GLOBALIZATION, MIGRATION LITERATURE, AND THE NEW EUROPE

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This essay initially delineates a series of isomorphies between the concepts and phenomena of globalization, the migrant writer, Weltliteratur, cosmopolitanism, and Europe. In general, the structural affinity can be characterized as the double movement of elimination and recuperation of space. More specifically, it argues that migration literature, Weltliteratur, cosmopolitanism, and Europe are all particular instances of the growing independence of particular spaces, but also that they are characterized by what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (in a meditation on “globalization”) has termed “reactions of inertia” which make them reconnect with the dimension of space. In this sense, they display a list of converging conditions and needs that can be summarized as follows: globalization is the elimination of body and space and the attempted recuperation of those dimensions in new ways; the migrant is weightless and rooted in multiple places; Weltliteratur is translocally mobile and locally inflected; cosmopolitan means being a citizen of the world and a patriot; Europe (and European literature) involves migration and the nation. Following this largely theoretical discussion of isomorphies, the remaining part of the essay will comprise a reading of Partir (2006) by the Moroccan-French writer Tahar Ben Jelloun. This novel of migration, which is set in Morocco and Spain, serves as an unruly literary example that not only illustrates but also nuances the apparent structural orderliness between the above concepts and phenomena.

Globalization
Globalization is definitely a complex and multifarious phenomenon. However, in “A Negative Anthropology of Globalization” – an essay written from an existentialist perspective and thus dealing with how globalization transforms structures and situations of individual life – Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht identifies two key characteristics: the increasing amount of information available to practically all human beings and, perhaps more crucial, the fact that this information (and its circulation) becomes ever more “detached from particular physical spaces”. At first sight this development can be traced back to the emergence of the railroad networks in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This was a

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material event that amplified the circulation of knowledge and people, not least because the very act of circulating was made smoother and more independent of the potential frictions of specific physical spaces than ever before. Together with Kant’s Zum ewigen Frieden published in 1795, the railroad networks also helped to bring about the resurgence of the Cynic-Stoic concept of cosmopolitanism, just as they converged historically with Goethe’s concept (and practice) of Weltliteratur.

A second stage in the development of globalization came in the twentieth century with the invention of a series of new communication technologies such as the telephone, the radio, and television. These devices are all characterized by their capacity to transmit information detached from physical space, but also by their own relatively sedentary nature (and, following from this, the sedentary nature of the people transmitting and receiving information). The latest step – marked by the emergence of cellular phones, laptops, the internet, and e-mail – has triggered an intense electronification of socialization. Besides emphasizing the complete independence of information transfer from physical space, this third phase also accentuates the increased detachment of technical devices and people from space (as the media

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2 It is Diogenes of Sinope (c. 412 BC), the archetypal Cynic philosopher in Ancient Greece, who is traditionally credited with the first known use of the word “cosmopolitan”, deriving from the Greek words kosmos (Κόσμος, the Universe) and polis(πόλις, city): “Asked where he came from, he answered, ‘I am a citizen of the world [Κοσμοπολίτης, kosmopolites]’” (Diogenes Laertius, “Diogenes of Sinope”, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, trans. R.D. Hicks, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1965, II, 65).

3 Goethe mentions Weltliteratur for the first time on 31 January 1827 in a conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann: “National literature means little now, the age of Weltliteratur has begun; and everyone should further its course” (Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “On World Literature”, in World Literature: A Reader, eds Theo D’haen, César Domínguez and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, London: Routledge, 2013, 11). However, as pointed out by Hans-J. Weitz the concept of Weltliteratur was in fact coined decades earlier by Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) in his handwritten notes to his translation of Horace’s letters (Hans-J Weitz, “Weltliteratur” zuerst bei Wieland”, Arcadia: Zeitschrift fur Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, XXII/2 [1987], 206). Gerhart Hoffmeister makes it clear, though, that “Goethe was the one who not only disseminated this idea, but also practiced it fully and eventually embodied it for his age and beyond. His view of Weltliteratur as ‘Weltumlauf’ (circulation of ideas around the world) largely depended on the state of ‘Weltkommunikation’ in the field of politics, trade, and literary activities” (Gerhart Hoffmeister, “Weltliteratur [World Literature]”, The Literary Encyclopedia: http://www.litencyc.com/php/topics.php?rec=true&UID=5529; see also John David Pizer, The Idea of World Literature: History and Pedagogical Practice, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2006, 1-3).