Global Mobility, Transcultural Literature, and Multiple Modes of Modernity

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Introduction

At the beginning of the third millennium, we are witnessing the rise in the numbers of deterritorialised citizens who are on the move across cultural and national boundaries. This article discusses how, in this liquid age, patterns of mobility affect cultural orientations, sensibilities, and, consequentially, creative (literary) expressions.[1] It also suggests that the cultural products of the present era, and in particular those transcultural literary works interested in the interactive and dialogic dynamics between and across cultures, need to be analysed through a transcultural perspective. To this end, the term transcultural here is used in two ways: (a) as a mode of reflexive identity and cultural orientation—that is, in Mikhail N. Epstein's and Ellen Berry's terms, as "the self-distancing, self-estrangement and self-criticism of one's own cultural identities and assumptions";[2] and (b) as a critical perspective that sees cultures as relational webs and acknowledges the transitory, confluential, and mutually transforming nature of cultures, as theorised by Wolfgang Welsch, Mikhail N. Epstein and others.[3]

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1   See in this regard, Joaquín Barriendos Rodríguez, "Global Art and Politics of Mobility: (Trans) Cultural Shifts in the International Contemporary Art-System," *Thamyris/Intersecting: Place, Sex and Race,* 23.1 (2011): 313–334; and Tim Cresswell, *On the Move. Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

2   Ellen Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 307. See also in this regard, Arianna Dagnino, "Transculturalism and Transcultural Literature in the 21st Century," *Transcultural Studies. A Series in Interdisciplinary Research*, 8 (2012): 1–14.

3   The transcultural approach adopted in the present article draws mainly on the concept of "transculturality" devised by Wolfgang Welsch, for whom any separatist vision of cultures as distinct, self-enclosed, and self-sufficient units is overcome in view of the contemporary dynamics of cultural transformations and "pure cultural processes"; cfr., Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in *Spaces of Culture: City–Nation–World*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999) 194–213, 204. It also draws on the theory of the transcultural developed by Mikhail N. Epstein; cfr. Mikhail N. Epstein "Transculture: A Broad Way between Globalism and Multiculturalism," *American Journal of Economics & Sociology* 68.1 (2009): 327–351. The notion of "transculturality" has been further developed by the researchers of the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context: The Dynamics of Transculturality" at Heidelberg University, http://

The article also discusses to what extent transcultural literature belongs to the growing terrain of the Literatures of Mobility, that is, those literatures that are affected by or deal with travels/exploratory drives, migratory flows, exile/diasporic experiences, expatriate/transnational narratives, and, more recently, neo-nomadic trajectories.

The transnational patterns and neonomadic trajectories of transcultural writers

Physical and virtual mobility has indeed become the main trope of societies characterised by conditions of "super-diversity" and the dynamic interplay of alternative/multiple modernities.[4] Constantly increasing migratory flows, together with the pressure of economic globalisation and the development of digital communication technologies, are inciting as well as enabling a whole new range of intercultural interactions, transnational patterns,[5] and neo-nomadic lifestyles.[6] The kind of transformations induced by the present socio-cultural scenario are being expressed in creative ways by those imaginative "transcultural writers"––such as Pico Iyer, Alberto Manguel, Ilija Trojanow,[7] Kamila Shamsie, or Tawada

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www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/ [Accessed 2 May 2013]. See in this regard Christiane Brosius and Roland Wenzlhuemer, Transcultural Turbulences. Towards a Multi-Sited Reading of Image Flows (Springer: Berlin, 2011); and Madeleine Herren, Martin Rüesch, and Christiane Sibille, *Transcultural History: Theories, Methods, Sources* (Springer: Berlin, 2012). See also Monica Juneja, "Global Art History and the Burden of Representation," in *Global Studies. Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture,* ed. Hans Belting et al. (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 274–296; and Monica Juneja, "Einleitung," in *Kulturerbe und Denkmalpflege transkulturell. Grenzgänge zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Michael Falser and Monica Juneja (Transcript: Bielefeld 2013), 17–34 (esp. 17–27). For an analysis of the different interpretations of the concept of "transculturality" see also Afef Benessaieh, "Multiculturalism, Interculturality, Tranculturaliy," in *Transcultural Americas/Amériques transculturelles*, ed. Afef Benessaieh (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 11–38.

4 On the concept of "superdiversity" see, in particular, Steven Vertovec, "Super-Diversity and Its Implications," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30.6 (2007): 1024–1054. On the confluential and mutually transforming nature of cultures see Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); and Ilija Trojanow and Ranjit Hoskoté, *Confluences. Forgotten Histories from East and West* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2012).

5 See, for example, Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

6 For a discussion on neonomadism and neonomadic lifestyles, see in particular Anthony D'Andrea, "Neo-Nomadism: A Theory of Post-Identitarian Mobility in the Global Age," *Mobilities* 1.1 (March, 2006): 95–119; and Arianna Dagnino, *I nuovi nomadi. Pionieri della mutazione, culture evolutive, nuove professioni* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 1996).

7 Cfr. Michaela Haberkorn, "*Treibeis und Weltensammler*. Konzepte nomadischer Identität in den Romanen von Libuše Moníkovà und Ilija Trojanow," in *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur.*

Yōko[8]—who have found themselves in the midst of these transformative processes. By being voluntarily "on the move" outside their native cultures and homelands, these writers—more (or less) educated, more (or less) well-off and socially advantaged—seem to be thriving in the freedom obtained and the opportunities acquired through patterns of physical and cultural deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations. While cultures (together with languages and identities) are becoming more fluid and intermingled through their complex permeations,[9] transcultural writers are making these processes particularly manifest in their works. This happens even when, as in the case of the present article, the selected transcultural writers are fairly significant writers who—by writing mainly in English—have negotiated their access to the Western, Anglo-American dominated, highly competitive and highly concentrated metropolitan arena of publishing houses and reviews.

With this scenario in mind, the present article suggests that if, within the discourse of modern human mobility, the twentieth century has been mainly written, read, and studied through a migrant/multicultural and/or postcolonial perspective, the early twenty-first century of neo-nomadic and transnational patterns appears to be marked by a transcultural sensibility. Its related literary expressions, namely those works that, together with their authors, are intrinsically border crossers, are able to go beyond the limits of any one culture or national/ethnic landscape. This view is certainly shared by Ottomar Ette, who in his analysis of travel literature as "the point of departure for examining a bordercrossing literature on the move," has envisioned that "the literatures of the 21st century will be literatures without a fixed abode, literatures that evade attempts at clear territorialisation."[10]

As I have highlighted in my study on contemporary transcultural writers, these authors are aware that the conventional narratives about nation, allegiance, and belonging firmly rooted in a particular community, location, or tradition

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Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration, ed. Helmut Schmitz, Vol. 69 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 243–261.

8 Cfr. Francesco Eugenio Barbieri, "Dove Comincia l'Europa. La Scrittura Transculturale di Tawada Yōko," *Scritture Migranti* 4 (2010): 65–88.

9 For a discussion on the permeability and confluential nature of cultures see, in particular, Welsch, "Transculturality"; Ulf Hannerz, "Thinking about Culture in a Global Ecumene," in *Culture in the Communication Age*, ed. James Lull (New York: Routledge, 2001); and Sneja Gunew, "Transcultural Translations: Performative Pedagogies," paper presented at the meeting of the International Research Project on Transculturalism of the International Council of Canadian Studies, 6–7 June, 2002, CD format. Available also online, http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/sgunew/TT.HTM [Accessed 3 August 2011].

10 Ottomar Ette, *Literature on the Move* [Literatur in Bewegung, 2001], trans. Katharina Vester (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 9, 13.

no longer work in a world where transnational experiences and neo-nomadic trajectories tend to disrupt the cohesive sense of belonging of clearly defined and homogenised groups.[11] As the writer Pico Iyer points out, "Even the man who never leaves home may feel that home is leaving him, as parents, children, lovers scatter around the map, taking pieces of him wherever they go."[12] Iyer was born in England of Indian parents and raised between Oxford and California; he is accustomed to travel extensively around the globe as correspondent and is now living in Japan. The writer Alberto Manguel—born in Argentina and raised in Israel before wandering the globe, becoming a Canadian citizen, and then moving to live in France—also expresses this neo-nomadic mode of being and sense of identity:

> Even when declaring allegiance to one place, we seem to be always moving away from it … Nationalities, ethnicities, tribal, and religious filiations imply geographical and political definitions of some kind, and yet, partly because of our nomad nature and partly due to the fluctuations of history, our geography is less grounded in a physical than in a phantom landscape. Home is always an imaginary place.[13]

The literary critic Sabrina Brancato notes that transcultural writers show "a determination to make a home of any place the self inhabits."[14] It is clear that these culturally and physically mobile writers tend to acquire an identity mode and express cultural sensibilities that distance them from the traditional categories of the migrant/exile/diasporic/postcolonial writers that have dominated the critical discourse of the second half of the twentieth century. That is why it seems preferable to refer to them, and their related creative outputs, as "transcultural." As Mikhail N. Epstein explains, a transcultural orientation is acquired by living "diffused" in a new dimension (a "Continuum"), simultaneously "inside and outside of all existing cultures."[15] When transposed in literary terms, this transcultural sensibility records and expresses the confluential nature of cultures, where the traditional dichotomies—North and South, the West and the Rest, coloniser

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11 For an analysis of the characteristics of transcultural writers, see the article by Arianna Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers and Transcultural Literature in the Age of Global Modernity," *Transnational Literature*, 4. 2 (2012): 1–14.

12 Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 27.

13 Alberto Manguel, *The City of Words* (London: Continuum, 2008), 145.

14 Sabrina Brancato, "Transcultural Perspectives in Caribbean Poetry," in *Transcultural English Studies*, 233–247, 245.

15 Epstein, "Transculture," 333.

and colonised, dominator and dominated, native and immigrant, national and ethnic—that have thus far characterised multicultural and postcolonial discourses are superseded. It also records the re-shaping of national collective imaginaries in their efforts to adjust to the path laid down in a new age of transnational and supra-national economic, political, social, and cultural processes. The Canadian writer of Indian origins Ven Begamudré is one of the most fervent advocates of a transcultural dimension in identity building, creative writing, and critical studies; in an interview with Daniel Coleman, he suggests:

> Transculturalism assumes that there is a process of change and of evolution which is necessary among … different cultures, and that eventually we stop being Indo-Canadian or Ukrainian-Canadian; we simply become human. And I'm much more comfortable with that idea than the idea that you're allowed to hang on to your own culture, because what worries me about multiculturalism is that it fosters divisions among cultures. People try to hang onto their heritage not because it helps them survive but because it's another dusty artifact in a museum that they trot out in order to justify what they do.[16]

Obviously, acquiring a transcultural orientation does not mean to disown or ignore the culture we are born into and the effects of that particular culture in our cultural make up and sense of identity. As Epstein points out, origins "are essential"—as are the deconstructionist attempts to demystify them—but instead of insisting on their affirmation—or their deconstructive demystification—we should let them go, transcend them.[17] Epstein concludes his reasoning stating that the main purpose of culture is, through a creative and historical process of "disorigination and liberation," to make us human beings "a river and not a dam"; that is, "Culture has any sense only insofar as it makes us dissidents and fugitives from our nature, our sex, or race, or age."[18]

The main defining elements of transcultural literature

If we look more closely at the latest works of transcultural authors such as Ilija Trojanow, Brian Castro, Tim Parks, Pico Iyer, Kamila Shamsie, or Miguel Syjuco, we read about characters with diverse cultural backgrounds who live transnational lives and move about multiple foreign settings. Let us

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16 Daniel Coleman, "Writing Dislocation. Transculturalism, Gender, Immigrant Families: A Conversation with Ven Begamudré," *Canadian Literature* 149 (1996): 36–51, 37.

17 Epstein, "Transculture," 342.

18 Epstein, "Transculture," 341.

take for example the novel *With the Tiger* written by Inez Baranay, who grew up in Australia of Hungarian parents, lived for extensive periods of time in India, and now resides in Istanbul. This work of fiction is an expressed tribute to Somerset Maugham's novel *The Razor's Edge*, published in 1944. In it, Elliott, the main character created by Maugham and revisited by Baranay in the Australia of the 1970s,[19] explains himself and his charismatic young companion, Larry, in this way: "Our communities are not geographically based, we don't live where we are born, we don't have a single workplace, we are global souls." Castro's work *The Bath Fugues* is mainly set in Australia but his characters then move to and from other countries and have experiences or remember things lived through different linguistic and cultural patterns in Shanghai, Macao, Paris, Portugal.[20] In the novel by Kamila Shamsie *Burnt Shadows*, the characters depicted belong to a plethora of seemingly disparate cultures (the Japanese, the English, the Indian, the Pakistani, the Afghan, the American) that progressively reveal their shared and interwoven history, while the action shifts—together with the characters' life-trajectories— from Nagasaki to New Delhi, from Karachi to Istanbul, from New York to Guantánamo.[21] As the literary critic Salil Tripathi has remarked while reviewing Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, "At the core of [her] novel is the idea that an individual's identity is not a fixed block that can be slotted into an assigned square, but essentially liquid, evolving as life flows."[22]

Constraints of space prevent me from completing a full analysis of the shared elements that characterise a transcultural literary work. What is most important to underline here, though, is that by studying the above-mentioned transcultural fictions one cannot fail to notice that they are written in a way that makes it hard for a reader to understand or infer, without knowing anything about their complex biographies and multiple forms of identities, to what nationality, cultural community, or ethnic group their authors belong. As Mark Stein has pointed out, these works and their writers tend to undermine the "habitual classification of literary texts in terms of national or regional literatures."[23] This also happens when reading *Ilustrado*, the novel—winner of the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2008—that Miguel Syjuco set between

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19 Inez Baranay, *With the Tiger* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2008), 225.

20 Brian Castro, *The Bath Fugues* (Artarmon, New South Wales: Giramondo Publishing, 2009).

21 Kamila Shamsie, *Burnt Shadows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

22   Salil Tripathi, "Burnt Shadows, by Kamila Shamsie," *The Independent*, March 13, 2009, para. 1, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/burnt-shadows-by-kamila-shamsie-1643530.html [Accessed 3 March 2012].

23 Mark Stein, "The Location of Transculture," in *Transcultural English Studies. Theories, Fictions, Realities*, ed. Frank Schulze-Engler and Sissy Helff (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2009), 251.

the United States and the Philippines, fiction and nonfiction, biography and autobiography, thus also intertwining different literary genres and blurring the boundaries between them.[24] Undoubtedly, the fact that we find it difficult to infer the nationality or cultural sense of belonging of its characters as much as of its author is also, if not mainly, due to the fact that *Ilustrado* was written by a 37-year old man who was born and raised in the Philippines, moved to live in New York, wrote his novel as part of his PhD thesis at the University of Adelaide in Australia, and then went to live in Canada, thus adding another element to his blend of cultural and imaginary landscapes.

If on the one hand we can infer that the modes of narration of transcultural writing are a direct expression of their creators' transcultural realities and sensibilities, then, on the other, what makes this kind of writing different is, most of all, its resistance to being appropriated by one single traditional national canon or being identified with one single, specific cultural/ethnic expression or tradition. Speaking about the "New Literatures in English," Frank Schulze-Engler states that:

> The idea of "locating" culture and literature exclusively in the context of ethnicities or nations is rapidly losing plausibility throughout an "English-speaking world" that has long since been multi- rather than monolingual … The New Literatures in English themselves have long since become a transcultural field with blurred boundaries.[25]

This same assumption might confidently refer to any of those literary expressions in any other language whose features fit into a transcultural paradigm.[26] It is true that in most cases transcultural literature may have its roots in migration as well as in postcolonial, diasporic, exile conditions and in the identity displacement and cultural dislocation that ensues; but then it detaches (or flows out) from them in a process of metamorphosis. This does not imply that these conditions and modes of writing are opposed to each other, nor that they are subject to a linear, temporal pattern of development, with unwanted evolutionist, progressive, or teleological undertones. Instead,

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24 Miguel Syjuco, *Ilustrado* (London: Picador, 2010). *Ilustrado* won the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2010.

25 Schulze-Engler, "Introduction," in *Transcultural English Studies*, ix–xvi; x, xvi.

26 Sissy Helff defines a "transcultural novel" as having at least one of the following aspects: (1) "The narrator and/or the narrative challenge(s) the collective identity of a particular community"; (2) "Experiences of border crossing and transnational identities characterize the narrators' lifeworld"; (3) "Traditional notions of 'home' are disputed." Cfr. Helff, "Shifting Perspectives: The Transcultural Novel," in *Transcultural English Studies*, 75–89; 83.

these specific modes of writing tend to coexist, interact, and often overlap.[27] The presence of transcultural writers, transcultural texts, and transcultural characters is not new in the history of literature. Precursors and representatives of a transcultural sensibility may be found in all ages, from ancient times (let us just think of Ovid or Martial) to the nineteenth and twentieth century (with such forerunners as Joseph Conrad, Marguerite Yourcenar, Paul Bowles), without mentioning the polyglot writers sans patrie of the Enlightenment (Voltaire, Giacomo Casanova, Carlo Goldoni) and pre-Enlightenment (Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift). However, it is only now, the present article argues, that the pattern of modern migrations and globalising phenomena generates new opportunities to undergo transcultural experiences and develop transcultural sensibilities. This translates into an increase in the numbers not only of transcultural writers but also of those scholars and writers who are promoting a transcultural perspective in literary studies[28] and in the humanities in general.[29]

The Literatures of mobility by modes of modernity and prevailing discourses

To better exemplify what has been argued so far, an attempt has been made to visualise in Table form the Literatures of Mobility (to which transcultural literature also belongs) according to the different and often overlapping modes of modernity and prevailing discourses.

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27 Cfr. Elke Sturm-Trigonakis, "Comparative Cultural Studies and the *New Weltliteratur*," in *Companion to Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies,* eds. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2012), 93–99.

28 See, in particular, Schulze-Engler, "Introduction"; Helff, "Shifting Perspectives"; and Brancato, "Transcultural Perspectives."

29 See in particular Welsch, "Transculturality"; Epstein, "Transculture"; and Trojanow and Hoskoté, *Confluences.*

LITERATURES OF MOBILITY BY MODES OF MODERNITY AND PREVAILING DISCOURSES

Modes of Modernity	Contextual Elements, Sources of Narratives and prevailing Discourses					Practices	
	1	2	3	4	5	I	II
	Socio-economic frameworks and turning points	Technological innovations and developments in transportation/ communication	Geo-strategic/political processes	Ideological constructs	Dominant cultural/critical discourses	**Mobility patterns**	**Creative literary expressions**
A. Middle Modernity	Imperialism. Capitalism. Massindustrialisation. Fordism. Laissez-faire capitalism. Collectivisation. Great Depression.	Mass train travel. Car travel. Air flights. Mass radio communication.	Nation-States. European imperialism. Liberal democracies. Dictatorships. Chinese Revolution. Russian Revolution. World War I. World War II.	Nationalism. Imperialism. Racism. Communism. National Socialism. Fascism/ Nazism. Liberalism. Antifascism. Anarchism. Atheism.	Patriarchalism. Traditionalism. Realism. Essentialism. Particularism. Positivism Functionalism. Structuralism. Universalism. Modernism. Avantgardism. Aesthetic elitism. Increasing secularisation.	Rootedness. Sedentary settlement. Emigration. Elite travel.	Travel Lit. Colonial Lit. Expatriate Lit.
B. Post-modernity	Economic boom. International capitalism. Social welfare. Economic oil crisis. Decentralisation of production. Consumerism.	Mass car travel. Air travel. Mass TV communication. Satellite technology. Information Age (1st phase): personal computer. Mass literacy. Beginning of the age of popular culture.	Decolonisation. Cold War. Cold war "proxy wars" and military dictatorships in developing countries. Social democracies. Chinese Cultural Revolution. American imperialism. Workers' and women's rights movements. 1960s counterculture.	Anticolonialism. Anticommunism. Anti-imperialism. Pacifism. Independentism. Neo-Marxism. Liberal democracy. Social democracy.	Poststructuralism. Deconstructionism. Postmodernism. Relativism. Feminism. Culturalism. Religious tolerance/ freedom. Interfaith dialogue. Pop culture.	Exile. Expatriation. Diasporas. Mass travel – 1st phase (national/ intercontinental level).	Migrant Lit. Exile Lit.
C. Liquid modernity/ High modernity/ Late modernity	Globalisation (1st phase). Economic neoliberism. Privatisation of State industries. Post-industrial society. Delocalisation of production. Mass urbanisation. Mass consumerism. Knowledge-based economy. Late capitalism.	Mass air travel. Space flight. Commercial mass media. Global satellite TV communication. Information Age (2nd phase): Internet communication. Mass-mediated popular culture.	Human rights movements. Fall of the Berlin Wall. Internationalisation of war. Anti-Western imperialism movements. Environmental Movements. Regional geo-political links and organisations. Islamic totalitarianism.	Neoconservatism. Ethnic Fundamentalism. Ecologism.	Postcolonialism. Pluralism. Multiculturalism. Localism/ Glocalism. Defensive 'traditionalisms'. Universalisation of the particular. Fundamentalist turns of "world religions" (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, etc.).	Migrancy. Transnational Lifestyles. War displacements. Mass travel – 2nd phase (international level).	Postcolonial Lit. Multicultural Lit. Diasporic Lit. Intercultural Lit.
D. Hyper-modernity/ Transmodernity/ Global modernity	Globalisation (2nd phase). Global financial crisis and its fall-outs. Hyperconsumerism. Downsizing. Hypercapitalism. Re-nationalisation of core industries.	Space travel. Mass Internet broadband communication. Internet TV webcasting. Information Age (3rd phase): mobile global net communication & mass media access.	Increased role of supranational and/or inter-governmental organisations (UN, G20, EU, ASEAN, WTO). Ethnocentric warfare. Global terrorism. Counter-terrorism. Authoritarian Governments. Xenophobic movements. Wars for natural resources and strategic control. Pancontinentalism.	Cosmopolitanism. Proto-multiculturalism. Radical democracy. Authoritarianism. Renewed liberal humanism.Renewed religious fundamentalism. Islamism. Denationalisation.	New articulations between the universal and the particular. Transnational religious networks (e.g. Islamic umma). Increasing revival of Eastern religions (e.g. Confucianism). Emphasis on multiplicity and heterogeneity. Pancontinental acculturation. Transculturalism.	Mass migrancy. Mass war displacements. Global mobility. Neonomadism.	Transnational Lit. Postnational Lit. Global/isation Lit. Cosmopolitan Lit. Transcultural Lit.

Table 1: Literatures of mobility by modes of modernity and prevailing discourses.

More specifically, the Table presents the main political, economic, technological, and social developments in the last century and the first decade of this century, synthetically showing how these developments, supported or ignited by different ideologies, critical approaches, and cultural outlooks, affect and interact with the concomitant literary expressions within the specific context of the "Literatures of Mobility." It is important to note that the previous literary configurations/expressions all belonging to the wider terrain of the "Literatures of Mobility" (i.e. migrant, exile, diasporic, postcolonial literature, etc.) are instrumental in generating a transcultural awareness, thus they do not need to be dismissed or conceived of as outdated and/or superfluous. Unfortunately, as with all diagrams applied to social sciences and humanities, this one may also appear too clear-cut and over-simplified, too prescriptive, too schematically structuralist, one might say, especially where the logic of oppositionality appears to emerge too predictably or where a linear evolutionist narrative would seem to be myopically or naively implied. Instead, we are all well aware that epochs, ideologies, and political, social, economic, or artistic waves and articulations tend to overlap, intermingle, and converge into one another without a break, without any "progressive or regressive trajectory."[30]

This synthetic visualisation of the modern human condition mirrors the one that could be captured in the present day by a middle-class denizen of the early twenty-first century secular culture from any of the "decentred" metropolitan centres of the world. As Aihwa Ong states in *Flexible Citizenship*, with the "emergence of a multipolar world" capitalism is now "distributed across a number of global arenas" and "the complex interweaving relations of domination and subordination by transnational capital … blur the division between 'core' and 'peripheral' countries."[31]

The Table concentrates in a single 8-column and 6-row spreadsheet the essence of roughly a century of human expressions and social transformations within the discursive space of modern "mobility"; that is, factual and theoretical mobility, which includes physical, psychological, and imaginary mobility as subtexts. It should thus be thought of, together with its accompanying commentary, as a work in progress that may be altered in time according to our human transformations, endeavours, defaults, developments, as well as expanded to include other artistic/creative realities, collective practices, and disciplinary dimensions. Along the vertical axis of the grid we have the

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30 Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 356, 85.

31 Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 31, 32.

Different modes of modernity (A, B, C, D), while its horizontal axis shows the *Contextual elements, sources of narratives, and prevailing discourses (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)*, together with the emerging *Practices—Mobility patterns (I) and Creative literary expressions (II)*—resulting from and simultaneously affecting the related prevailing discourses, narratives, and contextual elements. As Raymond Williams has remarked, "the making of the literature is part of the social process itself. The society cannot be said to exist until the literature, like all other activities which are part of what we understand by society, has been written."[32]

Specific timeframes have been purposefully omitted, since in most cases they tend to overlap. Moreover, often the time reference depends on the part of the world one finds oneself in at a given moment: villagers coming out of Africa as refugees, for example, might move within a very short span of time from a condition of pre-modernity (with its economy of subsistence and tribal/feudal social organisations) into one of late modernity and, vice versa, in a matter of hours citizens living in the hypermodernity of a high-rise metropolis could find themselves immersed in a totally different lifescape. Instead, the Table establishes a different conjunctural periodisation—the one related to those "modes of modernity" meant to represent the core of different societal states and patterns in different parts of the world, even when they happen to co-exist within the same timeframes, geographical regions, and, more often than not, within the same countries or urban areas. In many parts of the world today—including advanced Western economies—it is still common to meet in the streets people living in abject poverty, begging, barely surviving on the margins in an economy of mere subsistence, while next door researchers in immaculate white coats are busy working on some sophisticated, futuristic hi-tech or science project. As Madeleine Herren, Martin Rüesch, and Christiane Sibille explain:

> The introduction of border crossing not limited to national borders also destroys the easiest way of telling stories by following time lines. Both could happen—that crossing borders brings objects, concepts, persons in a new "chronoscape," or that parallel time frames open.[33]

Moreover, the expression "modes of modernity" seems to resonate with Shmuel N. Eisenstadt's acknowledgment that modernity is increasingly

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32 Raymond Williams, "Literature in Society," in *Contemporary Approaches to English Studies*, ed. Hilda Schiff (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977), 25.

33 Madeleine Herren, Martin Rüesch, and Christiane Sibille, *Transcultural History. Theories, Methods, Sources* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), 83.

understood as a diversified range of "multiple modernities."[34] Instead of assuming that globalisation may lead to an ahistorical and Westernised homogenisation of different cultures, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Jens Riedel, and Dominic Sachsenmaier posit the emergence of a plurality of forms of modernity "shaped by distinct cultural heritages and sociopolitical conditions."[35] Although the Western project launched the premise and established the starting and turning points for the processes that gave birth to and transported humanity into the modern era, Eisenstadt suggests that "The best way to understand the contemporary world—indeed to explain the history of modernity—is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs and cultural patterns of modernity" that goes beyond Western-centric models of classification, differentiation, and interpretation.[36]

Taking a slightly different slant, in his article "Modernity as History" Arif Dirlik maintains that the "efforts to reformulate modernity" and supersede its Eurocentric perspective are mainly due to the latter developments of "capitalist modernity" itself: "In its globalisation, [it] has had to interiorise cultural difference as part of its very constitution; one fundamental consequence of which has been to compromise its identification with EuroAmerican models of modernity, which provided an earlier modernisation discourse with its teleological power."[37] In other words, as Ong remarks, it seems no longer possible "to talk about a single modernity within the West."[38] Rather, it sounds more plausible to talk about "multiple interpretations of modernity"[39] that may lead to multiple developments in different political constitutions and geographical areas, away from the essentialising idea of some "master Western prototype."[40] This way of reasoning resonates with Charles Taylor's "cultural theory of modernity" and, more specifically, with his notion of "alternative modernities." In Taylor's view the changes undergone by different societies under the impact of modernity—with their different cultural "understandings

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34 Cfr. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129.1 (Winter 2000): 1–29.

35 Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Jens Riedel, and Dominic Sachsenmaier, "The Context of the Multiple Modernities Paradigm," in *Reflections on Multiple Modernities. European, Chinese and Other Interpretations*, eds. Dominic Sachsenmaier, Jens Riedel, and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1.

36 Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Some Observations on Multiple Modernities," in *Reflections on Multiple Modernities*, 27–41; 27.

37 Arif Dirlik, "Modernity as History: Post-Revolutionary China, Globalisation and the Question of Modernity." *Social History* 27.1 (2002): 16–39, 16.

38 Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 31.

39 Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," 24.

40 Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 31.

of the person, social relations, states of mind, goods and bads, virtues and vices, and the sacred and the profane"—may lead, through a process of "creative adaptation," to different outcomes, including divergence, even in the presence of a convergence of certain main factors (i.e., market-driven industrial economies, bureaucratic forms of administration, popular modes of government).[41] What Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar is keen to emphasise in Taylor's reasoning, though, is that "creative adaptation" does not mean naively to be able "to freely choose whatever one likes from the offerings of modernity," discarding the bad, the ugly, or the unwelcome; rather, it suggests "the manifold ways in which a people question the present."[42] On the same wavelength, Lawrence Grossberg states "modernity should be seen as a product of contradictory or [even] conflicting cultural processes" in which the West has lost its centrality:[43]

> The West can no longer be thought of as a dominant geographical concept structuring the non-West. Rather, it must be located, immanently within the temporality of a modernity embracing new cultural forms that have been and are still developing in what used to be the non-West and that now offer an occasion for dialectical encounter.[44]

In this light, modernity becomes, in all its modes, negotiations, translations, and declinations, "a commonly shared condition."[45] As Couze Venn posits while exploring the possibility of a theoretical debate that is able to go beyond the postcolonial and the postmodern times: "To begin with, we need to disaggregate the discourse of modernity, recognizing the plural character of the lived experience of modernity. Then we could repose the question of being and of transfiguration."[46]

The Table might appear as a subtle post-Enlightenment attempt to categorise historical processes that are both highly complex and made of entangled, often asymmetrical flows of cultural exchange. Nonetheless, following what has been

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41 Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," in *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 172, 182, 185.

42 Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," in *Alternative Modernities*, 1–23, 18.

43 Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham: Duke University Press), 86.

44 Grossberg, *Cultural Studies*, 288.

45 Dominic Sachsenmaier, "Multiple Modernities—the Concept and its Potential," in *Reflections on Multiple Modernities*, 42–67; 57.

46 Couze Venn, "Narrating the Postcolonial," in *Spaces of Culture. City—Nation—World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 264.

argued so far, the Table eschews an evolutionist and unilinear notion of modernity; it instead re-elaborates through a transcultural lens the traditional discourse of modernity by presenting its multiple "modes," steps, and transboundary interconnections in a movement towards an ever-greater complexity of views and cultural horizons. Following a logic of circularity, the Table captures the changes in society, critical perspectives, and artistic/literary expressions that often lead to a renegotiation of cultural values and to the acknowledgment of wider "scapes" of interdependence and interconnectedness.[47] The Table also marks the fact that processes of socio-cultural transformation, while being multidirectional and open to the deterritorialised/denationalised nature of cultural flows, are intrinsically embedded in specific historical contexts and localised practices.[48] As Monica Juneja states:

> If we proceed on an understanding of culture that is in a condition of being made and remade, historical units and boundaries cannot be taken as given; rather, they have to be constituted as a subject of investigation, as products of spatial and cultural displacements. Units of investigation are constituted neither mechanically following the territorial-cum-political logic of modern nation-states nor according to civilisational categories drawn up by the universal histories of the nineteenth century, but are continually defined as participants in and as contingent upon the historical relationships in which they are implicated. This would further mean approaching time and space as non-linear and non-homogeneous, defined through the logic of circulatory practices.[49]

The Table spans a timeframe from the beginning of the twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century, that is, the period in which subsequent articulations and modes of modernity (as shown in the vertical axis of the grid) created the premise for the recent transition to the "global age."[50] As previously mentioned, the periodisation adopted by the Table is of necessity more clear-cut than is the case in reality. The demarcations are not meant to be exclusive, and considerable overlap between the phases of modernity can be assumed, particularly between developed and developing regions of the world.

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47 Drawing on the concept of "scapes" outlined by Arjun Appadurai (2010, 1996), Diamantis Panagiotopoulos describes them as "virtual, deterritorialised spaces that are shaped and structured by a variety of flows and processes." Cfr. Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, "Material Versus Design: A Transcultural Approach to the Two Contrasting Properties of Things," *Transcultural Studies*, 1 (2013): 145–176; 154.

48 On the dynamics of "cultural flows" see Arjun Appadurai (1996, 2010).

49 Monica Juneja, "Global Art history and the Burden of Representation," 8.

50 See, in particular, Martin Albrow, *The Global Age: State and Society Beyond Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

Thus, *Middle modernity (A, in the Table)* roughly covers the first half of the twentieth century up to the end of the Second World War and the two decades following, when colonial imperialism progressively came to an end. It is the age of the grand narratives, of forced economic mass migrations, of mass-production, and of *laissez-faire* capitalism.[51]

Postmodernity (B), as defined by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*, roughly covers the four decades between the late 1950s and the late 1990s and witnesses the advent of the mass market, mass media, and mass car travel, together with the demise of colonial powers, the deconstruction of master narratives (including the concept of history as a unitary and progressive teleological course), the proliferation of alternative worldviews, and the emergence of counterculture.

Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Times, Liquid modernity (C)*—understood also as *high modernity* or *late modernity* (as defined by Anthony Giddens in *Modernity and Self-Identity*)—roughly covers the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, when personal computers and mobile phones become a fetish commodity, among thousands of other items, and economic globalisation asserts its power and pervasiveness. This is the time in human history when the world witnesses simultaneously the internationalisation of war, the threat of environmental destruction, the ongoing growth of multicultural societies, and the escalation of virulent ethnic conflicts.[52] In his latest book, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, Bauman maintains that "what makes modernity 'liquid' … is its self-propelling, self-intensifying, compulsive and obsessive 'modernisation,' as a result of which, like liquid, none of the consecutive forms of social life is able to maintain its shape for long."[53]

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51 In the present article, what is called "middle modernity" is distinct from "the early phase of modernity," which, in Marshal Berman's view, roughly covers the period between the sixteenth century and the French Revolution, "when people are just beginning to experience modern life." It also differs from what might be called "classical" modernity, which spans through the whole of the nineteenth century after "the great revolutionary wave of the 1790s [when] a great modern public abruptly and dramatically comes to life." It may be roughly associated with what Berman calls "the third … phase" of modernity, when "the process of modernisation expands to take in virtually the whole world" (although in this definition Berman encompasses most of the twentieth century, at least until the 1980s). Cfr. Marshal Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), 16–17.

52 Cfr. also Ulrich Beck, "Living in the World Risk Society," *Economy and Society*, 35.2 (August, 2006): 329–345.

53 Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity in association with the National Audiovisual Institute, 2011), 11.

Hypermodernity, transmodernity, global modernity (D) are alternative terms that indicate the present moment (second decade of the twenty-first century). It is a moment in which the general, increasing decentring, and "desembedding"—in terms of deterritorialisation and derootedness[54]—of state and government institutions as well as of national policies, economies, cultures, religions, communities, collective and individual identities calls for a reconfiguration of their theorisations, roles, and interrelations. It is within this context that the transnational religious networks (cfr. *D5* in the Table) that emerged in the previous decade mark the firm establishment of sectarian entities and fundamentalist movements (such as Al Qaeda) as alternative forms of "defensive traditionalisms" and essentialising universalisms "not geographically bound" and "globally organized."[55] More specifically, "hypermodernity" is the term used by French philosopher Gilles Lipovetski [56]to define the last phase of modernity, characterised by a technocratic revolution, hyper-consumption, and the hypermodern individual (who is at times excessively and narcissistically individualistic but still capable of expressing responsible ethical stances). Facing a world stripped of tradition and former stability, the hypermodern individual is often overwhelmed by fear and anxiety towards an uncertain future. With "transmodernity" Enrique D. Dussel designates a kind of modernity that is able to grant a more symmetrical perspective and to take into account the cultural and transformative richness of those cultures "simultaneously *pre*-modern (older than modernity), *contemporary* to Modernity and soon trans-modern as well," which have thus far been considered at the periphery of the Western world.[57] "Global modernity," on the other hand, is a term directly drawn from historian Arif Dirlik's theorisations, culminating in his latest book by the same title. Instead of participating in its foretold end, Dirlik posits that we bear witness to the fact that modernity "is a global condition":

> Modernity may no longer be approached as a dialogue internal to Europe or EuroAmerica, but is a global discourse in which many participate, producing different formulations of the modern as lived and envisaged within their local social environments. This in some

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54 Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh, *Literature and Globalization: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2011), xiv.

55 Shmuel Sachsenmaier, "Multiple Modernities," 51–52.

56 Cfr. Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

57 Enrique Dussel, "Transmodernity and Interculturality. An Interpretation from the Perspective of Philosophy of Liberation," *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1:3 (2012): 28–59, 42.

ways is the fulfillment of modernity, which not only drew all globally into modernity but promised an open-endedness in doing so.[58]

From this perspective we might, together with Epstein, talk about a protoglobal modernity, where the prefix "proto-" indicates the beginning, the early development of a new phase (but still within the paradigms of modernity) characterised by its open-endedness: "A beginning thus understood as leading to an open future and manifesting possibilities for continuation … can be designated as 'proto'."[59]

The *horizontal axis* of the grid shows the *contextual elements, sources of narratives, and prevailing discourses* in the global social arena according to the different, overlapping (often concomitant) modes of modernity. The contextual elements may contribute to generate narratives, which under certain conditions turn into prevailing discourses. As the end result of this process, social and cultural practices emerge and consolidate. These practices, in turn, impact on the contextual elements, narratives, and discourses. *Socio-economic frameworks and turning points (1)* refer to the economic structures and the decisive events that marked their breakdowns or their further developments. *Technological innovations and developments in transportation/communication (2)* focus on the main breakthroughs in the technologies that have accompanied humanity in its increased physical mobility (through faster and cheaper means of transport) but also virtual mobility (through more pervasive means of communication and access to knowledge).

Geo-strategic political processes (3) present an extremely synthetised historical narrative of the political events, movements, and ideas that have contributed to the shaping of a certain mode of modernity. *Ideological constructs (4)* sum up the relevant ideologies and ideological points of reference relative to a certain socio-political and/or historical configuration. *Dominant cultural/critical discourses (5)* refer to the modes of thinking, narratives, and prevailing views that shape—and at the same time are being shaped by—the production of knowledge relative to a certain socio-political and/or historical configuration. In an extended way, we might also refer to them as the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times, with all its manifestations (including the moral and the symbolic). Together they constitute what

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58   Arif Dirlik, "Modernity as History," 24, 17.

59   Mikhail N. Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*, trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 331.

Taylor calls "the constellation of background understanding" and collective imaginary through which people make sense of themselves in relation to the world, time, others, and the good.[60]

The last two entries in the horizontal axis are conceptually separated, since they relate to the 'Practices' (*'Mobility patterns' and 'Creative literary expressions'*)—meant as experiences, patterns of behaviour, modes of knowledge, and understanding—that emanate from and in turn affect, in a dynamic and circular process, those above-mentioned contextual elements, narratives, discourses, or counter-discourses. More specifically, *Mobility patterns (I)* relate to the extent and experience of physical, virtual or, in Appadurai's terms, even the "imagined" mobility of increasing numbers of people.[61] *Creative literary expressions (II)* refer to the cultural forms—and 'producers' of meaning—within the Literatures of Mobility. They creatively express and at the same time affect the imaginary, emotional states, and attitudes both of people on the move across (or beyond) nations, languages, cultural borders and of their more sedentary counterparts. Like all creative/artistic manifestations, they may have contrasting functions: more or less intentionally they may support or challenge dominant cultural discourses and/or counter-discourses. As forms of cultural practices they function in conjunction with economies and other socio-technological factors/contexts. As Paul Jay points out, "culture is a set of material practices linked to economies, and economic and material relations are always mediated by cultural factors and forms."[62] It is clear that the "fuzzy" category of transcultural literature, with its blurred boundaries and fluid nature, tends to overlap—if not at times coincide—with the adjacent categories of postnational, cosmopolitan, transnational, and global/ised writing. It is also clear that transcultural literature is not immune to the competitive dynamics of the international literary scene, characterised, as Pascale Casanova has highlighted in her book *The World Republic of Letters*, by "rivalry, struggle, and inequality."[63]

It is within this scenario that we are also witnessing the emergence of new forms of "pancontinental acculturation" (cfr. *D5* in the Table), the phenomenon by which the boundaries between different national cultures tend to blur in favour of a broader regional, and possibly continental, picture that contributes to the

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60 Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," 195.

61 Cfr. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

62 Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 45.

63 Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters,* trans. M.B. DeBevoise [*La république mondiale des lettres*, 1999] (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4.

denationalisation process. The comparativist Jan Walsh Hokenson talks about the increasing globalisation of culture in the third millennium and the process of "pan-continental cultural continuities" not only in Europe but also in the United States where, for example, already at present "programs in comparative literature are offering courses in the literatures of the Americas, the Latina writer, Caribbean poetics, East-West aesthetics—blurrings of national boundaries in favor of regional constants or parameters. It is clear that, slowly but surely, national cultures will no longer obtain."[64]

The diagram stresses the significance of growing states of mobility: from train travel to mass air flights, from fixed phone lines to mobile global communications, from 9-to-5 stable jobs to erratic professional careers. It also highlights the cumulative effects of all those increasingly significant "transsocietal" (and, again, often highly mobile) phenomena and processes[65]—migrations flows, diasporic movements, multinational corporations, international nongovernmental organisations, transnational communities, interregional trading organisations— that tend to supersede, erase, or transcend traditionally established national or territorial boundaries. As the historian James Clifford remarks:

> This century has seen a drastic expansion of mobility, including tourism, migrant labor, immigration, urban sprawl. More and more people "dwell" with the help of mass transit, automobiles, airplanes. In cities on six continents foreign populations have come to stay—mixing in but often in partial, specific fashions … Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighborhood.[66]

Moreover, the Table is an attempt to bridge—at least visually—the rift between those (mainly sociologists and economists) who "use a political-economic framework to assess the impact of transmigration on host and home countries" and those (mainly anthropologists and cultural theorists) "that focus almost exclusively on the cultural, imaginative, and subjective aspects of modern travel and interconnections."[67]

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64 Jan Walsh Hokenson, "The Culture of the Context: Comparative Literature Past and Future," in *Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies*, ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2003), 61.

65 Cfr. William H. Sewell Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn. New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn A. Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 35–61.

66 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 14.

67 Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 15.

What emerges from the Table is that—even in their discrepant, opposing manifestations and readings—the different modes of modernity, existential conditions, social structures, ideologies, cultural constructs, and creative (literary) expressions interpreted within the framework of a mobility discourse do not exclude each other but build on each other as sedimented/stratified products and expressions of human activity with a cumulative effect, and in a constant dynamic interrelation between patterned, socio-cultural contexts and competent, individual human agents.[68] As the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo has remarked, "There is no single history, only images of the past projected from different points of view."[69]

What is evident from the table, to use Edward W. Said's term, is the "contrapuntal" perspective and historiography, that is the dynamic and interdependent character of human activity, reasoning and debating.[70] There is no dominant theme (or at least only provisionally), no grand narrative, rather a polyphony of voices—sometimes contradictory—an interplay of points of view that keeps growing and augmenting in richness and complexity. As Clifford points out, "To reject a single progressive or entropic metanarrative is not to deny the existence of pervasive global processes unevenly at work. The world is increasingly connected, though not unified, economically and culturally."[71] Only by taking into account all the different situations, perspectives, outlooks, social dimensions, and creative manifestations are we able to catch a glimpse of the whole fluctuating, ever-changing pattern in the global tapestry. That is why we might read even this conjunctural diagram—this succinct form of "text"— expressly in a contrapuntal way, "not to impose a false harmony," as Alissa Jones Nelson notes explaining Said's approach, "but to achieve a counterpoint of various voices that maintains rather than smooths tension."[72] There appear to be no teleological forces (or theories) at work in the emerging picture, nor plans for large-scale projects of social engineering, only the dialogic interaction of contending, and mutually qualifying, multiple social voices and modes of discourse (in Mikhail Bakhtin's terms)—what Appadurai would call "the everyday cultural practice through which the work of the imagination is

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68 See in this regard, Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

69 Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 3.

70 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 36.

71 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 17.

72 Alissa Jones Nelson, "Contrapuntal Hermeneutics: Semantics, Edward W. Said, and a New Approach to Biblical Interpretation," in *Thinking Toward New Horizons*, eds. Matthias Augustin and Hermann M. Niemann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang: 2008), 206.

transformed."[73] In this light, it is not difficult to agree with Ong when she states, "Only by weaving the analysis of cultural politics and political economy into a single framework can we hope to provide a nuanced delineation of the complex relations between transnational phenomena, national regimes, and cultural practices in late modernity."[74]

Within this framework of reference, one can more easily acknowledge also the dialectical tension between the autonomy of art and its status as a *fait social*, a social fact, or as a "social function" previously proposed by Theodor W. Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory*.[75] That is to say, that despite being a cultural/ aesthetic product related to a particular society, economic circumstance, political contingency, and despite having a social history attached to it, art— and in the specific case of this study, literature—can still have a degree of autonomy, freedom, and power to affect prevailing discourses, as human social agents do. As Adorno has noted:

> By the inherent tendency of art to cast different lights on the familiar, artworks correspond to the objective need for a transformation of consciousness that could become a transformation of reality. [76]

This allows writers and their readers, engaged with the texts as active interpreters, to critically think and creatively imagine in ways that do not correspond to the dominant contemporary understanding of the world with its belief attachments, political agendas, and social conditioning. That is also why, as Andrew Edgar and Peter R. Sedgwick explain, a holistic approach tends to become "the default philosophy of most literary criticism," since literary criticism "is not so much concerned with any truth-claims ... but rather with interpreting [... the texts'] meaning or significance in a broadly contextual and non-assertoric sense."[77]

Transcultural comparativism
More importantly, what emerges clearly from this open-ended tapestry of human

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73 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 9.

74 Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 16. In Ong's view, political economy goes beyond the classical Marxist formulation "as a domain of production and labor that is separate from society and culture" (Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 16).

75 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* [Ästhetische Theorie, 1970], trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2004), 311–314.

76 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 317.

77 Andrew Edgar and Peter R. Sedgwick, Cultural Theory: *The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 178.

modern conditions is that with the appearance of global modernity onto the scene even the creative (literary) outputs associated with this most recent mode of modernity need to be read, studied, and analysed through a new interpretive lens and its adjoined new vocabulary. As Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh point out:

> One obvious reason why critics have been slow to engage with the theories of globalization as they were being developed in other disciplines is the fact that literary studies seemed to possess, in postcolonialism and postmodernism, two prior modes of thinking about transnationalism … However, while this kind of approach to globalization is obviously attractive for postcolonial scholars it may cloud our awareness of what is distinctive or new about globalization as a way of organizing international inequalities and a mode of narrating transnational interactions.[78]

Transculturality offers a new discursive field from which to critically address the cultural impact and creative expressions of global modernity towards "a panoptic view across national and canonical frontiers."[79] As Paul Jay makes clear: "We need to find a way to accommodate the transnational and postnational perspectives of globalization studies in our programs and curricula without subordinating the heterogeneous literatures we deal with to outdated critical paradigms."[80] It is this crystallisation of national paradigms in the study of literatures that, as Connell and Marsh highlight, "has served as an impediment to the engagement with globalisation as a critical idea."[81]

What has been said so far in regard to the Table contributes to the definition of a heuristic model within literary studies that might be called "transcultural comparativism." If we wanted to represent graphically this specific analytical framework, we would probably end up with a kind of 5D model where the five dimensions are constituted by: "time" (the historical dimension; the past as a serious factor); "context" (in terms of socio-economic realities, technological developments, political processes, geographical locations); "practice" (in terms of lived experience, language, communication, interaction); "meaning" (in terms of dominant ideologies, worldviews, cultural constructs); and "agency" (in terms of self-reflexivity, critical thinking, innovation, imagination, creative outputs). From this perspective, transcultural comparativism shows great affinities with—and might be inscribed within—the "Systemic and Empirical Approach

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78 Connell and Marsh, *Literature and Globalisation*, 94–96.

79 Hokenson, "The Culture of the Context," 63.

80 Paul Jay, "Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English," *PMLA* 116.1 (2001): 32–47, 44.

81 Connell and Marsh, "Literature and Globalization," 97, 98.

to Literature and Culture" that Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek has been developing since the 1990s and has first described in 1998 in his book *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*. Drawing on existing and emerging theories in the disciplines of comparative literature and cultural studies, Tötösy de Zepetnek has formulated a theoretical and methodological framework that he refers to as "Comparative Cultural Studies." In his view, this framework facilitates the pluralistic, all-inclusive, and interdisciplinary study of literature and culture while emphasising the connections and the dialogic realities/practices between cultures, languages, literatures, and disciplines.[82]

Conclusions

As we have seen, the social and economic patterns of early twenty first-century globalisation, people's increased mobility across the planet, and the cultural complexities and interactions that these combined factors generate seem to foster emerging transcultural orientations and transcultural modes of creative (literary but also, more generally, artistic) expression. The most recent theorisations of the transcultural show us new modes of identity-building as well as new models of interpretation that perhaps can, in Epstein's words, "open … a possibility for globalization not as homogenization but, rather, as further differentiation of cultures and their 'dissemination' into transcultural individuals."[83] In this light, we might thus imply that early twenty first-century expressions of transcultural literature—by creating, re-creating, interlacing and, most importantly, negotiating diverse cultural landscapes—contribute to open up new worlds, new modernities connected to the present age of global mobility, and show us the strengths and at the same time the limits and the illusory perception of single bounded cultures/civilisations and monocultural/monological identities. In this regard, the American philosopher Richard Rorty was particularly convinced that literary texts may help us to find "more resourceful ways for describing [ourselves] or altering [our] vocabularies for a variety of purposes," and thus give us the chance "to enlarge ourselves by enlarging our sensitivity and our imaginations."[84]

We might thus conclude that in order to advance our understanding of the current literary production, prompted by the present age of global mobility, it

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82 Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, "From Comparative Literature Today toward Comparative Cultural Studies," CLCWeb: *Comparative Literature and Culture* 1.3 (1999), http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clc-web/vol1/iss3/2 [Accessed 2 January 2012].

83 Epstein, "Transculture," 328.

84 Richard Rorty, *Take Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself: Interviews with Richard Rorty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 124.

seems necessary to acknowledge the presence and identity, the fluid nature and the transforming role of transcultural works. Moreover, by examining these works through a transcultural lens we might be able to grasp and interpret in a more profound way what the cultural anthropologist Ulf Hannerz describes as the inescapable and often unpredictable influence of other cultures in our contemporary.[85] Finally, transculturality (or what others, more generically, define as transculturalism) and its creative expressions promote a new understanding of cultural encounters, revealing the often asymmetrical but always multidirectional flows of cultural circulation that are marked by ruptures, disjunctures, and mutual tensions but also by commonalities and shared ventures, affects, or outlooks.[86] The significance of a transcultural 'transforming' approach (and experience) in writing, reading, and critiquing has been highlighted by Gilles Dupuis when marking the differences between transculturalism and interculturalism within a literary context:

> Transculturalism … does not limit itself to two cultures facing each other, trying to work out what they assume to be their intrinsic discrepancies. Transculturalism takes place when at least two—and sometimes three or more—cultures are not only engaged in dialogue, but partake in a more profound and often contradictory process, in which enlightenment, understanding, and continuous reassessment of identity are at play. The ultimate aim is to transform each other's identity through a long, arduous, and sometimes painful negotiation of Otherness.[87]

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85 Hannerz, "Thinking about Culture."

86 As Afef Benessaieh (2010) maintains in "Multiculturalism, Interculturality, Transculturality," "the transcultural traverses cultures, bringing to light what is common or alike amid what seems to be different… [It] does not dualize or polarize cultures as essentially different or potentially antagonistic," 18, 19.

87 Gilles Dupuis, "Transculturalism and Écritures Migrantes," in *History of Literature in Canada: English-Canadian and French-Canadian*, ed. Reingard M. Nischik (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 497–508.

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