires reduced the many independent local/regional spaces of literature to just three positions- core, periphery and semi-periphery- which exist in hierarchical relationships to each other. While initially, Moretti's ideas regarding World Literature were shaped by his theory of the diffusion of the European novel in the world ('More Conjectures'), more recently he has suggested that the object of World Literature is best theorized through a combination of (a) evolutionary theory to explain proliferation and diffusion of forms before the integrated World-system and (b) World-system theory.' (Orsini, 2015: 347)

As a matter of fact, Orsini finds significant convergences between Moretti and Casanova in the Eurocentric narrative underlying their respective enterprises. For both theorists, the global overrides the local', advertising the validity of a Russian puppet-like template as Moretti maintains in his conception of the literary space: 'The many spaces of literary history- provinces, nation, continent, planet… The hierarchy that binds them altogether' (Moretti, 2013: 113). Critic Aamir Mufti joins his voice not only to dismiss Moretti's concept of 'close reading' but also to suggest an alternative way for rethinking the concept of World Literature which: '…cannot take the form exclusively of 'distant reading 'Moretti proposes… but neither can it take the form of close reading for its own sake. What is needed is *better* close reading, attentive to the worldliness of language and text at various levels of social reality and from the highly localized to the planetary as such' (Mufti, 2010: 493)

1.6 Theoretical Alternatives to World Literature

Refreshing indeed is Francesca Orsini's *Significant Geographies in Lieu of World* (2018) or earlier *The Multilingual Local in World Literature*(2015), whereby she broaches an alternative, and allegedly more encompassing conceptual framework, in which she cautions against the concept of World Literature as 'a famously slippery, apparently

expansive, yet surprisingly narrow category' (Orsini, 2015: 345), and further condemns the contemporary '……urge to flatten world literature and make it monologic' (Orsini, 2018: 293). One of the issues she identifies 'with current theories of World Literature is that: 'the term 'world' is insufficiently probed and theorized. As a category, 'world' is too generic and suggests a continuity and seamlessness that are both deceptive and self-fulfilling.' (Orsini, 290). These sentiments are shared by a number of theorists, particularly David Damrosch, who stresses the floating character of the category of world literature and recognizes its ambiguous position between territory and ideology.

Orsini's attempt to reconfigure our understanding of space stems from the dilemma she senses is imprisoning minor and non-Western literatures in misfitting categories. 'Precisely because geography is so crucial to World Literature' (Orsini, 2015: 345), and she calls for a review of the current spatial models provided by World Literature through her 'significant geographies' which enable a more nuanced account of the local/global dialectic:

> 'While approaches based only on single-language archives often tend to reproduce the literary and social biases of each archive, a multilingual approach is inherently comparative and relativizing; it highlights authors' and archives' strategies of distinction, affiliation and/or exclusion, and makes us look for what other studies and actors existed, it also shows with particular geographies- real and imaginary- were significant for each set of authors and genres in each language (I suggest the term 'significant geographies') instead of positing a generic 'World' or 'global' elsewhere to which only very few had access. While multilingual literary cultures are rarely (if ever) so fully interconnected as to be literary systems, their codes and trajectories help us think about local and 'global' in more complex and accurate ways.' (Orsini, 2015: 346)

This new framework furnishes a substitute model against the homogenizing global paradigm that currently seems to prevail in World Literature, and that operates through market mechanisms to further marginalize minor cultures under the sway of a mono-cultural system in a total denial of diversity or difference:

> 'By 'significant geographies', we mean the *conceptual imaginative*, and *real* geographies that texts, authors, and language communities inhabit, produce and reach, which typically extend outwards without (ever ?) having a truly global reach.' (Orsini, 2015: 294)

In joining the debate, French critic Didier Coste attempts to demonstrate how World literature as a conceptual framework seems to have 'a rich and dangerous polysemy' and proposes 'to treat World literature as a myth in the Barthesian sense, which does not imply that it is an empty sign, but on the contrary an overdetermined sign and consequently brimming with both overt hidden effects on the mode of thinking of its users' (Coste, 2007: 1/2). Such a Barthesian reading of the 'inflated, outwardly

fleshy' term, replete as it stands with potentially playful semiotic content indeed, complicates the already overloaded category of World Literature and perhaps justifies why Coste raises a host of further questions as to the reason why 'World Literature has never been institutionalized as a discipline with its own object, methods and prerequisites' (Coste, 2007: 3), while maintaining that World Literature 'is competing not only with global, universal and planetary literature but with (unqualified) literature itself'. According to Coste, if literature is intrinsically global, the world dimension holds the power of a panacea since 'World literature once in circulation becomes a currency and merchandise with a strong impact on cultural economy, it is thus highly political' (Coste, 2007: 4). If the power to circulate is one of the criteria which entitles any text to integrate World Literature, recalling Damrosch's three-fold test set, it would be more accurate to raise questions as to the influential role of capitalist forces in marketing particular texts, and the margin of intellectual integrity left for the authors to join or not the race.

A Momentous twist in the debate on World Literature is the one accomplished by Emily Apter in both her seminal studies *The Translation Zone* (2006), and subsequently *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2014). Her voice stands, together with Spivak's, as one of the most intransigeant detractors of the discourse of World Literature, through rethinking translation studies, and provoking serious reflection on the influence of language 'wars' on canonization in literature, Apter claims that: '(…..) language wars, great and small, shape the politics of translation in the spheres of media, literacy, literary markets, electronic information transfer and codes of literariness' (Apter, 2006: 4). Echoeing Casanova's contention that 'Translation like criticism is a process of establishing value' (Casanova, 1999: 23), Apter envisages the world of translation as '….. a military zone governed by laws of hostility and hospitality, by semantic transfers and treatises' (Apter, 2006), while casting her project within a linguistic ecology where we find endangered language species that are subjected to the tyranny of powerful languages, thus killing linguistic diversity. For Sarah Brouillette, Apter's two books:

> '(…..) are at heart motivated by polarizing debates in the field of translation studies. Is everything translatable, or nothing? Do we insist on universals or on particular, on the planetary or the local, on a global World Literature or a disparate array of national traditions? Do we, with Alain Badiou engage in the elevation of 'univocity over equivocation', of idea over language, of transparency over opacity, of transmission over hermeneutics? (p.23) or does such a manoeuvr justify a potentially annihilating blindness to the specificities of local cultural traditions?' (Brouillette, 2015 :3)

Yet, Brouillette senses an unmistakable difference in Apter's tone; if in *The Translation Zone*, Apter is rather neutral and exhibits a bona fide attitude towards World Literature and its ensuing stakes, her tone in *Against World Literature* becomes 'less hopeful' (Brouillette, 2015: 4), as 'she insists more that it is the untranslatable that should

command our allegiance' (Brouillette, 2015: 4). In her attempt to trace Apter's incentive, Brouillette finds in *Against World Literature* reverberations of French critic Barbara Cassin, while acknowledging the way Apter has further elaborated on the former's *Vocabulaire Européen Des Philosophies:*

> 'Part of her inspiration is Barbara Cassin's 2004 *Vocabulaire Européen Des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles*, a dictionary of nearly 400 terms that have proven difficult to translate. Yet Apter wearily extends Cassin's practical and philosophical interest in the untranslatable in the direction of speculative realism, such that failure to translate becomes just another measure of our hubristic human drives. She adopts from the speculative realists an image 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.' (Brouillette, 2015: 4)

For Brouillette, two antagonistic forces seem to animate Apter's project, namely World Literature and untranslatability, which is not to be interpreted - she cautions- as Apter's hostility to 'a globalized canon for comparative literary studies' (Brouillette, 2015: 4), but rather as her binary mapping of the field of comparative studies along two avenues: World Literature as the wrong path because of its association with what Apter calls 'one worldedness', and 'the homogeneity of culture produced under capitalism' (Brouillette, 2015: 5). In refusing the possibility and hegemony of a common world culture, Apter unequivocally joins her voice to Spivak's, notoriously inimical to World Literature and who has always endorsed the 'singularity and untranslatability of the literary work', since 'the literary is the particularity and irreducibility of idiom, not the universal of translatability. Translation is misprision, so the question is, why do we want to do it? to what ends? and for whom?' (qtd in Chesney McColl, 2017: 260). Otherwise, if for Chesney McColl, (…..) Spivak insists that we need to learn languages rather than consume World Literature anthologies in English (of the sort Damrosch edits)' (Chesney McColl, 2017: 260), this by no means implies that Damrosch is supportive of ' monolingualism and monoculture' (McColl,261). For McColl again, Spivak and Apter are preaching a similar resistance to the politics of World Literature, and therefore aligning themselves in opposition to all efforts by other critics, such as Damrosch, to compromise with World Literature. Instead, Spivak suggests the 'planetary' as a new paradigm to replace the 'global', and she is trenchant in her declaration that:

> 'Globalization takes place only in capital and data, everything else is damage control……. I don't believe the humanities can be global. I think our task is to supplement the uniformization necessary for globalization, we must therefore learn to think of ourselves as the custodians of the world's wealth of languages, not as impressarios of a multicultural circus in English.' (Spivak qtd in Chesney McColl, 2017: 269)

In his review of Apter's *Against World* (2014), Damrosch otherwise maintains that: 'In *Against World Literature,* she offers a bracing critique of the politics of translation in American literary studies. All too often, she argues, scholars and teachers of World Literature assume a ready transferability across open linguistic and political borders, and she aims to complicate these matters, both linguistically and politically' (Damrosch, 2014: 504). Arguably, if Apter establishes a rather depressing framework, a legitimate question at this stage would be: to what extent is the untranslatable solid in the face of global flows and a mighty capitalist machinery?. In this respect, Brouillette is very skeptical as to Apter's categorical contention that 'nothing is translatable', and readily questions the putative defiance of the untranslatable when 'its celebration does not stem from any engagement with the details of how what is treated as World Literature is actually constituted at a material level' (Brouillette, 2015: 10). What Apter is really championing against the bulimic drives of the whorling vortex of the World capitalist system is the investment of translation with its capacity 'to present barriers to easy comprehension… In her view we must constantly acknowledge that there are things we cannot assimilate' (Brouillette, 2015: 6). Indian scholar Debjani Ganguli, on the other hand is confident that Apter's project is almost '…the most 'wordly' in Edward Said's sense of being attuned to the geopolitics of its time' (Ganguli, 2008: 122)

Pertinently, in her enlightening article *Polysystems Redux: The Unfinished Business of World Literature* (2015), Ganguli embarks on a reappraisal of the findings of World literature theorists as she evaluates the work accomplished by a number of prestigious scholars, while nodding towards the potential clusterings to be effected between different critical postures. Foucauldian in essence, Ganguli's research rehearses the history of world literature in terms of 'epistemic ruptures', while finding resonance in numerous contemporary theories. By bracketing off Casanova's theory of a 'World republic of letters', aligning herself, thus, with al Musawi and Mufti, she calls for '(…) the opening up of comparative literary studies beyond the French-English-German-Spanish quartet to the philologically rich world of area studies especially from the Middle East, Africa, South and South East Asia, not to mention the Russo-Slavic region.' (Debjani, 2015: 275). Instead, she recommends '…a serious rethinking about the world literary system itself in terms of a polyworlds model' (Debjani, 2015: 275). Such a paradigm based on plurality or multiscalar systems of thought is strongly reminiscent of Orsini's 'Significant Geographies', or more accurately perhaps of Arjun Appadurai's five dimensions of 'global cultural flows', better known as the five scapes first introduced in *Modernity at large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), wherein he revisits the confusing notions of culture, cultural and culturalism:

> 'I propose that an elementary framework for exploring such disjunctures is to look at the relationship among five dimensions of global cultural flows that can be termed : (a) ethnoscapes, (b) mediascapes, (c)technoscapes, (d) finanscapes, and (e)ideoscapes.' (Appadurai, 1996: 33)

By adopting the theory of rupture, Appadurai explores the transformation in everyday discourses of media and migration in the electronic field, and acknowledges their constant deterrioralization across the globe. Three categories of diaspora are to be reckoned with; namely, diasporas of hope, diasporas of terror and diasporas of despair. These categories are catalysts of memory and desire in propelling the force of the imagination.

2. Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to document the sophisticated ongoing debates surrounding World Literature today, and incidentally to synthetise the manifold theoretical attempts at coming to terms with the complexity of these debates. The article has cogently argued that not only are such understandings of the global literary scene sensitive to material, cultural, socio-historical, geographical and linguistic particularities, but they equally offer a highly nuanced and complex account with overlappings, intersections and cross-cuttings across a vast spectrum of discursive sites and modes of thought. If they mark a different curve in debates on globalization, they surely usher in innovative spaces of enunciation, opening up challenging perspectives in discourse and critical theory in the much-contested terrain of World literature. The debates, undoubtedly, enact a vibrant intellectual ambience which definitely invites more insightful research in the future.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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