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X MARKS THE SPOT: LITERATURE AND THEORY AS LIMIT TESTS FOR COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY, CANADIAN PERSPECTIVES

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Article || Received on: 28/07/2018 | International Advisory Board's suitability: 29/11/2018 | Published: 01/2019

Abstract || This article reflects on the Canadian Comparative Literature Association as it approaches its 50th anniversary. The first part of the article details two small experimental events the association held to update its constitution and prepare for the anniversary, while the second and third parts identify relevant scholarship that speaks to key vectors of the association's experience: translation, globalization, and World Literature. It situates Canadian Comparative Literature as a translation zone and finds work by Sherry Simon and Billy Rae Belcourt exemplary in embodying and responding to the limits, tensions and challenges we find ourselves facing.

Keywords || Comparative Literature | World Literature | Canada | (Cultural) Translation | Globalization

Resumen || Este artículo reflexiona sobre la Asociación Canadiense de Literatura Comparada, la cual está próxima a celebrar su 50 aniversario. La primera parte del artículo detalla dos pequeños eventos experimentales que llevó a cabo la asociación para actualizar su constitución y prepararse para su aniversario, mientras que la segunda y la tercera parte identifican investigaciones relevantes que abordan vectores clave de la experiencia de la asociación: traducción, globalización y Literatura mundial. Sitúa a la literatura comparada canadiense como una zona de traducción y explica cómo el trabajo de Sherry Simon y Billy Rae Belcourt son ejemplos paradigmáticos que encarnan y responden a los límites, tensiones y retos con los que nos encontramos.

Palabras clave || Literatura comparada | Literatura mundial | Canadá | Traducción (cultural) | Globalización

Resum || Aquest article reflexiona sobre l'Associació Canadenca de Literatura Comparada amb motiu del seu 50 aniversari. La primera part de l'article detalla dues petites activitats que l'associació va organitzar per a actualitzar la seva constitució i preparar l'aniversari. La segona i la tercera part identifiquen estudis rellevants que tracten aspectes clau de l'experiència de la associació: traducció, globalització i literatura universal. L'article situa la literatura comparada canadenca com una zona de traducció i presenta el treball de Sherry Simon i Billy Rae Belcourt com exemplar en la personificació i resposta als límits, tensions i desafiaments que enfrontem.

Paraules clau || Literatura comparada | Literatura universal | Canadà | Traducció (cultural) | Globalització

0. Introduction

In 2019, the Canadian Comparative Literature Association (CCLA) celebrates its 50th anniversary, one of many academic associations to be doing so. The 1960s were a time of great academic growth in Canada as they were in the United States, with institutions springing up around what from today's perspective seems like a vertiginous number of hires. Before that time, "although there was little systematic teaching of comparative literature…, Canadian universities granted, between 1921 and 1969, about 125 graduate degrees based on comparative topics; quite a few Canadians studied abroad (mainly in France, eastern Europe and the US)" (Dimić, 2006). The first programme in Comparative Literature was established at the University of Alberta in 1964, with a second inaugurated the following year at Carleton University in Ottawa with a lecture by Northrop Frye (Kushner, 2009: 176). By 1969, the U of A's programme had become a "full-fledged department" (Dimić, 2006) and Frye had managed to found a programme at the University of Toronto (see Valdés, 2009: 182-184 for an account of the tremendous efforts required). A national journal for the discipline, the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue canadienne de littérature comparée*, followed five years later, the year after the Canadian association had announced its presence on the international scene by hosting the VIIth ICLA (International Comparative Literature Association) congress, in 1973, which was a joint undertaking by Montreal's McGill University and Carleton in Ottawa.

As Eva Kushner reminisced on the occasion of the association's 40th anniversary, the official founding of the CCLA at the 1969 Learned Societies congress at York University in Toronto had been set off by a series of annoying experiences at conferences, most notably the Vth Congress of the ICLA in Belgrade in August 1967, for which Canadian scholars had had to apply via the seven-year-old ACLA (American Comparative Literature Association) (Kushner, 2009: 176). Kushner, who taught at both Carleton, from 1961 to 1969, and McGill, from 1969 to 1987, when she moved to the University of Toronto, has been a driving force in the discipline and a key source of institutional memory (Ingram, 2009: 172). As Karin Beeler, another key force in Canadian Comparative Literature relates, Kushner "helped detach the CCLA from the ACLA and integrate it in the ICLA and among Canadian learned societies" (Beeler and Shewchuk, 2011). The dynamic identified here is useful in helping us to reflect on the positionality of Comparative Literature in Canada and the limits and tensions it has had to negotiate in light of the challenges it has faced.

Relations with American and international associations have led to the development of different offshoots of the discipline across the country.

The state-of-the discipline reports that the ACLA has a mandate to publish every decade, (and has a tradition of naming after their editors: Levin,1965); Greene, 1975; Bernheimer. 1993; and Saussy, 2006), have served as an important reference point and source of inspiration for the CCLA, as is evident in recent publications (De Gasperi and Pivato). After the appearance of the Saussy volume, the ACLA realized that the publication in paper form of its constitutionally mandated report was no longer sufficiently responsive to the many voices, issues and positionalities that now constitute the discipline.[1] In preparation for, and building up to, the ACLA's first online state-of-the-discipline report (https://stateofthediscipline.acla.org), it held experimental sessions entitled "ACL(x)/Examine" at Penn State in September 2013 and "ACL(x)/Otherwise" at the University of South Carolina in February 2015. These sessions proved so successful that in September 2016 a third, "ACL(x)/Extra-Disciplinarity," was held at Penn State. It was in emulation of these small experimental gatherings, which were specifically designed to create a space for more targeted discussions than possible at the large annual national conferences, and which a few fortunate members of the CCLA Executive were able to attend, that the CCLA decided to hold its own CCL(x)s.

In this contribution, we would like to take advantage of the opportunity that the 10th anniversary issue of *452ºF* presents to reflect on what the CCLA has experienced in the 21st century with a focus on the two CCL(x)s it held in May 2014 and May 2017, in each case the day before its annual conference, at Brock in 2014 and at Ryerson in 2017. As Elizabeth S. Anker and Rita Felski note in the introduction to *Critique and Postcritique*, "We are currently in the midst of a recalibration of thought and practice whose consequences are difficult to predict" (Anker and Felski, 2017: 1). Like Anker and Felski, we are keen to reflect on "the larger intellectual and historical contexts that have motivated a rethinking of the aims of literary and cultural studies" (Anker and Felski, 2017: 2) and to consider possible trajectories open to the CCLA and the place of literature and theory in them. To that end, we find that the work of Emily Apter, Susan Bassnett and Fredric Jameson help us to identify translation and globalization as main challenges that Comparative Literature in Canada has to contend with, and the work of Sherry Simon and Billy Rae Belcourt as exemplary in embodying responses to those challenges.

1. The CCL(x)s

On May 24, 2014, the CCLA Executive organized a special session to seek input in updating the association's constitution, which still existed in its original 1969 state.[2] In preparation for the meeting,

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1 | Perhaps inevitably, a paper publication ended up being produced with a selection of the online material (Heise).

2 | Both documents can be found on the CCLA's homepage: https://complit.ca/.

one of the members of the Executive —Early Career Scholar representative Rachel Stapleton, a tech- and research-savvy PhD candidate at the University of Toronto whose area of expertise is early modern literature— took on the onerous task of going through the CCLA files in the Eva Kushner fonds at the University of Toronto, locating the original constitution, and identifying areas that needed to be brought into the twenty-first century. Primarily this meant revisiting the Executive's responsibilities, goals and means "given our post-SSHRC realities," as it was put in the invitational announcement. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Canada's national academic funding agency, had just cut the $3000.00 it annually gave academic associations to help with the cost of annual meetings held during the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities (previously known as "the Learneds," as it was the gathering of then-termed "learned societies," a moniker that has since been rejected as too elitist). A paltry amount to be sure, it nonetheless allowed the CCLA to subsidize the travel costs of graduate students and the under-employed. How would we manage without it? Did we need any new positions on the Executive to accommodate new social-media realities? Was a regional structure providing adequate cross-national representation on the Executive? Was the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue canadienne de la littérature comparée* an adequate publishing organ for the association? What should the CCLA's relationship to the ACLA and to the ICLA be? None of these questions had easy or straightforward answers.

In reviewing the association's goals, a significant lacuna was noticed and rectified, not just by modifying an existing bullet-point, as several were, but by adding an entirely new one: "To promote and disseminate approaches to the *theory*, practices and pedagogy of Comparative Literature in Canada" (italics added; CCLA, 2014). Indeed, there had been no mention of the word "theory" in the 1969 document, while pedagogy had figured prominently and has continued to do so.[3] The question of what constituted "approaches to the theory, practices and pedagogy of Comparative Literature in Canada" was addressed during a spontaneously organized roundtable on "CCLA Today and Tomorrow" held a few days later during that year's annual meeting.[4] In a packed laboratory room surrounded by test-tubes and microscopes, impassioned comments were exchanged on the status of "the literary" in identity-producing discourses about Comparative Literature from both within and outside the discipline. Some of those present did not self-identify as comparatists and yet did work that the comparatists present recognized as belonging to their discipline, such as Lai-Tze Fan's work on electronic literature, while others, who were recognized as comparatists, did work that not everyone thought of as a part of the discipline, such as Susan Ingram's research on fashion and urbanity.

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3 | The association's overarching aim was seen in 1969 as being "to promote the study of Comparative Literature in the colleges and universities of Canada by encouraging *teaching*, criticism, and scholarship that approach literature in a broad international context and cross the traditional boundaries of literary fields defined by language or nation" (italics added), something modified ever so slightly in 2014 to "to promote the study of Comparative Literature in Canada through teaching, criticism, and scholarship that approach literature in a broad context and across traditional boundaries of literary fields defined by language, nation, or discipline."

4 | An audio-track of the discussion is available at: https://complit.ca/congres-2/congres/.

Theory, understood *pace* Jonathan Culler as "thinking about thinking" (224), proved useful for this discussion. At the time of the CCLA's 40th anniversary, theory and Comparative Literature had been regarded as "intricately connected and mutually constitutive" (Cobley, 2009: 191). A mere five years later, that relation was no longer as secure. The discussion had moved on to the question of what constituted theory and what it meant to move from Culler's implicitly *literary* theory to theory understood as "French Theory" in the spirit of French Americanist François Cusset's masterful though not unproblematic account of how a group of French thinkers had become academic stars on account of their popularity among an influential stream of politicized scholars in U.S. literature departments.[5] It was the latter, Cusset's "French Theory," that helped us probe "the larger intellectual and historical contexts that have motivated a rethinking of the aims of literary and cultural studies" of the kind Anker and Felski refer to. The threatened closure and amalgamation of the University of Toronto's storied Centre for Comparative Literature into a School of Languages and Literatures in 2010, which had been warded off by an international campaign that included a petition with over 5000 signatures (see Friesen, 2010), was still fresh in everyone's mind, but even more so was the Centre's successful hosting of the annual ACLA conference in April 2013 with the theme "Global Positioning Systems." How to position ourselves institutionally given the shifting status and place of literature in society at large —something captured by the disappearance of the entry on literature between Raymond Williams' 1976 *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* and the 2005 *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, edited by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris— was juxtaposed with the rise of the studies of World Literature and Digital Humanities, neither of which has as close a relationship to Comparative Literature in Canada as it does in the United States, where David Damrosch and Alan Liu have been leading figures of these respective trends. The paucity of institutions that foster the continuation of Comparative Literature as a named practice is one of the greatest challenges of the Canadian situation, yet given experiences such as the recent establishment of Graduate Diplomas in Comparative Literature and World Literature in York's graduate programs of Humanities and English, the mood at Brock was generally, if cautiously optimistic.

Three years later, on May 27, 2017, a second CCL(x) —CCL(x)17 "Re-Viewing Comparative Literature: Issues of Scholarship and Publishing in the Contemporary Conjuncture"— was held as a way of generating discussion building up to the 50th anniversary celebrations. Twelve scholars from adjuncts to senior scholars from across Canada and around the world were invited to present short, trenchant polemics on issues we hoped would help us bring into focus the state of the discipline in our country: issues of indigeneity, issues of English and

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5 | Neither Canada nor Comparative Literature figure in more than a tangential way in Cusset's book.

other languages, issues of outreach, and issues concerning digital knowledge and publishing. Why invite scholars from far-flung places such as the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and the University of California at Irvine to be part of this conversation? Given the political conjuncture at which we found ourselves, with world leaders such as Trump, Xi Jinping, Putin, Orbán, and Erdoğan, the dangers of isolationism, rabid nationalism and xenophobia were only too clear, and hence also the desirability of having international voices and perspectives as part of the conversation, particularly those of scholars with connections to Canada who had secured academic positions thanks to their degrees in Comparative Literature.

It is to be noted that theory *as such* was not perceived as a separate issue in need of discussion at CCL(x)17. The so-called theory wars of the 1980s and 1990s may have in the meantime been overtaken by a renewed set of culture wars,[6] but theory still inevitably underpins most of the current critical debates in Comparative Literature in Canada. As Linda Hutcheon recounts in her Preface to Giulia De Gasperi and Joseph Pivato's *Comparative Literature for the New Century*:

> When I graduated as the first Ph.D. in the new programme in Comparative Literature from the University of Toronto in 1975, I would never have guessed that this exciting new "theory" in which I had been immersed during my graduate years would have become, over the next forty years, as "naturalized," as bred-in-the-bone, as these essays reveal it to be: if this volume is to be believed, it is almost our lingua franca (Hutcheon 2018: viii).

This "naturalized" position of theory is also evident in the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were taken for granted at the second CCL(x). While some among the older generation, such as Joseph Pivato, may not be theory's greatest supporters, there is nonetheless a general consensus one must be as conversant in it as in whichever of the languages one works in. On the basis of the dialogues that transpired during both CCL(x) events, it is apparent that Comparative Literature in Canada sees itself having to navigate: bilingualism and multilingualism in the face of the threat of (anglo) monolingualism, how to move beyond the model of "visible minorities" and "First Nations" in order to generate more inclusivity, multiple canons (literary and other), the relationship between print culture and other media, the development of information studies, concerted efforts in digitalization, and the future of the production and dissemination of knowledge. Each of these issues is rife with tension, and each is witness to the negotiations that accompany the advent of new and emerging perspectives in the field and that reflect changes to the way Canadian comparatists see the future of their discipline.

While the above set of challenges may appear somewhat disjointed, they in fact underscore some common denominators and factors

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6 | The recent eruption of "Sokol Squared" demonstrates the ongoing nature of this contestation (see Kafka).

endemic to the very enterprise of comparatism: the impossibility of homogeneity, whether cultural/linguistic or academic/theoretical, the ongoing processes of cross-fertilization that inform the interaction between different traditions and discourses, and the constant need for (self)revision and redefinition. Taken together, they help us target key dynamics of the Canadian situation. The concept of (textual and cultural) translation in particular is a powerful critical tool and a trope that helps us identify transfer and flow of meanings and information, the dynamics of cultural tradition and innovation, linguistic and national fluidity, and cultural impurities —the messy hodge-podge of multiply hyphenated identities that is typical in Canada— as a source of diversity, new languages and communities in our globalizing, digital times.

2. Canadian Comparative Literature as Translation Zone

In *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, a book with greater resonance for Canadian comparatists than her more recent, and more heavily debated, *Against World Literature*, which will be discussed below, Emily Apter makes an argument for the various affinities and contiguities between Comparative Literature and translation practice. While this has long been part of the critical discourse in the field and can be traced back to Goethe's pioneering reflections on *Weltliteratur*, the ideas of translational practices and translational spaces have since evolved to include new, theoretically sophisticated conceptualizations of cultural and linguistic influences and interactions. Drawing on Kenneth Reinhard's work, Apter finds particularly productive the model of comparatism that adopts the idea of "neighbouring" languages, literatures and communities of speakers, with the "neighbourhoods" being defined by contiguity and ethical encounter rather than by similitude and cultural influence (Apter, 2006: 247). She contends that "[i]n naming a translational process constitutive of its disciplinary nomination comparative literature breaks the isomorphic fit between the name of a nation and the name of a language" (Apter, 2006: 243), something that makes Canada, with its bilingual status, a natural home for comparatists. Only Apter's use of military vocabulary in her theorizing of contemporary translational comparative spaces ("language wars," "translation zones, military zones"), which reflects the U.S.'s post 9/11 political climate, does not map neatly onto Canadian cultural experience, which rather lends itself to, and indeed prides itself (often unjustly) on, a language of linguistic and cultural negotiations, areas of literary and cultural proximity and contact, and in-between lacunae and interstitial spaces.

In her historical overview of translation studies, Susan Bassnett similarly emphasizes the crucial role of translation today not only in relation to Comparative Literature, but to all discursive practices and areas of inquiry. Taking stock of the revisionist paradigmatic shifts in the humanities over the past half-century and the growing emphasis on interdisciplinarity, she examines how translation came to be a conceptual and critical lens for reading cultural phenomena across both temporal and spatial planes of reference. In a more specific context, Bassnett contends that translation studies and comparative literature "are not disciplines" but rather "methods of approaching the study of texts," because all acts of literary transaction and transfer are defined by "interconnectedness" (Bassnett, 2014: 239), which is central to both translational and comparative literary/cultural projects. Thus, world literature, the work of comparatism, and translation studies exist in an inherently symbiotic relation, focusing on and exploring "global literary and cultural flows" and, particularly importantly, "questions of agency" (Bassnett, 2014: 239). Bassnett goes as far as claiming that the post-2000 decades are defined by the so-called "translational turn" (as opposed to the "cultural turn" of the 1990s), thus positioning translation as an act and a process —in both a literal and metaphorical sense— at the intersection of a wide range of forms of critical inquiry.

As a prominent example in the Canadian context, which Bassnett also refers to, the work of Sherry Simon has shown the potential of translation studies and its critical tools for exploring urban culture as a meeting place and a continuum of exchange between different "neighbourhoods," literary communities, national histories, languages, and discourses of politics. Simon convincingly demonstrates how the symbolic ontology of a historically complex and culturally diverse city such as Montreal is constructed through the participating multi-voiced discourses of the francophone, anglophone and immigrant communities. The linguistic divisions and sites of difference can generate both tensions and productive creativity, and interactions along these lines of difference can contribute to "resistance and vivifying exchange" (Simon, 2006: 27). In one of her interviews, Simon reflects on the simultaneously unique and representative experience of this city, its past linguistic and political polarization and present-day fluidity, tolerance for and proliferation of "mixed codes." However, although there have been positive changes in the relation between the francophone and anglophone cultural spheres, she contends that "bilingualism is never symmetrical" (Simon, 2012b). Linguistic practices in a cultural landscape that includes more than one language always involve negotiating power structures and power relations, whether historically shaped or recently emerging, and Simon is "not ready to say that the 'two solitudes,' the term coined by novelist Hugh MacLennan in 1948, are a thing of the past" (Simon, 2012b). Simon's work showcases the relevance of the conceptual

apparatus of translation studies in its broader application and performs a productive reading of the Canadian cultural continuum as a complex translational space that enables explorations along historical, political, cultural and linguistic axes.

At the same time, the recent coming to prominence of translation studies and the interdisciplinary integration of the translational perspective as a method and a way of reading cultural interactions and transfers also inevitably resulted in a more critical reexamination of the significance of translation as a critical tool. While embracing and endorsing the growing relevance of translation studies and translational practices for the field of comparative literature, it is useful to reflect on other perspectives on translation and the challenges it posits. Returning to Emily Apter's work, her controversial *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatabililty* (2013) —with the title itself making a very clear positional claim— reflects on some of the implications inherent in our newfound love for all things translated. Apter situates recent developments in the translation industry in the context of disciplinary concerns for Comparative and World Literature and contends that she has "serious reservations about tendencies in World Literature toward reflexive endorsement of cultural equivalence and substitutability, or toward the celebration of nationally and ethnically branded 'differences' that have been niche-marketed as commercialized 'identities'" (Apter, 2013: 346). Apter calls for a new approach to comparatism that "recognizes the importance of non-translation, mistranslation, incomparability and untranslatability" (Apter, 2013: 347). While acknowledging the importance and contribution to the field of ambitious and broadly conceived projects such as the recent *Routledge Companion to World Literature* (D'Haen, Damrosch and Kadir, 2012), which maps the intersectional relations of World Literature with fields such as philology, translation, globalization and diaspora studies, Apter contends that they "fall prey inevitably to the tendency to zoom over the speed bumps of untranslatability in the rush to cover ground"; as a counter-argument, she "invoke[s] untranslatability as a deflationary gesture toward the expansionism and gargantuan scale of world-literary endeavors" (Apter, 2013: 347). The issue of untranslatability engages with many potentially problematic aspects of translation, such as the erasure of difference and the assumption that culture is inherently translatable and translational. Looking back at the recent theory and practice of translation and World Literature, Apter is critical about its slippages: "With translation assumed to be a good thing *en soi* —under the assumption that it is a critical praxis enabling communication across languages, cultures, time periods and disciplines— the right to the Untranslatable was blindsided. In a parallel way, at its very core World Literature seemed oblivious to the Untranslatable —as shown by its unqueried inclusion of the word 'world'" (Apter, 2013: 350). Revisiting Simon's important contention on the asymmetry of bilingualism, we

can extend her argument to the act of comparison itself, which is never symmetrical and is always shaped and informed by power relations. The unproblematic and simplistic conceptualization of "world" tends to obscure the work of global power relations and to reinforce the impetus toward homogenizing and universalizing world experience as seen and understood through the Western lens. Apter hopes for the recognition of the concepts such as "Incomparables and Untranslatables" (Apter, 2013: 354), which should perhaps gain currency in the disciplinary discourse while bringing more nuance and cultural sensitivity to comparative undertakings. While the title of the book explicitly plays on opposition and negation, Apter's critique has a positive and productive core to it, as her key argument is against the historically constructed comparability and universality of World Literature and for the recognition of a multiplicity of models and practices of world literatures that inform and enrich each other at the very locus of difference. These considerations have broader implications for pedagogy, World and Comparative Literature curricula and scholarly practices. Whether we privilege a specific understanding of what constitutes the translational moment or seek to negotiate the middle ground, translation studies, from its earlier niche status to its more recent status as an interdisciplinary critical tool, is in many ways central to the way the field of Comparative Literature is practiced in Canada today. Moving to the next point in this discussion, translational cultural movements, production of texts, their circulation, flow and exchange, and their multilingual "lives" necessarily situate comparative literary inquiry, along with translation studies, in the context of processes of globalization.

3. Canadian Comparative Literature in a Globalized, Digitized World

Revisiting Fredric Jameson's by now canonical take on globalization is also a useful exercise for Canadian comparatists as it reminds us of the intricate workings of cultural, economic, technological and political factors, which, in their cross-connectivity, have become a cornerstone of globalization studies as well as global comparative literary and cultural studies. Theories of globalization, and their many affinities with postcolonial studies, further work to examine the shifting and changing forces of hegemony and global power structures: "Looming behind the anxieties [of globalization …] is a new version of what used to be called imperialism, which we can now trace through a whole dynasty of forms" (Jameson, 2000: 50). On the cultural level, Jameson is concerned with the homogenization of world culture, where the movement toward simplification or even "driving out" of local cultures and traditional forms is argued to be at the very core of processes of globalization (Jameson, 2000: 51). In the context of

the world cultural landscape, globalizing forces threaten "the final extinction of local cultures, resuscitable only in Disneyfied form, through the construction of artificial simulacra and the mere images of fantasized traditions and beliefs" (Jameson, 2000: 56). Whether today's global literary production and flow (texts in translation or texts written in English for consumption by Western/global readership) is an (unwitting) contributor to the processes of cultural simulation and "standardization," in Jameson's words, remains a matter of debate. It may be apt to recall here Stephen Owen's notorious critique of world poetry in translation, and particularly his comments on the award-winning Chinese (and later American) poet Bei Dao, whose poetry is "written to travel well" (qtd. in Damrosch, 2003: 20). Although Owen's controversial contentions have been disputed by many critics, his concern about the dominant influence of Western aesthetic traditions and the increasingly more prominent production of "translatable" literature (which is to say, literature made easy for consumption by a Western readership) aligns with many critics of globalization, such as Emily Apter.

Globalization processes have a crucial impact on international flows of texts and the imperializing tendencies of the translation industry. It is, however, difficult to track and research these flows, and the metadata are hard to aggregate. In one such recent study, which compares the markets for translation of literature in the US and France, Gisèle Sapiro uses the number of source languages in translated literature as an indicator of diversity. While she contends that many small and niche publishers contribute to linguistic and cultural pluralism, overall, large-scale commercial productions continue to reinforce the dominant status of English. Referring to her own and other scholars' findings, she contends that translation markets are characterized by persisting asymmetry: "Though translation can be considered in itself as a form of hybridization of cultures, as publications from one culture are expressed in the language of another, the flows of translation depend both on the structure of the book market and on the system of power relations between linguistic communities" (Sapiro, 2014: 210). The representation of peripheral languages (whether European or non-European) remains marginal. Speaking from the personal experience of teaching Comparative Literature, World Literature, and Postcolonial Studies at Canadian universities, we can attest to the limited resources available both in terms of the narrow availability of translations from a wide range of comparatively "minor" languages and in terms of editions that are often subject to limited printing and being out of stock, temporarily or permanently. In our pedagogical practice we are often constrained both by what is "translatable" and "teachable" and by what is seen by academic publishers and distributors as commercially profitable. Comparative literary, cultural, and media studies should continue engaging in close examination of processes of globalization in the context of the translation industry

and of the dynamics of the global book market, which has direct implications for the theory and praxis of the discipline.

It also needs to respond to the changes to publishing and distribution being wrought by digitality. The suicide of 26-year-old computer programmer Aaron Schwartz in 2013 after he was arrested for a massive download from the JSTOR database served as a wake-up call about the stakes involved in the paywalls set up by academic publishing conglomerates such as Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Wiley-Blackwell and Taylor & Francis. As Guy Geltner discusses, the only solution thus far to the problem of for-profit companies having become "the global gatekeepers of academic research" (Geltner, 2017) generated by researchers working for the most part in publicly funded institutions is Sci-Hub, a website established in 2011 by then 22-year-old Aleksandra Elbakyan, a Kazakhstani computer science student frustrated by her lack of access to necessary research material. Made illegal by a legal challenge on the part of Elsevier, Sci-Hub nevertheless continues to allow researchers who are not at institutions that can afford the gatekeepers' astronomical fees, currently estimated at $10 billion annually (Geltner, 2017), to access the articles they need for their research. Open access has become a highly contested alternative. We see this in the Canadian context with SSHRC's tiering of its 2018 competition for aid to scholarly journals so that journals "that offer immediate open access or delayed open access with an embargo period of 12 months or less, and do not charge article processing charges (APCs)" will receive $1,050 per article while those that "offer immediate open access but charge APCs" will only receive $850. Our decision to send this article to *452ºF* was motivated in no small part by the fact that it is a fully open-access journal.

Questions of globalization processes should not obscure or marginalize the problems of the national, transnational, and diasporic literatures and cultures. While it is true that most recent publications on the theory of World Literature (such as David Damrosch's *World Literature in Theory* or the collectively edited *Routledge Companion to World Literature*) include either full sections or individual contributions devoted to globalization, these issues are inevitably situated in the context of increasing global mobility. Whether in the form of migrant workers or forced collective displacements, we continue to bear witness to waves of refugees and asylum seekers trying to make their way to conditions of relative peace and prosperity. The increasingly more diffuse and contested notions of national culture and of national literary canons are further complicated by the phenomenon of transnational literary production, which still remains a matter of debate. According to John Pizer, transnational literature is written "by bilingual and bicultural authors in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, by writers who, from economically and/or

politically induced exile, are creating contemporary works that call into question the very notion of discrete 'national' literatures" and thus contributes to redefining "the very principle of world literature" (Pizer, 2006: 4). He goes on to say that transnational literature is "now considered world literature because it is thematically, culturally, and even linguistically the product of multiple cultures, and cannot be included in nationally based canons" (Pizer, 2006: 4). On a more problematic note, Pizer refers to globalization as a "contemporary human condition" and contends that transnationalism describes the "status of world culture under the sign of globalization" (Pizer, 2006: 4). While such discussions often obfuscate the uneasy relation between national language(s), national culture(s) and the nation state, they also invite questions about the potential complexity of intra-national cultural and linguistic relations and zones of proximity. In the context of the multicultural Canadian landscape, with its anglophone, francophone and allophone communities and wide range of diasporic and indigenous cultures, we can ask whether such relations are becoming more or less prominent.

Issues of indigeneity, cultural inclusion and redress have been prominent concerns on the recent socio-political and cultural scene in Canada. The most important development to date in the narrative of Indigenous-settler relations is the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2008-15), which was tasked with documenting the history and impact on the Indigenous population of the government residential school system, whose practices have been equated with cultural genocide. After seven years of private and public meetings with the survivors of residential schools, the findings of the Commission were presented in a multi-volume set of documents and made available online. The work of healing Indigenous communities and their relationship with the many levels of community and nation with which they interact involves revitalizing "individuals as well as Indigenous cultures, languages, spirituality, laws, and governance systems. For governments, building a respectful relationship involves dismantling a centuries-old political and bureaucratic culture in which, all too often, policies and programs are still based on failed notions of assimilation" (TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 2015: 126). The narrative of the TRC posits new challenges for Canadian comparative cultural and literary studies to foster and build new connections both in terms of pedagogy and scholarship.

One of the most exciting new Indigenous voices to emerge is that of Billy-Rae Belcourt, from the Driftpile Cree Nation in Alberta. With a B.A. in Comparative Literature under his belt, Belcourt came to prominence as the first Canadian First Nations Rhodes Scholar. The M.A. in Women's Studies he completed at Oxford was with distinction, and he is currently completing his PhD in English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. His first poetry collection,

This Wound is a World, won several awards including the 2018 Griffin Poetry Prize, Canada's most prestigious and lucrative literary award. Belcourt brings together academia and creativity in his poetry and explores indigeneity, queerness, workings of the body, sexuality, and language. One of his poems, "The Ode to Northern Alberta," is particularly poignant in its invocation of fragmented identities and disembodied experiences that speak for the traumatic past of his community: "here, no one is birthed / only pieced together. / i tire myself out / pretending to have a body." The poem articulates the need to rewrite the narrative of the past: "history lays itself bare / at the side of the road / but no one is looking. / history screams into the night / but it sounds too much like the wind" (Belcourt, 2017a). This work crosses barriers between scholarship, creativity, various media, and public intellectualism, which in itself is symptomatic of the new responsibilities of today's academia towards public knowledge and community.

A recent example of Canadian scholarship that reflects the evolving trends and directions in Comparative Literature discussed above is Giulia De Gasperi and Joseph Pivato's edited volume *Comparative Literature for the New Century* (2018). This collection of critical essays brings together established and emerging scholars who engage with a wide range of theoretical issues and methodologies and argue that the Canadian, as well as broader North American, context shapes the future direction for comparative literary studies, which emphasizes the importance of languages and is grounded in a growing plurilinguistic and multicultural sensibility. The volume explores the project of a new Canadian Comparative Literature at the intersection of translation, translingualism, anglo- and francophone literary studies, non-literary media studies, ethnic minority writing and diasporic writing. The editors suggest that "more comparative work needs to be done with the literary works of Indigenous authors in North America, which may also involve work with Indigenous languages" (De Gasperi and Pivato, 2018: 19). One example of such recent work in Indigenous studies is Macfarlane and Ruffo's *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada* (2015), which combines contributions by scholars and Indigenous writers on the issues of colonialism, appropriation, resistance, language, orality, pan-Indigenous experience, and ethics in scholarship. De Gasperi and Pivato also argue for the growing importance of studying "multicultural" writers, who, according to Sneja Gunew, serve as "mediators between national literatures and world literature" and contribute to the conception of world literature that includes "the coeval existence of many histories, languages, and forms of the human and posthuman coexisting and sometimes interacting across borders" (De Gasperi and Pivato, 2018: 197). While Comparative Literature in Canada has demonstrated its investment in this approach over the past half century, the recent interventions into the narrative of

Canadian history, explorations of truth and reconciliation practices, and the growing political complexity of the globalized world open new critical venues and ethical responsibilities.

4. Conclusion

Bringing together the above points, we would like to reflect on the way contemporary critical perspectives and (inter)disciplinary concerns are changing the way we think of the very object of Comparative Literature. One of the most telling shifts in both the theory and practice of Comparative Literature in Canada is the evolving understanding of the nature of comparative thinking and comparative analysis. Thus, Ali Behdad, a former president of the ACLA, in a publication following one of his Canadian lectures, reflects in the following way:

> the comparative frame of mind is defined by the fundamental insight that any cultural production is inherently heterogeneous and hence requires no external object of comparison. Put otherwise, a comparative frame of mind does not require the co-presence of two or more cultural or literary archives in practicing comparative literature, for any single object can be read in relation to, or even against, its own context. Relatedly, a comparative frame of mind also takes seriously the arbitrariness of the divisions drawn among cultural productions, and may even make the problematization of genre categories the object of analysis itself (Behdad, 2016: 271).

The critical reading of an object of comparison is no longer understood to be "horizontal," linear and structural (i.e. text A vs. text B), but rather vertical, where it lays bare its own complex intertextual and dialogical nature, emphasizing the inherent situatedness of the object of study at the intersection of a multiplicity of voices and discourses, at the junction of past, present and future. Thus, any text, whether literary or not, is always already situated on potentially comparative ground; everything and anything is comparative under the critical scrutiny of a culturally and historically conscious reader.

What we have learned from the CCL(x)s and this opportunity to reflect on them is the importance of gathering together such readers —scholars whose work and vision explore translational spaces between disciplines, methodologies, practices, and media. While not all may identify as comparatists, we collectively contribute to an academic practice that recognizes and is mindful of its surroundings, its histories and the languages in which those histories have occurred, and that continues to respond to the demands of globalization and translation by pushing the limits of literature and theory.

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