

David Damrosch

University of Harvard

Tupi or Not Tupi: The World in the Nation

The quarter century since the founding of the Associação Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada has witnessed a profound shift in comparative studies, from an almost exclusive focus on Western European literary relations to a newly global perspective. The conference programs of the Association's meetings reflect this trend, and naturally so, as Portuguese is a global language, and writers in Portugal itself – from Camões to Pessoa and beyond – have long been involved with literary and cultural relations on a global scale. There is much to celebrate in the opening up of comparative literature to the full panorama of the world's literatures, but serious problems attend this change. Just how much of the world's literature can anyone read? How many literary traditions can be studied even by the collective membership of a national association such as the APLC? Will literature in Portuguese gain new attention in a field long dominated by French, German, and English literature, or will the broadening of the field extend mostly to Asia and the Middle East? The playing field is far from level even among the handful of global languages, and a growing interest in Anglophone and Francophone literature hasn't yet been matched by comparable worldwide attention to Lusophone writers. It is not necessarily a dramatic improvement if the former domination of Paris as "the capital of the nineteenth century," in Walter Benjamin's phrase, is now replaced by the leveling force of global English emanating from London and New York – or, increasingly, from Hollywood.

The ubiquity of Anglophone popular culture was brought home to me recently on a visit to Hanoi. The fact that the Hanoi Academy of

Sciences would be inviting American scholars to discuss world literature certainly represents a welcome change from the tragic hostilities of a generation ago, but the soft power of American marketing may flatten out global culture more effectively than military means have done. Particularly striking was a prominent building in downtown Hanoi, across whose upper storey ran a proud sign in red neon letters, proclaiming (as my hosts translated the words for me) “Eternal Victory to the Communist Party.” The center of the building, though, was now occupied by a KFC fast-food restaurant. The sign over the main entrance showed a beaming Colonel Sanders, his goateed visage oddly resembling portraits of Uncle Ho Chi Minh on nearby banners. The Colonel was flanked by signs for Panasonic, the HSBC, and a restaurant called (in English) “Thai Village” – the Hanoi branch of a Singapore-based chain. Global English here paves the way for the region-wide marketing of a Southeast Asian cuisine.

Equally noteworthy was a book display in the gift shop of the Ho Chi Minh Residence. There, a Chinese-language guide to the site was sandwiched in between two quite discordant volumes: on Ho Chi Minh’s right, a cartoon life of Abraham Lincoln, and to his left a glossy paperback boasting a roly-poly Winnie the Pooh and a leering Tigger, taken from the Disney film. Yet this display was less American-centered than it seemed at first. The Disney characters were featured on the cover of a collection of Vietnamese animal fables, used as a kind of found image lifted from the American media in order to draw young Vietnamese readers into a collection of their own culture’s productions. The biography of Lincoln was appropriate in its own way. Ho Chi Minh was an admirer of America’s struggles for freedom from British colonial domination, and during the Vietnam War, various North Vietnamese commentators compared their north-south conflict to the American Civil War; thus the American example aided Ho in resisting French imperialism and then the incursions of America itself. Moreover, the Lincoln bio-comic in the bookshop wasn’t an American product at all, but instead illustrates the regional circulation of literature throughout East Asia: it was a Vietnamese translation of a Korean life of Lincoln, composed in the form of a Japanese manga.

Ho Chi Minh's presence at the center of this grouping was a logical outcome of the globalizing literary processes in which he actively participated during his lifetime. The book about him was a guide for Chinese visitors to the site; its cover showed him writing away, not working indoors in his austere office but sitting in a bamboo chair out in his garden, much as a classical Chinese poet might have done. He might, indeed, have been writing a poem at that very moment. Living on the cusp of a shift from the older East Asian literary world to the new global stage of his revolutionary activism, Ho composed poetry in classical Chinese when he wasn't writing speeches in Vietnamese for local consumption and essays in French for dissemination in the anti-imperial struggle in Europe. Appropriately, this book was published by the Gioi Xuat Ban Xa, the "World Publishing House."

These examples can suggest something of the rich complexity of cultural flows today. Creative writers are finding all sorts of new opportunities in today's globalizing world, including ways to exploit the very tensions of globalization itself, and these are a worthy subject for today's comparative study. The literatures of non-hegemonic nations are far from melting away amid global babble. Instead, they are becoming revitalized through new modes of international circulation and exchange. Outside the often rather self-obsessed Anglophone sphere, we can recognize the vital role played in many local cultures by the world's several genuinely global languages. As the world's seventh or eighth most widely spoken language, Portuguese is prominent among these, all the more so with its long literary traditions on three continents and beyond.

As a result of these developments, the challenges and the opportunities for comparative studies in the next quarter century will be different from what most comparatists were thinking about in the mid-1980s when the Association was founded. This was also the period in which I first became involved as a young assistant professor in the Association's counterpart in the United States, the American Comparative Literature Association. The ACLA's annual meetings of that era featured between 125 and 150 papers, almost all delivered in English and by academics based in the USA. As late as 1994, the annual meeting held at Claremont, California had only four participants from

outside the USA: two from Canada, one from England, and only a single speaker from a non-Anglophone country, Germany. The increasing internationalism of comparative studies has led to a dramatic growth in ACLA since then: our annual meetings now regularly include two thousand papers, presented by scholars coming from as many as fifty countries.

In its incipient globalization, comparative literary scholarship is only just beginning to catch up with the longstanding circulation of art and literature around the globe – a process well illustrated by the Japanese screens, Indo-Portuguese chests, and Afro-Portuguese ivories on display in Lisbon’s **Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga**. One way for us to begin to carry out a more global comparative study, in fact, will be to look more fully at the presence of the wider world within our own home locales. The nationalism of the national literary traditions was never as all-encompassing or as water-tight as nationalistic literary histories have often supposed. Having arisen during the heyday of nationalism, our departments of modern literature even now often carry on the nineteenth-century assumption that the essence of a nation is carried by its national language, embodied in its highest form by the masterpieces of its national literature. The presence of minority or foreign languages within the national cultural space has often been neglected, studied only minimally if at all. Until recently, American poets who wrote in Spanish or in Yiddish were rarely if ever included in survey courses or anthologies of American literature, while in England, Irish and Welsh were similarly banished from the curriculum. Even in the case of a major canonical writer such as Milton, only his English-language works are commonly studied: no survey anthology of English literature that I know of includes any of Milton’s Latin poetry. Though Milton was fluent in Latin and proud of his poetic ability in the language, we take it for granted that his Latin poems aren’t worth our while – a judgment that most of us have made without ever having read any of them. Similarly, in India the bilingual poet Mirza Ghalib, who wrote both in Persian and in Urdu, is beloved as an Urdu poet and ignored as a Persian poet – even though Ghalib himself preferred his own Persian poems to his Urdu ones.

Along with understanding the importance of alternatives to the “national language,” we need to give greater weight to translated works, not only as distant “influences” from which we can plot the greatness of our great national writers, but also in many cases as works that actually become part of the literary culture into which they are translated. If we attend to what was being published and read in a given time and place, we will often find that the national literary space includes a far higher proportion of translated works than our courses and our literary histories usually allow. Tracing the growth of English fiction, for instance, English departments have typically given students survey courses that move from *Beowulf* to *The Canterbury Tales* and on to “the Rise of the Novel” in Defoe, Richardson, Sterne, and Fielding. Yet such a parochial evolution would have surprised Henry Fielding, who had never heard of *Beowulf*. He wrote *Tom Jones* (1749) in comic dialogue with his epic master Virgil. The sole surviving manuscript of *Beowulf* had yet to be discovered by Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin, an Icelandic scholar who visited England in 1786 seeking Scandinavian material. And when Laurence Sterne’s opinionated hero Tristram Shandy comes to discuss his favorite authors, neither Chaucer nor Defoe makes the grade. His great inspirations, he says, are “my dear Rabelais, and dearer Cervantes” (Sterne 169). Fielding read Virgil in Latin, but Sterne would have read Cervantes in Charles Jervis’s popular translation of 1742, and likely read Rabelais in the translation begun by Thomas Urquhart and completed by Peter Motteux in 1708.

It is little wonder that Tristram preferred *Don Quixote* over such works as *The Canterbury Tales*. Cervantes was far more widely read in eighteenth-century England than was Chaucer, and he was far from the only influential author on the scene. “Translations,” as one translator noted in 1654, “swarm more . . . then ever” (Sauer 276). From the sixteenth century until Sterne’s day, Spanish and French plays and romances would often have outnumbered home-grown productions in London booksellers’ shops. Their plots, themes, and imagery made their way into English-language writing in much the same way as local material would do, adopted by writers who didn’t cordon off translated works in some separate mental folder from English-language originals. In this connection, it may be recalled that Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*

– written in Latin and published in Holland in 1516 – is indebted not only to Plato’s *Republic* but also to the Peninsular literature of travel and exploration. More casts his narrative in the form of conversations in Antwerp with Raphael Hythlodæus, a sailor who had supposedly traveled to Brazil with Amerigo Vespucci and then branched out on his own for further explorations around the globe. *Utopia* was never published in England during More’s lifetime; it only became part of “English” literature (narrowly defined) in 1551, when it was published in London, in an English translation.

Scholars and critics have occasionally discussed the active presence of translated works as constitutive parts of a national tradition, though these insights have rarely been developed by more mainstream national literary historians. Thus in 1894, the Mexican essayist Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera asserted that Spanish and Latin American novelists had become excellent writers by reading the wealth of imported works available to them in translation:

Mientras más prosa y poesía alemana, francesa, inglesa, italiana, rusa, norte y sudamericana, etc., importe la literatura española, más producirá, y de más ricos y más cuantiosos productos será su exportación. Parece que reniega la literatura de que yo le aplique estos plebeyos términos de comercio; pero no hallo otros que traduzcan tan bien mi pensamiento. No puede negarse que en España hay mejores novelistas que poetas líricos. ¿Y a qué se debe esta disparidad? Pues, a que esos novelistas han leído a Balzac, a Flaubert, a Stendhal, a George Eliot, a Thackeray, a Tolstoi, a muchos otros, y este roce con otros temperamentos literarios, ha sido provechoso para ellos. . . . El renacimiento de la novela en España ha coincidido y debía coincidir con la abundancia de traducciones publicadas. Leen hoy los españoles mucho Zola, mucho Daudet, mucho Bourget, mucho Goncourt, mucho Feuille. . . . En otras palabras: la novela española ha viajado y ha aprendido bastante en sus viajes. (“El cruzamiento en literatura,” in Siskind 138)

Mariano Siskind, who cites this passage in his 2014 book *Cosmopolitan Desires*, comments that Gutiérrez Nájera is giving an important twist to the logic of the peripheral writer as importer of cultural goods from the cultural center: “Even before Spain or Mexico

or Latin American countries generally engage the world, their marginal situation determines their role as cultural importers. But through importation, they modify the sign of their marginality and become importing/exporting cultures” (138). As Siskind says, this perspective received a classic expression in Oswald de Andrade’s “Manifesto antropófago” (1928), which asserted that Brazil devours European culture and has even provided the French with a grounding of their own supposed universality.

In light of current debates over the role of global English, it is particularly intriguing to observe Oswald de Andrade’s sly use of English in his manifesto. Seemingly a declaration of nativist principles, after two initial statements the manifesto suddenly shifts into English:

Só a antropofagia nos une. Socialmente. Economicamente. Filosoficamente.

Única lei do mundo. Expressão mascarada de todos os individualismos, de todos os coletivismos. De todas as religiões. De todos os tratados de paz.

Tupi, or not tupi that is the question. (3)

Even today, Andrade’s subversive play on Hamlet’s famous question is often taken in terms of the quest for a local identity; you can find it, for example, on T-shirts printed by the Brazilian group *Pense Bem* as an affirmation of indigenous rights: “*Todo Dia é Dia do Índio: ‘Tupi or not Tupi.’*” Indigenous rights were not, however, Andrade’s own interest; on the contrary, he was concerned to present Brazil as the most cosmopolitan of cultures, capable of cannibalistically absorbing all foreign influences and even setting the tone for the metropolitan centers. Brazil had surrealism before the Surrealists, he asserts, and psychoanalysis before Freud, but without Viennese repressions. The warped quotation from Shakespeare is double-edged: it seems that Brazilians possessed Shakespeare *avant la lettre*, but at the same time, the character they quote is a Hamlet filled with self-doubt and uncertainty over his identity. In this respect, it seems to me that “Tupi or not Tupi” has a satiric thrust, aimed at the upper classes of society in Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo: people who pride themselves on their ability

to quote Shakespeare in the original. Yet their imperfect pronunciation, by which “b” slips into “p,” leads to a return of the repressed, the native Tupi whom the upper-class Brazilian precisely does *not* want to be.

At several points in his manifesto, Andrade registers the ambiguous attraction of English. If what the Brazilians are importing from England is Shakespeare, what is coming from the USA is something else again: Hollywood films, from whose stereotyped representations of native culture the Brazilians will (mis)recognize their own supposed essence: “A reação contra o homem vestido. O cinema americano informará.” A new Golden Age arrives, or at least an age of films like *The Gold Digger* (1923) with their platinum blonde starlets: “A idade de ouro anunciada pela América. A idade de ouro. E todas as girls” (3).

Andrade’s 1928 manifesto can remind us how regularly national traditions are shot through with influences from the wider world, often conveyed through the global languages that cross borders with ever-increasing frequency. As Gutiérrez Nájera already argued in the 1890s, national literary cultures have regularly become homes away from home for many foreign works. In this respect, world literature is not so much something that exists outside a country’s borders; equally, it is always deeply embedded *within* existing national cultures. Readers experience world literature primarily within their national setting, in the ways it is selected, translated, and mediated by their national literary culture. This literary internationalism, moreover, is not only found among peripheral literatures, but is an important feature of the metropolitan literatures and their hegemonic languages as well. To take the example of English literature, beginning in the colonial period the transatlantic book trade reinforced the interplay of the local and the foreign within the British and the nascent American national traditions. Today, the growing field of transatlantic English studies is deepening our sense of the binational quality of Anglo-American literature from the seventeenth century onward, but here too more should be done to take into account the full range of literatures that have long been written and read in North America as well as England – keeping in mind that Mexico and Canada share North America with the USA, even as substantial parts of the American West and Southwest were long part of colonial New Spain.

As a case in point, I would propose that an influential colonial author such as Bartolomé de Las Casas should rightfully be seen as part of British as well as of Spanish literature. In the original Spanish, his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552) is a major work on colonial Mexico and the Caribbean; in English translation, it circulated in England during the seventeenth century with literary as well as political results¹. Of particular interest is the second English translation of the text, published in London in 1656. The translator, John Phillips – who was also an early translator of *Don Quixote* – evidently undertook the translation of Las Casas at the request of his uncle, John Milton, who treated him almost as an adopted son. Though the *Brevísima relación* had been translated several decades before, a new version would be useful to Oliver Cromwell as he sought to counter Spanish hegemony in the New World. Having failed to do so by direct action – the Spanish had soundly defeated a fleet he sent to the Caribbean in 1654 – Cromwell turned to textual means. In 1655 he published *A Declaration of His Highness, by the Advice of His Council, Setting forth . . . the Justice of Their Cause against Spain*, a tract which Milton translated into Latin for foreign consumption. Soon afterward, John Phillips was commissioned to translate Las Casas, as part of the propaganda effort to highlight the evils of Spanish misrule.

In the introduction to his translation, Phillips echoes language that his uncle had employed in his *Observations on the Cruelties of the Irish*, a tract that Milton had written in support of Cromwell's violent suppression of the Irish rebellion of 1641. To a modern eye, England's Irish subjects might seem more readily parallel to the Amerindians than to the conquistadors, but to Milton and to Cromwell the common term was Catholicism, and they sought to combat the insidiously spreading power of the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire then governed by Spain's monarchs.

¹ The following discussions of Las Casas and then of Marguerite Yourcenar have been drawn from my article "National Literatures in an Age of Globalization," *ADE Bulletin* 149 (2010), 26-37, revised in "Translation and National Literature," in Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter, eds., *A Companion to Translation Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2014.

In translating the *Brevísima relación*, Phillips played up the human drama of the Spanish practices denounced by Las Casas. “The destruction of the Indies” – the region – becomes “*The Tears of the INDIANS*,” personified victims of oppression. An expansive subtitle mounts a wholesale attack on Spanish imperialism, typographically weighted toward the West Indies, the primary area of British imperial concern:

The Tears of the INDIANS:
BEING
An Historical and true Account
Of the Cruel
Maffacres and Slaughters
of above Twenty Millions
of innocent People;
Committed by the Spaniards
in the Iflands of
Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c.
As alfo, in the Continent of
Mexico, Peru, & other Places of the
West-Indies,
To the total destruction of those Countries.

Written in Spanifh by *Cafaus*,
an Eye-witnefs of thofe things;
And made Englifh by *J. P.*

Illustrations in the English edition further the redirection of the text, with lurid images giving a pornography of violence. The caption to one four-panel image, for instance, makes explicit the link between politics and religion. The conquistadors are shown conducting an “inquisition for Bloud,” and the hapless natives in one panel sink under the weight of a great anchor, at once image of Spanish naval power and a religious *ancora spei*. The anchor-bearing natives are lashed by a demonic Spaniard, as though they are Jesus struggling to carry his cross to Golgotha. Flames shown in all four panels strengthen the

identification of the conquistadors as the Devil's henchmen, visually echoing Phillips's preface, which declares that "it hath been the Satanical Scope of the Tyrant, to set all the European Provinces at Variance, and to keep them busie at home, that they might not have leisure to bend their Forces against his Golden Regions" (Sauer 279-80). Furthering the satanic theme, strung-up body parts associate the Spanish with the cannibalistic Aztec priests, widely viewed as minions of the Devil in his Mexican guise of Huitzilopochtli, god of war. One Spaniard is even shown, Aztec-style, cutting the heart out of his dismembered victim. The overall effect of Phillips's presentation is thus very different from that of the Spanish original. For all the severity of Las Casas's critique of the conquistadors' excesses, he was pleading for reform within the Spanish imperial project. In John Phillips's hands, his book became something very different, a wholesale denunciation of Spanish rule, even an attack on Catholic culture at large – a radical revision that would have shocked Las Casas himself.

If John Phillips drew on his uncle's tracts in framing his translation, *The Tears of the Indians* became a resource for Milton in turn, inflecting his portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Often seen in terms of classical paganism, Milton's Satan is closely associated as well with Catholic imperialism. In Book 4 of *Paradise Lost*, Satan voyages from Hell to the "boundless Continent" of Earth, where he hopes to increase his "Honor and Empire with revenge enlarg'd, / By conquering this new World" (4.390-1). The tears of the Indians come to the fore as Adam and Eve contemplate their fallen bodies in their newly-sewn clothing:

O how unlike
To that first naked Glory. Such of late
Columbus found th' *American* so girt
With feather'd Cincture, naked else and wild
Among the Trees on Isles and woody Shores.
Thus fenc'd, and as they thought, thir shame in part
Cover'd, but not at rest or ease of Mind,
They sat them down to weep, nor only Tears
Rain'd at thir Eyes, but high Winds worse within
Began to rise, high Passions, Anger, Hate,

Mistrust, Suspicion, Discord, and shook sore
Thir inward State
of Mind, calm Region once
And full of Peace, now toss't and turbulent... (9.1114-26)

The tears of Adam and Eve, brought about by a Hispanized Satan, are the mirror image of the tears of the Indians caused by Phillips's satanic Spanish monarch, who foments discord in Europe in order to keep rivals away from his New World possessions.

As the critic Elizabeth Sauer has rightly said, "The dialectical process of England's identity formation was decisively shaped through its religious, cultural, political and economic relations with Spain. . . . Textual representation, appropriation, and translation serve . . . as vital but neglected 'forms of nationhood'" (286). On this perspective, *The Tears of the Indians* should be considered as much an English as a Spanish work, significantly reframed by John Phillips for its English audience. Indeed, the translation's title page puts the matter very aptly: the Spanish original has been "made English" by *J. P.*

Writers as well as their works can be located on a broad spectrum of national and linguistic identity, for many important "national" writers have had transnational identities. We have always recognized the presence of a favored few migrant authors within national literary space: T. S. Eliot is regularly included in anthologies of British literature, even as Americanists justifiably continue to claim him as one of their own. And why not? Though he was born and raised in Saint Louis and received crucial intellectual formation during his years at Harvard, he made his career in England and even became a British citizen, exerting a tremendous influence on British literary life through his poetry, his criticism, and his editorial work for Faber and Faber. Yet what of Marie de France? Though this major medieval writer also made her career in London, and drew heavily on Arthurian themes in her *lais*, for many decades she has remained a wholly owned subsidiary of French departments, simply because she wrote in Anglo-Norman and not Anglo-Saxon or Middle English. And this, despite the fact that her very name means Marie *from* France – a name that no writer active in France would ever have had. Marie would long since have been taken

up by English departments if she had abandoned her cultured French to begin writing in the language of the London streets.

Similar linguistic myopia limits our view of American literature today. From the time *Lolita* hit the bestseller lists in the mid-1950s, Vladimir Nabokov has been recognized as a major American writer. American studies of Nabokov also regularly take into account his earlier Russian-language works, which entered American literary culture once they were translated by Dmitri Nabokov under his father's watchful eye. Yet what of Marguerite Yourcenar? Like Nabokov, she emigrated to the United States relatively early in her adulthood, and she spent most of her working life in her adopted country – actually her second adopted country, as she had earlier moved from her native Belgium to Paris, anagrammatically simplifying her dual Flemish/French family name Cleenewerck de Crayencour to “Yourcenar.” Yet she never shifted from French to English after emigrating to the United States. She continued to set her novels and memoirs in Europe, and in 1980 she became the first woman ever elected to the Académie Française. Though she is certainly a major French writer, we misrepresent her work, and the American literary culture of her era, if we consider her exclusively as an eternal European.

Yourcenar moved to the United States in 1939, and lived in New England for the dozen years preceding the publication of her masterwork *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (1951), a book she had begun years before in France but then set aside, returning to it in 1949. Yourcenar had become an American citizen in 1947, and so she was indeed an American writer, legally speaking, when she composed her most famous novel; she continued to live primarily in Northeast Harbor, Maine until her death in 1987. Like Marie de France before her, however, she has been discussed almost exclusively by French scholars, who tend to treat her American sojourn as a charming aberration in a cultural wasteland that must have had no significant impact on her writing. Yet Yourcenar lived with her American lover Grace Frick for four decades, and she traveled widely in the United States, praising its expansive breadth to her friends. “If I were you I would start by hitchhiking to San Antonio or San Francisco,” she wrote to one friend; “It takes time to get to know this great country, at once so spread out and so secret” (Savigneau 197).

She collected African-American spirituals in the South and translated a volume's worth of them, published under the title *Fleuve profound, somber rivière* (1964). She published a French translation of Henry James's *What Maisie Knew* in 1947, two years before resuming her work on Hadrian, and later translated James Baldwin.

These active relations to American literature and culture go largely undiscussed by Yourcenar's French critics, and are all the more neglected by Americanists, who have never written about her at all. Yet it is likely that Yourcenar's American experiences enriched her meditations on Hadrian's far-flung empire and informed her hero's bemused tolerance of minority populations such as the Jews in Roman Judea. Living in Connecticut and teaching at Sarah Lawrence College outside New York City as she worked on the *Memoirs of Hadrian*, Yourcenar was surely gathering impressions from her students as well as information from the Yale library, where she conducted the extensive research that underlies her great novel. Even her relative disengagement from much of American culture can be seen as contributing to her Olympian portrayal of the Roman emperor. As Edmund White shrewdly noted in a review of Josyane Savigneau's Yourcenar biography, "Yourcenar's aloofness at Sarah Lawrence sounds remarkably like Vladimir Nabokov's at Cornell" (White). Both novelists, it may be noted, lectured on comparative literature at their respective colleges, and in the very years that Nabokov was gathering local color for *Lolita* at Cornell, Yourcenar was plotting out her universalized portrait of Hadrian in Connecticut and Maine.

Yourcenar's choice to settle in the United States, she later said, "is not that of America against France. It translates a taste for a world stripped of all borders" (Savigneau 197) – a particularly American take on life at the time of works such as Kerouac's *On the Road*. In her afterword to *Memoirs of Hadrian*, Yourcenar wrote of the intense pleasure of resuming her long-abandoned novel while on a transcontinental road trip of her own, by train, in February of 1949:

Closed inside my compartment as if in a cubicle of some Egyptian tomb, I worked late into the night between New York and Chicago; then all the next day, in the restaurant of a Chicago station where I awaited a train blocked by storms and

snow; then again until dawn, alone in the observation car of a Santa Fé Limited, surrounded by black spurs of the Colorado mountains, and by the eternal pattern of the stars. Thus were written at a single impulsion the passages on food, love, sleep, and the knowledge of men. I can hardly recall a day spent with more ardor, or more lucid nights. (Yourcenar 328)

Yourcenar was always sensitive to place – she became an environmental activist in her later years – and she drew inspiration from the expansive American landscape, at once local and universal (surrounded by the black spurs of the Rockies and the eternal pattern of the stars), both linked to the landscape and separated from it, “alone in the observation car of a Santa Fé Limited.” Not long before Nabokov would work on *Lolita* while pursuing butterflies in Colorado, she continued to write her novel while touring New Mexico with Grace Frick.

Yourcenar’s American experience inflected her novel on many levels, and the *Mémoires d’Hadrien* entered American literary space in turn when it was published in New York in 1954. It came out in the lucid translation lovingly prepared in Northeast Harbor by Grace Frick, corrected on a nightly basis by Yourcenar, who rightly or wrongly prided herself on possessing a greater command of English prose style than her American companion. *The Memoirs of Hadrian* received glowing reviews around the country and stayed on *The New York Times* best-seller list for twenty weeks, from December 1954 through May of 1955. It was eventually edged off the list by a varied group of American and imported novels, including Françoise Sagan’s *Bonjour Tristesse*, Thomas Mann’s *Confessions of Felix Krull*, and – very different in provenance and tone – Mac Hyman’s *No Time for Sergeants*. Nabokov’s *Lolita* was in press during those months, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Nabokov was intrigued by his fellow émigré’s portrayal of a philosopher-king and his passion for his young lover, Antinous. The popular success of Hadrian’s fictional memoir helped pave the way for Nabokov’s next novel, the tragicomic commentary-memoir of the deposed Zemblan monarch Charles X. Kinbote.

If the idea of a national literature opens out this way, so too does the national language. This is probably self-evident to everyone in a

country where elementary students are being taught new spellings so as to coordinate between the languages sometimes called “Brazilian” and “Portuguese.” Yet even under a harmonized spelling, neither Brazilian nor Portuguese is just one thing, and its regional and social varieties are regularly used strategically by everyone from Lobo Antunes to fado singers. Here let me take a particularly striking example from my own native tongue, or should I say my own early-acquired and still evolving congeries of dialects, idiolects, and sociolects. My example will be *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes*, a novel from 1999 by the Tibetan post-modernist – there is such a category – Jamyang Norbu.

Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, Norbu’s father sent him to a British school in Darjeeling, India. During his final year at the school in 1959, the Tibetan revolt against Chinese rule led to the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, and Norbu was joined in Darjeeling by his family. Unlike Indians of his generation, Norbu never experienced English as the language of colonial oppression. The imperial power that had driven his family out of Tibet was China, and the mostly impoverished Tibetan refugees received a lukewarm welcome in northern India, generally remaining fairly isolated from the Hindi-speaking society around them. For Norbu, the English language and its literature were passports to a wider world, as he remarks in a preface to the novel:

My life at St. Joseph’s college was, at first, a lonely one, but on learning the English language I soon made many friends, and best of all, discovered books. Like generations of other schoolboys I read the works of G. A. Henty, John Buchan, Rider-Haggard and W. E. Johns, and thoroughly enjoyed them. Yet nothing could quite equal the tremendous thrill of reading Kipling or Conan Doyle – especially the latter’s Sherlock Holmes adventures. For a boy from Tibet there were details in those stories that did at first cause some bewilderment but these were trifling obstacles and never really got in the way of my fundamental appreciation of the stories. (x)

Decades later, Norbu became involved in the ongoing struggle to restore Tibetan autonomy, and he found that his favorite British authors gave him a means to reach a global audience. The inspiration for his

novel came from Conan Doyle's tale "The Empty House" – the story that Conan Doyle wrote to bring Sherlock Holmes back to his devoted readers, two years after he had supposedly been murdered by Doctor Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls. In order to account for his long absence, Holmes tells Watson that he has spent the time traveling in Tibet, even meeting "the head Lama" in Lhasa.

The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes imagines what might have transpired during those journeys, in a hilarious pastiche of the Sherlock Holmes stories that has a serious undercurrent: solving a murder mystery, Holmes finds himself confronting the evil agents of the Chinese Empire, already intent on gaining control over Tibet. Yet Norbu did more than play with Conan Doyle; in addition, he drew equally on Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim* to create his evocation of Victorian British India. Remarkably, he takes a comic character from Kipling, a Babu or Indian civil servant named Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, and he elevates him from the status of minor character, making him the first-person narrator of the entire novel.

To be sure, as a good Indian, Mookerjee himself has a low opinion of Kipling, whom he knows only as a sometime journalist, and whose rhetoric of "the Great Game" he rejects with scorn: "This excretious appellation was the creation of one Mr Rudyard Kipling, late of the Allahabad *Pioneer*, who [writes] with deplorable journalistic flippancy" (xix). Not enamored of Kipling's imperialist politics, Norbu nonetheless has great fun with his Kipling's stylized Babu English, having Mookerjee pile on ostentatious terms like "excretious appellation" and indulge in vertiginous slippages between colloquial English and Hindi – "a bounteous baksheesh of a rupee" (5), "the blighter of a ghariwallah" (48).

A particularly amusing sequence occurs early on, when Mookerjee is sent to sound out the motives of a mysterious Norwegian newly arrived in Bombay – none other than Sherlock Holmes in disguise. Mookerjee tries to ingratiate himself in a disguise of his own, posing as a shipping company's guide, "Satyanarayan Satai, Failed Entrance, Allahabad University," but Holmes instantly discerns a contradictory fact of Mookerjee's past: "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive." (A brilliant reuse, here, of Holmes's first observation to Doctor Watson

in the original tales). Discomfited, Mookerjee bursts out in a kind of hyper-babu-speak:

Wha . . . ! Oh no, no sahib. I am most humble Hindu from Oudh, presently in remunerative and gainful employment in demi-official position of agent, *pro tem*, to respectable shipping firm. Afghanistan? Ha! Ha! Why, sahib, land is wretched cold, devoid of essential facilities and essential amenities, and natives all murdering savages – Musselmanns of worst sort – beyond redemption and majesty of British law. Why for I go to Afghanistan?

Holmes isn't fooled. "Why indeed,' said he, with a low chuckle that sounded rather sinister" (6).

Norbu isn't merely making fun of Mookerjee, however; instead, he builds on Kipling's original portrayal of Hurree as a shrewd undercover operator and amateur ethnographer, who is able to play on European stereotypes to get his way. As Mookerjee tells us in describing his attempted ruse on meeting Holmes, "It is always an advantage for a babu to try and live up to a sahib's preconception of the semi-educated native" (6). His problem in this scene is that his usual strategy fails to work on Holmes, who is free of the prejudices that blind most visiting Europeans and can actually see what's before his eyes. As the novel progresses, both Hurree and Holmes learn a great deal from each other, as they come to confront Tibet's Chinese enemies, and they part as the best of friends.

Norbu further undercuts Orientalist preconceptions by making Hurree a thoroughgoing rationalist – in keeping with the scientific and ethnographic ambitions he already displays in *Kim*. Norbu completes the picture by revealing Holmes as a virtually Buddhist mystic in his own right, here building on Conan Doyle's own spiritualist interests and his original representation of Holmes as someone deeply aware of the transience of human life in a world of suffering and delusion. By the novel's end, Tibetan Buddhism is shown to be a spiritual resource for the whole world, an ideal blend of religion and science, ancient and modern, East and West together.

Norbu's novel plays with sovereign freedom on the politics of global English, in an affectionate parody of Kiplingese mobilized to draw in foreign readers to a deeper understanding of the cultural and political struggles of Tibetans for recognition and independence. His creative hybridization of English is nowhere better seen than in an extensive glossary that concludes the novel – a kind of parodic explosion of Chinua Achebe's auto-ethnographic glossary to *Things Fall Apart*. Norbu's ten-page glossary sets Tibetan, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Anglo-English terms on an even plane, even using French to elevate the Hindi term "baksheesh," which he glosses as "alms, a *pour boire*" (269). The glossary teaches us that dekchis are cooking pots (Hindi), a chilingpa is a foreigner (Tibetan), a khafila is a caravan (Arabic), a lingam is a phallic symbol (Sanskrit), and that – my favorite definition – a "poodle-faker" is a "womanizer, especially in hill stations; hence 'poodle-faking' (Anglo-Indian)" (276). The very selection of entries has a political resonance: it is surely no coincidence that Norbu's compilation from A to Z starts with "Amban: the imperial Manchu commissioner in Lhasa (Manchu)" and ends with "zoolum: oppression (Hindustani)" (269, 279).

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Examples as varied as the work of Oswald de Andrade, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Marguerite Yourcenar, and Jamyang Norbu can suggest something of the international variety that is regularly to be found within a national literary culture in various modes of translation. What such cases show is that the national and the transnational are by no means opposed spheres. Instead, the "national language" itself is the medium through which original and translated works circulate together to form our ineluctably international national literatures. So it may be time to stop thinking so much of national literatures as of national *markets*. Comparative literature in the coming years needs to become more seriously global, not only in reaching out to far-flung locales, but also in delving deeper inward, to unfold the true linguistic and literary variety that permeates our "national" languages and our local literary cultures. In the next quarter-century of our respective associations' work, we can look ahead to an exciting era of comparative inquiry at

home as well as abroad – *a idade de ouro*, as Andrade might say, *e todas as comparações*.

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