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Cultures of (In)Security in Comparison: From Comparative Literature to Critical Approaches to Security Studies

Due to its flexible topography, its lack of single object or unified methodology, Comparative Literature has often been presented as an “undisciplined discipline.”¹ The study of ‘World Literature,’ which has become one of the most influential paths in Comparative Literature, highly represented in university curricula and mainstream publishing, is also according to Franco Moretti “not an object, it’s a problem, and a problem that asks for a new critical method.”² It could be argued, thus, that Comparative Literature and Comparative Studies, more generally (to include broader comparative, non-exclusively literary, approaches) are in fact, *insecure* fields, fields that have resisted to be over-regulated but that, despite that healthy resistance have not relinquished their ongoing search for an encompassing but rigorous methodology.

This thematic volume aims to examine cultures of insecurity in comparison, by suggesting new disciplinary paths. We believe that it is vital for Comparative Studies to rethink the terms of its current interdisciplinary approaches at a time when cultures, literatures and arts – although increasingly inter-related and benefitting from wider and more effective technologies and networks – are inevitably shaped by the pressures of global finance or by the weight of neoliberalism. In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that we should

¹ Peter Brooks, “Undisciplined Discipline,” in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), 97-106.

² Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature,” *New Left Review* 1, January-February (2000), 55.

overcome the customary fear and hostility, which have dominated the relations between social sciences and humanities by using Jacques Derrida's politics of friendship as "an example of how humanities and social sciences must supplement each other."³ This implies, in Spivak's view, a shift away from Euro-U.S. cultural dominance and a focus on older minorities (African, Asian, and Hispanic). In our perspective, the focus away from Euro-American dominance in Comparative Studies is, indeed, essential for the future of our field and can be understood not only in terms of the objects of study but also in terms of the methodologies, strategies and approaches. Spivak has written at length about the linguistic challenges facing our field, given the dominance of English, now further reinforced with the growth of translation studies – a most important question which has remained largely unresolved. We will turn our attention here to another related issue, namely the shift from the national to the transnational perspectives which has characterized many recent studies in our field.

Since many of the discussions about the future of Comparative Literature intersect with the emergence of 'World Literature,' we will refer to this approach within Comparative Literature to reflect upon some of the major trends and challenges in the field.⁴ In their goal to achieve a global reach, the most prominent authors on 'World Literature' such as Pascale Casanova, Franco Moretti and David Damrosch have – more or less successfully⁵ –

³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 27.

⁴ Among the most prominent works related to the emergence of 'World Literature' it is worth mentioning here the publication of Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999); Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature,"; David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, Djelal Kadir, eds., *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (Oxford: Routledge, 2012).

⁵ Several authors have argued that the model which underpins the organization of World Literature's anthologies is problematic, not only due to the unquestioned canonicity of the authors chosen to be include in such volumes, but also because the criteria for inclusion of given authors/texts is still, in the main, created and managed by Western scholars as the major organizers of these volumes. Mary Gallagher, for instance, argues that "just as anthologies of so-called 'international' writing in previous decades usually only included writing from a variety of traditions firmly inside the Western world, so certain anthologies of global or world

attempted to correct the historical Eurocentric bias of Comparative Literature and expand the visibility of literatures produced outside Europe and the U.S. The Institute for World Literature, led by David Damrosch at Harvard University, depends upon a substantial international investment in the field, drawing on the belief that “many people are now interested in teaching courses in world literature and in pursuing research within a global framework, but few programs in comparative or even world literature have yet established ways to train scholars and teachers to do such work on a broad basis.”⁶ This is a project that aims to be “global in its presence as well as its intentions.”⁷ Some critics, however, argue that despite the project’s noteworthy ambitions to read beyond the European canons, ‘World Literature’ has relied on methods and critical approaches mainly promoted within a Euro-American nexus or shaped by “Anglo–globalism.”⁸ For Emily Apter, World Literature’s “entrepreneurial, bulimic drive to anthologize and curricularize the world’s cultural resources,” often blind to linguistic and political specificities, leads to a tendency towards simplification, homogenization and commoditization.⁹ Graham Huggan similarly suggests that ‘World Literature’ is obliged – to some extent at least – to rail against (or simply ignore) the conspicuous inequalities produced by globalization because the field is itself a relatively unacknowledged product of globalization.”¹⁰

writing reproduce a symmetrical, if inverse, exclusion.” Mary Gallagher, “Poetics, ethics, and globalization,” in *World Writing: Poetics, Ethics, Globalization*, ed. Mary Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 44. Nicholas Brown argues that “if world literature does not spring spontaneously from a host of freely developing cultural equals, but rather represents the exploitation of geographic and cultural diversity by a limited ensemble of economic and cultural forms, we may ask to what extent Non-Western Literature is a contradiction in terms.” Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 6.

⁶ See Institute of World Literature Website, accessed 4 November 2015, <http://iwl.fas.harvard.edu/pages/about>

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Jonathan Arac, “Anglo-Globalism?” *New Left Review* 16, July-August (2002), 35-45.

⁹ Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013).

¹⁰ Graham Huggan, “The trouble with World Literature.” In *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, eds. Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 501.

In this article we would like to suggest that the difficulties in tackling the processes of globalization faced by ‘World Literature’ and Comparative Literature may have not only to do with the signaled tendency to produce the very processes of globalization suggested by Apter and Huggan, but are also linked with a recent – and more general – trend adopted by scholars in the Humanities at large, to privilege the study of ‘transnational’ in detriment of an examination of national and international relations.¹¹ With the crisis felt in area studies due to the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new geopolitical configurations, many scholars have been too ready to disregard concepts such as that of the ‘national’ and the ‘international’ and replace these, instead, by ‘postnational’ and ‘transnational’ perspectives, perhaps hoping to find new cultural counterpoints to globalization processes, but yet neglecting to thoroughly examine the dynamics of power of those politically and economically charged global processes.

In David Damrosch’s influential book, *What is World Literature*, the author takes “world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language.”¹² Referring to Marx’s claim that “national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature,”¹³ Damrosch goes on to read ‘World Literature’ as “less a set of works than a network”¹⁴ shaped by newly global trade relations complicated by globalization. By rejecting nation-based approaches to the Comparative Studies in favor of an approach based on the circulation of texts, Damrosch believes that ‘World Literature’ will thus be able to resist “disintegrat[ion] into the conflicting multiplicity of separate

¹¹ For Graham Huggan “the ‘conversational’ model of ‘World Literature’, designed to put different disciplines as well as different works of literature into dialogue with one another, is always liable to bypass specific forms of methodological training, producing instead a ‘sociology’ that looks like sociology, a ‘history’ that looks like history, and the least – to rail against (or simply ignore) the conspicuous inequalities produced by globalization because the field is itself a relatively unacknowledged product of globalization [...]” Huggan, “The trouble with World Literature,” 500-501.

¹² Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, 4.

¹³ Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, 4.

¹⁴ Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, 3.

national traditions; nor, on the other hand, need it be swallowed up in the white noise that Janet Abu-Lughod has called ‘global babble.’¹⁵ A similar rejection of nation-based comparisons and in favor of new epistemological and intermedial relations is stated by Haun Saussy, who suggests that Comparative Literature should turn its focus to significant intersections between arts and media since, in his view, nations are “not [an] interesting basis for comparison.”¹⁶

One should bear in mind, however, that if the nation as an entity has seen much of its political and economic traction weakened by global pressures, its roles – its political and social roles –, its part in international politics and its governing duties in constitutional societies, where self-governing and representative values are meant to prevail, cannot be simply ignored or undermined. Despite the fragilities and failures of contemporary democracies, they still correspond – more or less progressively – to an ideal system of social representation that many transnational and international organizations do not hold. Indeed what happens in nations (the national) and what happens *in* and *between* nations (the international) is now – more than ever – relevant for our understanding of global dynamics, which are not simply reduced to transnational movements or networks. Moreover, it should be made clear that to equate the study of national literatures and cultures with ‘nationalistic’ or essentialist paradigms is to reduce the much needed focus on wider national issues (problems as well as solutions) which are fueled by and/or have an impact on globalization, to a caricature of national partisanship that would endanger any serious academic approach on international relations. Comparative approaches based on national traits, connections, or even perspectives do not need to assume (and should not in principle adopt) chauvinistic or narcissistic positions. Nor do they need to “sing the nation state,” in the words of Spivak and Butler.¹⁷ Self-criticism is a crucial tool for Comparative Studies, for only self-conscious and self-critical approaches can flourish in a

¹⁵ Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, 5.

¹⁶ Haun Saussy and Gerald Gillespie (eds.), *Intersections, Interferences, Interdisciplines. Literature with Other Arts* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2014), 12.

¹⁷ Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (Oxford: Seagull Books, 2007).

field crisscrossed by different cultures, diverse histories and multiple social realities. Through self-criticism, Comparative Studies, and Comparative Literature, can be a privileged stage for the interrogation of national, international and transnational connections, pressures and dissociations. If the impulse towards comparison is imbued also by the critical questioning of the political decisions promoted, or pressures faced, by one or more countries, with attention to the general go-political formations which determine both national and international standpoints, comparative approaches will become less a tool for national competition than for global awareness, political consciousness and self-examination. Jingoistic readings are promoted by the lack of rigorous discussion of national histories and their specific social realities. Renewed and revised comparisons of national histories and cultural contexts, and of their roles in wider inter- and trans-national structures, are not only important but necessary. Naturally, nation-based comparisons cannot – or should not – ignore international and transnational trends as, it is well known, national contexts are inextricably linked to global frameworks.

Moreover, analyses attentive also to national traits are not necessarily traditional in form or format, nor are they necessarily monodisciplinary. Hence the move towards the study of new intersections, interferences, intertextuality, as suggested by Haun Saussy, should not be seen as an alternative development or a move away from nation-based readings since it can – and does – occur in comparative analyses of texts concerned with national and international relations. Indeed, the examination of (inter) national problems, negotiations and/or riddles can often only be thoroughly understood through the exploration of the often elusive places where texts and contexts intersect, and politics and aesthetics overlap.

Drawing on Goethe's belief that Germany lacked both "a great history" and "political unity", Damrosch explains that the author "can't afford to grant 'national literature' too much meaning, since he doesn't even live *in* a proper nation at all."¹⁸ This view of national literature, can however be seen in a different light if we consider the reality of writers whose works, unlike that of Goethe, directly challenged the

¹⁸ Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, 8.

reality of foreign domination.¹⁹ Indeed, if we recall the challenges faced by anticolonial thinkers in the second half of the 20th century, such as Frantz Fanon or Amílcar Cabral, one can ask to what extent are issues of national consciousness or national culture not similarly pertinent to writers and artists in countries under foreign rule. How can writers from Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, whose countries endured or are still enduring today not only national and regional conflicts, but also foreign military and political interventions, be capable to write *in* and *about* their countries without raising questions of nationality? Yet, the defense of national consciousness is not only a problem of those faced by military interventions but by many who undergo economic interventions. Indeed, it is also a European problem today. If we take into consideration the recent political and economic pressures that Southern European democracies face (as illustrated by Greece's failed negotiations with the UE and the IMF), we will recognize that ideas of national identity and national sovereignty have been greatly undermined by international interests. In this sense, and to go back to Damrosch's reading of Goethe's work, which opens this paragraph, one could argue that writers living in places of conflict (either military, political or economic) cannot afford '*not*' "*to grant 'national literature' too much meaning*", as they would run the risk of not living *in a proper nation at all*.

Comparative approaches attentive to both national realities and international dynamics can give expression to the way texts recreate, reflect upon, revise or critique global and local governmental policies, issues of legal jurisdiction, demographical changes, and the way these react or respond to international negotiations, political pressures or transnational financial fluxes. An example of such an approach could be illustrated by the reading of a long poem by the Portuguese writer

¹⁹ That was the case of Germany too during the Napoleonic wars, during which a strong national movement emerged with its potentialities and risks as illustrated by Johann Gottlieb Fichte's defense of a Jacobin nationalism – *Germanness* would depend on the collective will to progress towards liberty and perfectibility – a notion, albeit increasingly *ethnicised* through the idea of purity and originality (German as the *Ursprache*, Germans as the *Urvolk*). We thank Manuela Ribeiro Sanches for her comments, particularly regarding the issue of German nationalism during the period of the Napoleonic wars, which informed this paper.

Hélia Correia entitled *A Terceira Miséria* – a book written under the ongoing programs of austerity in Portugal and Greece, following the financial crisis in United States and Europe, which became the recipient of the renowned 2015 Camões Prize. What Correia calls our “third misery,” the misery of our times, is our inability to listen and to question (“A terceira miséria é esta, a de hoje./ A de quem já não ouve nem pergunta”).²⁰ For Correia, the noble place of the polis is no longer a stage of democracy but has become instead a platform of cultural and social obliviousness. By alluding directly to the Greek cultural legacy and its historical role in the birth of democracy, Correia’s text questions both Portuguese national politics and the wide range of austerity policies promoted in Southern Europe by the European Commission, the European Central bank and the IMF and the general indifference of these international organizations towards democratic ethics. Correia’s text is not only critical of the social and cultural strategies promoted by Portuguese politicians, but is also informed by the example of the Greek people and its leaders in their recent battle with a finance-lead European administration. *Terceira Miséria* is a text vigilant about the loss of shared values, which, for many, were also meant to uphold the international project known as European Union. Hélia Correia’s text evokes, precisely, Edward Said’s definition of the “worldliness”, often mentioned by advocates of ‘World Literature’. One should bear in mind, however, that for Said “worldliness” implies something which is recurrently absent in much literary criticism today, namely the critic’s role in “creating the processes of the present, as process and inauguration, the actual conditions by means of which art and writing bear significance.”²¹ Certainly not all texts embody, as poignantly as Correia’s book does, the double-edged critique of national and international anti-democratic practices. However, many other texts produced not only in Europe but throughout the world, contain similarly pressing insights about current national and international configurations which beg our attention. It is up to us, academic scholars and critics, to

²⁰ Hélia Correia, *A Terceira Miséria* (Lisbon: Relógio d’Água, 2012), 29.

²¹ Edward W. Said, “The Text, the World, the Critic.” *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 8, no. 2 (Autumn, 1975), 21.

reveal such alignments, which in Said's vision of "worldliness", can emerge though "the articulation of those voices dominated, displaced, or silenced by the textuality of texts."²²

Due to the suppleness of its focus, Comparative Studies and Comparative Literature are privileged environments for the examination and critique of national, international and transnational relations. Indeed, the changes in the field of International Relations have much in common with those taking place in Comparative Literature. The acknowledgment of the common concerns that unite both fields have led several institutions to create joint programs in Comparative Literature and International Relations, at the same time that global studies bringing social sciences and humanities together proliferate in both sides of the Atlantic. However, few serious studies have taken upon the task to explore such interdisciplinary potential systematically. Interdisciplinary approaches would allow Comparative Studies scholars to examine in greater depth issues emerging up to globalization processes such as diplomatic relations, questions of state sovereignty and problems concerning international security, ecological sustainability, foreign interventionism, nuclear proliferation, and global finance, among others.

New debates about Comparative Literature have also been engaged, to some extent, in re-defining traditional visions of cosmopolitanism as separate from geo-political interests or individual or collective forms of privilege. In what 'World Literature' is concerned, it is worth taking into consideration Damrosch's presentation of Goethe's cosmopolitanism as described above. Damrosch is careful to show that, although cosmopolitan desires may hide, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith demonstrates, imperial yearning, he believes that Goethe's vision of 'World Literature' is not based upon such yearnings. For Damrosch it results, instead, from the lack of a secure cultural position. The terms of this discussion are, nevertheless, relevant for us here because they are inextricably tied up with ideas of *security*, which are, themselves, tied to national and international relations. In the original text, Herrnstein Smith states that

²² Said, "The Text, the World, the Critic," 21.

since the self, even as it is transformed by its interactions with the world, also transforms how that world seems to itself, its *system of self-securing* is not thereby unhinged nor is it “corrected” by cosmopolitanism. Rather, in enlarging its view “from China to Peru,” it may become all the more imperialistic, seeing in every horizon of difference new peripheries of its own centrality, new pathologies through which its own normality may be defined and must be asserted.²³

Smith refers here to a “system of self-securing” (which is cited by Damrosch in his article) to illustrate how the logic of self-privileging can incorporate values such as cosmopolitanism not “merely as a self-sustaining mechanism but as a productive one, generating new perceptual and conceptual articulation.”²⁴ Damrosch, in return, reasserts the terminology of security when he suggests that Goethe lacked the “secure cultural standpoint that could allow his imperial view to collapse into a self-confirming narcissism.”²⁵ Not surprisingly, security is clearly at the heart of debates about cultural hegemony. If security is visibly a cultural concern, more work should and can be done by scholars in our fields to understand the cultural outcomes which derive from its national and international dynamics as well as to understand the relation between security and culture as a widening and global phenomenon with a longstanding political history. Indeed, if the image of *Securitas*, the goddess of security, once played an important cultural and political part in the Roman Empire – circulating widely in the coins of early Roman emperors – one should bear in mind that new and, paradoxically, more threatening representations of security continue to play substantial roles in new imperial configurations.

In the social sciences, in particular, there has been a renewed interest in security studies since the 11th September 2001 attacks in New York and Washington DC, and since the institutionalization of ‘9/11’ as major event. With the launch of the War on Terror and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as recent interventions in Syria, European

²³ Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies a/Value Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1988), 54.

²⁴ Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies a/Value Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*, 54.

²⁵ Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, 8.

cities such as London, Madrid, and more recently Paris or Brussels, have also become targets of international terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda and Isis. These developments had a significant impact not only on dominant approaches to security, often concerned with issues of strategy and the global distribution of the threat of war among competing states, but have also been of particular interest to scholars of critical security studies, who engaged in both explaining and critiquing dominant security paradigms. Indeed, at a time when many scholars search for transnational common platforms, where security could be examined comparatively, it would be very important to see the emergence and collaboration between critical approaches to security in the humanities, in fields as varied as literature, visual culture and more general cultural studies. By inviting the dialogue between the humanities and the social sciences, the thematic cluster contained in this volume suggests, first of all, that literary studies in particular, should reclaim their place in the construction and critique of new security studies. Indeed, it can be argued that, although major concepts used by the social sciences in the study of urban security and surveillance such as panopticism, societies of control, state of exception, vision machine derived, to a great extent, from the fictional works of authors such as Kafka, Orwell, Bradbury and Burroughs, literary studies have been – with few exceptions – largely disengaged from the debates on the repercussions of security in contemporary society and should therefore retrieve a position within the ongoing discussion on security. Secondly, this volume invites colleagues in the social sciences (anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, etc.) to focus on security by engaging with cultural and linguistic questions, fictional tropes, images and metaphors which are usually of the domain of literary and cultural studies but are essential to an understanding of the discourses and practices of security across the world.

As this volume is being prepared, the rising number of refugees and migrants coming to the European Union, across the Mediterranean Sea or through Southeast Europe, and applying for asylum from areas such as the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and the Western Balkans has led to what has been called a refugee crisis. Since this sense of *crisis* has been greatly exacerbated by the terrorist attacks in Paris on

the 13th November 2015, it seems more important than ever that we clarify and reflect upon some of the thorny questions that bring security and hospitality together.

Derrida's insights into friendship and hospitality have initiated a debate, whose re-articulation is particularly urgent nowadays. The interpretation of the "host" Derrida proposes is based on the antinomy and reversibility of the duality friend-enemy. Contrary to Carl Schmitt, for whom it constitutes an irreversible element that lies at the base of sovereignty, the possibility of a friend become enemy and vice versa is at the very heart of the definition of both. This distinction has important political implications that have been already outlined.²⁶ Because of that, Derrida's theorization on amity and enmity sounds particularly attuned with the state of things of the war on terror and our present moment, and it is thus not strange that it has been constantly recalled and recovered in the last years.

If Derrida's writings on hospitality and friendship seem to loom our present, there is in them an interest in escaping actuality and engaging with the origins of both terms, as well as with the potential of the linguistic genealogies.²⁷ Derrida bases his plea for unconditional hospitality in a revision of Kantian's unconditional truth. For Kant, the absolute moral predicament of truth constitutes the limit of hospitality. The need to say the truth in any situation, even when the life of someone close to us is at danger, constrains our agency as hosts as well as the

²⁶ Reinhard points out that "The implication of Derrida's comment is that the neighbor who is to be loved as ourself cannot be relegated to a private, pre- or extrapolitical realm, insofar as a similar, if not identical, structure of reflexivity also determines the relationship to the public enemy, who, as reliably 'identifiable', is loved (or hated) as ourself". Kenneth Reinhard, "Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbor." In *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 19.

²⁷ Precisely, one of the central arguments of Derrida, namely the close bond between *host* and *hostage*, and also between *hospitality* and *hostility*, presents that etymological interest.

hospes bound.²⁸ That bound becomes, then, dependent of the realm of the law, of being inscribed and sanctioned publicly. In that sense, Derrida argues, hospitality remains fallible and conditional, whereas truth, and by extension law, remain unconditional, non-dependent of contextual hazards. As a result, “he [Kant] destroys, along with the right to lie, any right of keeping something to oneself, of dissimulating, or resisting the demand for truth, confessions, or public openness.”²⁹

What is important here is that, for Derrida, it is “juridicality,” the inscription of the principle of hospitality into the law, what threatens that principle from its inception, from its base:

From the point of view of the law, the guest, even when he is well received, is first of all a foreigner, he must remain a foreigner. Hospitality is due to the foreigner, certainly, but remains, like the law, conditional, and thus conditioned in its dependence on the unconditionality that is the basis of the law.³⁰

It is well known that the alternative Derrida offers is a step towards unconditional hospitality, towards hospitality beyond the laws of hospitality: “It is as though the laws (plural) of hospitality, in marking limits, powers, rights, and duties, consisted in challenging and transgressing the law of hospitality, the one that would command that the “new arrival” be offered an unconditional welcome.”³¹

So, the question will be to define what is an unconditional welcome, an hospitality “beyond thematization,”³² in which situations could it be possible, and more specifically to determine if it is still possible in our troubled present. Is there a space for present-day refugees in

²⁸ It is worth recalling that unconditional hospitality does not mean hospitality granted to all, but rather, as Papastergiadis recalls, “a regulated mode of reception”. Nikos Papastergiadis, “Hospitality and the Zombification of the Other.” In *The Conditions of Hospitality. Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, ed. Thomas Claviez (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 145.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality. Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 69.

³⁰ Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 72-73.

³¹ Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 77.

³² Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 51.

Derrida's "cities of refuge"? Derrida argues for the need of cities of refuge by saying that "nowadays international law is limited by treaties between sovereign states, and that not even a "government of the world" would be capable of sorting things out."³³ However, it seems that the landscape opened up by the current predicament of insecurity and violence exceeds this problematic. The problem with that argument is that it relies so much on the state, constructing national sovereignty as a force that, at best, can let the realm of law to materialize, and at worst creates obstacles to it. What we are missing in that argument is the ways sovereignty enforces the law *even when not, mostly when not, acknowledges it*. We are witnessing in our present, to put it simply, a political economy of accessibility that contradicts and ultimately denies the correct functioning of those cities of refuge, one that implies a *conditional* recurring to the discourse of human rights and friendship, often distributed through quotas and linked to the demonstration of force and the administration of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. More than that, the plea for unconditional hospitality and cities of refuge is being framed within a segmented urban space marked by the configuration of neoliberal spaces and dynamics of exclusion and marginalization,³⁴ and of banished experiences and agencies.³⁵ Along with that, we are witnessing the exhaustion and deployment of the positive value traditionally associated to the discourses of tolerance and human rights, discourses that have become in many cases curtains of more subtle

³³ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2003), 8.

³⁴ Bryan Hogeveen and Joshua Freistadt, "Hospitality and the Homeless: Jacques Derrida in the Neoliberal City." *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology*, 5(1), (2013), 48.

³⁵ The idea of the ban constitutes one of the main points developed by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer*: For Agamben, the banned subject was considered as already dead, and therefore violence on her persona constituted a non-punishable act. Because of that, the experience of the banned accounts for "a zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast, nature and culture" Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 109. For an updated approach on the figure of the ban in the American context, linked to security and control issues, see Katherine Beckett and Steve Herbert, *Banished. The Social Control in Urban America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

forms of violence. Finally, as we are also witnessing, both national and international institutions have been slow – and in some cases unwilling – to consider moral and ethical implications of the lack of a thorough system of refugee protection, limiting themselves, in many instances, to implement short-term legal and administrative measures, heightening the overall context of vulnerability and precariousness felt by both refugees and European citizens alike.³⁶

So, what can comparative security studies teach us concerning those questions? How are we to envisage, if we must, an “unconditional welcome” nowadays? If Derrida points at the momentous condition of any act of hospitality, Mireille Rosello, on the other hand, considers the question of hospitality by sketching a slightly different panorama, in which the daughters and sons of immigrants continue to be immersed in the host-hostage antinomy, even when their relation with territory and identity is different to that of their progenitors.³⁷

For Derrida, there must be simultaneously a bond and an antinomy, a “non-dialectical” relation, between the unconditional principle of hospitality and its materializations in the form of specific laws. But, what happens when the “legality” of those laws disappears, when they just become a tool for policing, losing sight of the other part of that non-dialectical relation? Is that antinomy the model for all kind of relations with the other?³⁸ Perhaps we should also consider situations “in which the ethical demand requires a non-hospitable response at the level

³⁶ Erin Wilson, “Protecting the Unprotected: Reconceptualising Refugee Protection through the Notion of Hospitality.” In *Local Global* 7 (2010), 101.

³⁷ Mireille Rosello, “Conviviality and Pilgrimage: Hospitality as Interruptive Practice.” In *The Conditions of Hospitality. Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, edited by Thomas Claviez. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 127-145.

³⁸ For Leung and Stone, a new situation arises “When one shifts attention away from the refugee and toward the other who does not desire inclusion, the violence of hospitality is rendered inescapably visible. And to welcome, in this scene, demonstrates a different type of violence, for the failure of hospitality is not that one is not hospitable enough but, paradoxically, that one has been hospitable at all.” Gilbert Leung and Matthew Stone, “Otherwise than Hospitality: A Disputation on the Relation of Ethics to Law and Politics.” *Law and Critique* 20 (2), 204.

of politics.”³⁹ To reiterate the question posed by Gilbert Gleung and Mathew Stone: are there others who do not desire hospitality? ⁴⁰ Could it be argued that we are witnessing, as some critics of Derrida have done, the intrinsic violence and the difficulties existing in the passage from the ethical conception of an unconditional principle of hospitality, based on a universal and totalizing idea of *fraternité*, to its political materialization?

This passage is not only a troublesome point in Derrida’s text; it is also a moment worth revisiting and exploring further. Important work has been already done in that sense,⁴¹ but that transition still needs our attention, particularly if we aim to consider security from a critical comparative perspective. A key question for Comparative Studies has to do with the very “forms of the we” originated by the increasingly felt sense of (in)security worldwide. These new forms can be more or less conservative depending on the place which “insecurity” is felt to be located, and on the extent to which an insecure subject is capable of interrogating national and international negotiations as well as transnational processes.

That sense of insecurity results for the confrontations emerging in the pressing spaces of antagonism summarized by Žižek in four groups: the menace of an ecological crisis leading to catastrophe; the struggles related to intellectual property and the privatization of culture; the ethic-social implications of biogenetics advances, and finally the construction of new walls and contexts of marginalization and segregation.⁴² The tensions gathered under those four clusters, Žižek argues, evidence the fragility of the capitalist system, constituting ultimately a systemic crisis, but also a potential for renovation and emergence, and therefore for politics. Antagonism can be framed, then, as a place of crisis but

³⁹ Leung and Stone, “Otherwise than Hospitality: A Disputation on the Relation of Ethics to Law and Politics.” In *Law and Critique* 20 (2009), 203.

⁴⁰ Leung and Stone, “Otherwise than Hospitality: A Disputation on the Relation of Ethics to Law and Politics,” 203.

⁴¹ See, for example, Gideon Baker (ed.), *Hospitality and World Politics* (London: Palgrave, 2013); David J. Gauthier, *Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and the Politics of Dwelling* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011).

⁴² Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (London: Routledge, 2004), 86.

also as a potential aperture, one attentive to the intercrossing and the dialogue of security and (the potentiality of) hospitality.⁴³ Furthermore, those spaces of antagonism, especially the last one, represented by the erection of borders and the precarization of common spaces, seem to be difficultly subsumable under World Literature's vision of a transnational network based on connectivity and reciprocity. It will be necessary, thus, to keep those elements in mind and to remain vigilant of the ongoing and manifold instances where national, international and transnational work directly or indirectly against political materializations of hospitality and social justice – if we aim to redefine “worldly” connections and articulations within Comparative Studies.

In 2009, Susan Buck-Morss asked for a radical cosmopolitanism, one overtaking the theoretical and political zones of comfort and the exclusivity of privileged experiences either individual or collective.⁴⁴ This position is essential to harmonize security and hospitality; it can be considered a *condition of possibility* for scholars in Comparatives Studies, a way of integrating our cultural and creative efforts in a precarious time. That condition underlies the challenge undertaken by the following collection of essays. These are essays which force us out of our theoretical and political zones of comfort, proposing new avenues for Comparative Studies and new ways of looking at the world.

The essays here gathered cover a wide range of disciplinary fields while offering original and complementary insights on these matters. They clearly emphasize the manifold contours of today's cultures of (in)security, suggesting, in terms of themes and methods, possible new *foci* of interest for Comparative Studies. And what is more, they aim at decentering – both geographically as methodologically – a timely and intricate debate where hegemonic dynamics still abound. The thematic cluster “Cultures of (In)security in Comparison” opens with a contribution by Donald E. Pease, an eminent Americanist who has

⁴³ See Jeffrey Clapp and Emily Ridge (eds.), *Security and Hospitality in Literature and Culture: Modern and Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁴ Susan Buck-Morss. “Radical Cosmopolitanism.” *Third Text* 23(5) (2009), 547-549.

been dealing with security issues in his research and, at the same time, renovating the practices of Comparative Literature. His essay “The Uncanny Return of American Exceptionalism: Barack Obama v. The Tea Party Movement” puts in evidence how the fantasy of American exceptionality – a stance that transnational American Studies have consciously tried to avoid – seems to be a well-grounded concept increasingly used within public and political domains especially related to Homeland Security strategies. In particular, his essay suggests that the idea of ‘exception’ was a powerful metaphorical and operative notion that reinforced the so-called ‘War on Terror,’ and the ‘State of Exception’ inaugurated by George W. Bush after 2001. More crucially however, Pease investigates the tensions that oppose Barack Obama and the Tea Party movement, mainly by exposing how the Tea Party program rests on a deliberate disavowal of knowledge and on fostering new parasitic anxieties over Obama’s administration. By emphasizing how the Tea Party has struggled to convert what was perceived as Obama’s potential of transformation and change into a fetishistic narrative that places him as a new terrorist and enemy of the state, Donald Pease further discusses how homeland security discourses and counter-discourses are closely intertwined with issues of race and biopolitics.

A different perspective is outlined by Simone Tulumello and Roberto Falanga in their article “An exploratory study of uses of ‘urban security’ and ‘urban safety’ in international urban studies literature”. In this work, the authors use an innovative approach, combining methods from both social sciences and humanities, to examine the impact that themes of security and safety actually have in academic circles and, more concretely, in the scholarly production on urban studies. To this end, they have examined sets of bibliographic material retrieved from Web of Science by Thomson Reuters, using network analysis on author keywords and text analysis of abstracts. Consequently, and after a comprehensive discussion of the related findings, interesting conclusions can be extracted from this investigation. Through an analytical methodology, this article aims at overcoming the semantic ambiguity that is often present between the terms safety and security. Their results suggest that studies on urban safety/security and studies on critical urban studies tend to define quite independent fields, frequently disconnected from each

another. While offering a detailed characterization of the communities of authors involved, also in terms of geographic distribution, this work puts forward how, according to Tulumello and Falanga, the concept of security is more commonly charged with a regulatory function regarding crime prevention and its policies, whereas safety is a term more often associated with feelings and perceptions of fear.

Such a stimulating survey on the international literature on themes of security is then followed by another contribution which highlights how the narratives of fear are not only part of political and academic contexts; they are also very much present in the circuits of art, both in terms of art practices as theoretically. In his essay “Art and the Discourse of Fear during the ‘War on Terror’”, Pierre Saurisse starts by analyzing the post-9/11 situation in the U.S. to highlight how the vocabulary of fear pervaded language, as well as the political and public discourses during that period. More concretely, the article examines how artists have initially responded to these fearful discourses with thought-provoking artistic actions that were mostly activated in the public space, rather than in the institutional circuits of museums and galleries. The affective element is here brought to the fore, as the author further discusses the strategies used, and refuted, to launch a war on a specific emotion – terror. Additionally, and through the fine analysis of different case studies, Saurisse emphasizes how art has commented on the political according to strategies which mirror and mimic the policies of action and preemption that shaped the so-called ‘War on Terror’. The artworks and performative actions here examined also underline the role of the media, clearly revealing how fear, as we know it today, has been something so carefully and consistently constructed. They also expose the mechanisms of deception that were at the heart of the United States policy-making of those years because, ultimately, these were works committed to undermining the strategies of fabrication that shaped that very discourse of fear.

Aiming at expanding current debates on (in)security, the articles that integrate this thematic cluster offer a wide variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary frames at the same time that they address, differently, interrelated cultural issues like hospitality, nationalism, or cosmopolitanism. The essay by Carlos Garrido Castellano offers yet

another take on these matters in that it opens up the scale of reflection towards the environmental. The article “Locating Human agency in the Anthropocene. Environmental Universalism, Natural Catastrophes and the Possibilities of Critique” proposes a comparative analysis in which institutional critique is used as an illuminating lens through which these issues can be addressed. The author puts in evidence how, in the Anthropocene, human capacity to impact on the planet poses timely questions concerning security, agency and risk management. However, thoughtful critique is required to better understand the consequences of such actions and the topographies of the present geopolitical administrations. Even though the Anthropocene model implies a sense of vicinity and proximity between members of a universal community, a re-evaluation of our position in such a global scale seems all the more necessary. Garrido Castellano’s essay challenges us to see beyond the ‘neutral white cube’ also in this context, as it moreover suggests that the idea of an imagined global landscape of shared responsibilities is somehow concealing the existence of unescapable inequalities that define different world cartographies, territories of insecurity and rather invisible ideological structures. By doing so, this work poses an ultimate question, interrogating who is, after all, the universal “we” in the Anthropocene.

While (in)security may refer to collective circumstances of a given setting, even if unknown, it powerfully operates at an individual level as well, where it primarily concerns perception. The perception of insecurity constitutes the main attention of the article “Mexican Children Discussing ‘The Situation of Insecurity’ in the City of Monterrey, Mexico” by Beatriz Inzunza-Acedo. The article investigates how a group of forty-four children (aged 10-13), from different social backgrounds, reacts to, and is influenced by, the insecurity that pervades their home city: Monterrey. To do so, the author proposes an empirical approach, based on interviews and drawings which were made by the children and that are here closely examined. Such an elicitation technique attempts to retrieve information that, otherwise, would not be easily accessible. Results are particularly revealing for they succeed in drawing differences and points of coincidence in the children’s responses concerning insecurity and, more importantly, they do so by taking their genre and social class into account.

Interestingly enough, this study shows not only how children's perception is certainly influenced by their own experience (or by the experience of close relatives), it also brings to the fore how media stereotypes (TV, film, videogames) are incredibly effective and play a crucial role in their judgment of these phenomena. Therefore, the construction of children's views on insecurity combines different levels of experience, articulates real life accounts with fictional genres, and implies an active negotiation in their own creation of meaning.

Finally, the thematic cluster closes with the article "*White Order: Racialization of Public Space in the Netherlands*," by Egbert Alejandro Martina and Patricia Schor, which aims to address insecurity problems through a reflection grounded on urban policies and city planning concerning several Dutch cities. Drawing on specific case studies, the authors address issues of (post)coloniality, thus proposing a productive link between territoriality and bodies, here understood also as areas of governmentality. The article deals with political discourses and representations of non-autochthon populations, and analyses several forms of racialization of the Dutch current policies and strategies with regard to the public space. Martina and Egbert launch the idea that the apparently neutral governmental practices and discourses are actually grounded on the hegemony of a 'White Order'. For this reason, issues of race are necessarily discussed by the authors, and their argument highlights the role of space management and urban planning in such an orderly frame. More importantly, they propose an understanding of such political actions in urban planning as regulatory forms of soft, low-intensity violence which pervade the current modes of living in common. In this scenario, the authors ask: how are we to think of urban forms of commonality and what kind of social relations can possibly emerge from this quiet urban violence that is exerted upon specific bodies?

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