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Global *Translatio*: The “Invention” of Comparative Literature, Istanbul, 1933

Emily Apter

Any language is human prior to being national: Turkish, French, and German languages first belong to humanity and then to Turkish, French, and German peoples.
—Leo Spitzer, “Learning Turkish” (1934)

In many ways, the rush to globalize the literary canon in recent years may be viewed as the “comp-lit-ization” of national literatures throughout the humanities. Comparative literature was in principle global from its inception, even if its institutional establishment in the postwar period assigned Europe the lion’s share of critical attention and shortchanged non-Western literatures. As many have pointed out, the foundational figures of comparative literature—Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach—came as exiles and emigres from war-torn Europe with a shared suspicion of nationalism. Goethe’s ideal of *Weltliteratur*, associated with a commitment to expansive cultural secularism, became a disciplinary premiss that has endured, resonating today in, say, Franco Moretti’s essay “Conjectures on World Literature,” in which he argues that antinationalism is really the only *raison d’être* for risky forays into “distant reading.” “The point,” he asserts, “is that there is no other justification for the study of world literature (and for the existence of departments of comparative literature) but this: to be a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national litera-

This essay grew out of dialogue with Aamir Mufti, whose own essay “Auerbach in Istanbul” provided crucial inspiration. I also acknowledge with profound gratitude the contribution of Tülay Atak, whose discovery and translation of Spitzer’s “Learning Turkish” article proved indispensable. The interview with Sühayla Bayrav was arranged by Tulay and her friends. Thanks are also due to Fredric Jameson, who put me in touch with Sibel Irzik and her colleagues at the Bosphorus University. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Andreas Huyssen, and David Damrosch offered invaluable suggestions when a version of this essay was presented at Columbia University. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht was kind enough to share his manuscript “Leo Spitzer’s Style,” a rich source of literary history for this period.

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tures—especially the local literature. If comparative literature is not this, it's nothing."¹

Anyone who has worked in comparative literature can appreciate Moretti's emphasis on antinationalism. The *doxa* of national language departments tend to be more apparent to those accustomed to working across or outside them, while critical tendencies and schools appear more obviously as extensions of national literatures to those committed self-consciously to combining or traducing them. National character ghosts theories and approaches even in an era of cultural antiessentialism. English departments are identified with a heritage of pragmatism, from practical criticism to the New Historicism. Reception and discourse theory are naturalized within German studies. French is associated with deconstruction even after deconstruction's migration elsewhere. Slavic languages retain morphology and dialogism as their theoretical calling cards. Third world allegory lingers as an *appellation contrôlée* in classifying third world literatures, and so on. Lacking a specific country, or single national identity, comp lit necessarily works toward a nonnationally defined disciplinary locus, placing high stakes on successfully negotiating the pitfalls of *Weltliteratur*, especially in an increasingly globalized economy governed by transnational exchanges. But, as we have seen, the more talk there has been of "worlding" the canon along lines established by Edward Said, the less consensus there is on how to accomplish the task. As Moretti puts it: "the literature around us is now unmistakably a planetary system. The question is not really *what* we should do—the question is *how*. What does it mean, studying world literature? How do we do it? I work on West European narrative between 1790 and 1930, and already feel like a charlatan outside of Britain or France. World literature?" ("CWL," pp. 54–55).

A number of rubrics have emerged in response to this how-to question even if they hardly qualify as full-fledged paradigms: global lit (inflected by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi), cosmopolitanism (given its imprimatur by Bruce Robbins and Timothy Brennan), world lit (revived by David Damrosch and Franco Moretti), literary transnationalism (indebted to the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), and comparative postcolonial and

1. Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review*, n.s., 1 (Jan.–Feb. 2000): 68; hereafter abbreviated "CWL."

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diaspora studies (indelibly marked by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Françoise Lionnet, and Rey Chow, among others). While promising vital engagement with non-Western traditions, these categories offer few methodological solutions to the pragmatic issue of how to make credible comparisons among radically different languages and literatures. Moretti, once again, articulates the matter succinctly: "World literature is not an object, it's a *problem*, and a problem that asks for a new critical method; and no one has ever found a method by just reading more texts" ("CWL," p. 55). Does he himself propose a method? Well, yes and no. He introduces the promising idea of distant reading as the foundation of a new epistemology (echoing Benedict Anderson's notion of distant or e-nationalism), but it is an idea that potentially risks foundering in a city of bits, where micro and macro literary units are awash in a global system with no obvious sorting device. Distance, Moretti pronounces, "*is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less is more" ("CWL," p. 57).

If, in this formulation, distant reading seems scarcely distinct from the emphasis on old tropes, themes, and genres from comparative literature of yesteryear, Moretti, to give him his due, is proselytizing for something more radical. Frankly admitting that in his own area of expertise he has dealt only with literature's "canonical fraction," Moretti advocates a kind of lit crit heresy that dispenses with close reading, relies unabashedly on secondhand material, and subordinates intellectual energies to the achievement of a "day of synthesis." Following Immanuel Wallerstein, the champion of world-systems theory, Moretti sets his hopes on the synthetic flash of insight that produces a shape-shifting paradigm of global relevance. His examples emphasize a socially vested formalism—"forms as abstracts of social relationships"—ranging from Roberto Schwarz's formal reading of foreign debt in the Brazilian novel, to Henry Zhao's concept of "the uneasy narrator" as the congealed expression of East-West "interpretive diversification," to Ato Quayson's use of genre—Nigerian postrealism—as the narrative guise assumed by imperial interference ("CWL," pp. 64, 63).

Moretti's attempt to assign renewed importance to plot, character, voice, and genre as load-bearing units of global lit has much to recommend it, as does his political formalism in the expanded field of world-systems theory, which bluntly recognizes the uneven playing field of global symbolic capital. Like the work of Perry Anderson and other affiliates of the *New Left Review*, his macro approach is clearly indebted to Jameson's *Marxism and Form*. But it is an approach that ignores the extent to which high theory, with its

internationalist circulation, already functioned as a form of distant reading. It also favors narrative over linguistic engagement, and this, I would surmise, is ultimately the dangling participle of Moretti's revamped *Weltliteratur*.

The problem left unresolved by Moretti—the need for a full-throttle globalism that would valorize textual closeness while refusing to sacrifice distance—was confronted earlier in literary history by Leo Spitzer when he was charged by the Turkish government to devise a philological curriculum in Istanbul in 1933. In looking not just at what Spitzer preached—a universal Eurocentrism—but more at what he practiced—a staged cacophony of multilingual encounters—one finds an example of comparatism that sustains at once global reach and textual closeness.

Spitzer in Istanbul

It is by now something of a commonplace in the history of comparative literary studies to cite Erich Auerbach's melancholy postscript in *Mimesis* in which he describes the circumstances of the book's preparation during the period of his exile in Turkey from 1933 to 1945:

I may also mention that the book was written during the war and at Istanbul, where the libraries are not well equipped for European studies. International communications were impeded; I had to dispense with almost all periodicals, with almost all the more recent investigations, and in some cases with reliable critical editions of my texts. Hence it is possible and even probable that I overlooked things which I ought to have considered. . . . On the other hand it is quite possible that the book owes its existence to just this lack of a rich and specialized library. If it had been possible for me to acquaint myself with all the work that has been done on so many subjects, I might never have reached the point of writing.²

Equally famous is the use Edward Said made of this passage, making it not just the cornerstone of a critique of the Orientalist worm gnawing the internal organs of Eurocentric literary criticism but also the foundation of his own particular brand of exilic humanism: "The book owed its existence to the very fact of Oriental, non-Occidental exile and homelessness," he would write in *The World, the Text and the Critic*.³ Auerbach, as many have remarked, remained a consistent *point de repère* for Said, starting with his

2. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J., 1953), p. 557.

3. Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p. 8.

translation (with Maire Said) of Auerbach's seminal essay "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" at the outset of his career in 1969 and continuing through to his 1999 MLA presidential column titled "Humanism?" where he chastises Auerbach for being "mystified" by the "explosion" of "new" languages after World War II. But, even in this critical sally, Said recuperates the Auerbachian project in his vision of humanism: "In any case," he concludes, "I don't believe that humanism as a subject for us can be evaded."⁴

In his astute essay "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture," Aamir Mufti uses the Auerbachian Said as a point of departure for rethinking comparative literature in a post-colonial world by firmly grounding it in the experience of the minority. Where Said, according to Mufti, took the condition of Auerbach's exile as a goad to "questioning received notions of 'nation, home, community and belonging,'" Mufti proposes moving from the politics of "un-homing," to the politics of statelessness, with all that that implies: the loss of human dignity, the stripping of rights, and the reduction of an ethnic identity to the faceless category of the minority (Mufti is borrowing here from Hannah Arendt's analysis of the Jews as paradigmatic minority in her *The Origins of Totalitarianism*).⁵

Said's insistence on the critical imperative of the secular can appear elitist and hence paradoxical only if we fail to recognize this minority and exilic thrust in his work, if we forget the haunting figure of Auerbach in Turkish exile that he repeatedly evokes. It is in this sense that we must read Said when he himself speaks of exile not as "privilege" but as permanent critique of "the mass institutions that dominate modern life." Saidian secular criticism points insistently to the dilemmas and the terrors, but also, above all, to the ethical possibilities, of minority existence in modernity. ["AI," p. 107]

Arguing against Ahjaz Ahmad, according to whom, Mufti maintains, Auerbach is shorthand for a high humanist, "'Tory' orientations" locked in permanent battle with Foucauldian antihumanism, Mufti underscores parallels between Auerbach's "synthetic" critical practice and the holistic aspects of Saidian Orientalism ("AI," pp. 99, 100). He discerns, in the Auerbach of Said's invention, an ethics of coexistence: an ethical ideal of *Weltliteratur* that acknowledges the fragility of worldliness and refuses to be

4. Said, "Humanism?" *MLA Newsletter* 31 (Fall 1999): 4.

5. Aamir Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Autumn 1998): 103; hereafter abbreviated "AI."

threatened by the specter of other languages crowding the floor of European languages and literatures.

But what happens to this ethical paradigm of global comparatism if we are compelled to revise the foundation myth of exile? Does the picture change, does the way we read Auerbach's melancholy postscript and self-described intellectual isolation shift, when we reckon fully with the fact that Spitzer had already been in Istanbul for several years by the time Auerbach got there? There are few traces of the Istanbul chapter of literary history in the annals of early comparative literature; there are scant references to the intellectual collaborations among emigre colleagues and Turkish teaching assistants at the University of Istanbul in the 1930s, and there are really no full accounts of what happened to European philological pedagogy when it was transplanted to Turkey.⁶ I would like to suggest that the fact that Spitzer had established a lively philological school in Istanbul—and learned Turkish along the way—might have significant bearing on attempts to redefine comp lit today as a “worlded” minoritarian comparatism. My point is that in globalizing literary studies there is a selective forgetting of ways in which early comp lit was always and already globalized. Spitzer in Istanbul, *before Auerbach*, tells the story not just of exilic humanism but of worldly linguistic exchanges containing the seeds of a transnational humanism or global *translatio*. As the status of European traditions within postcolonial studies continues to be negotiated, this transnational humanism may be construed as a critical practice that reckons with the uncertain status of European thought in the future global marketplace of culture. It questions the default to European models in hermeneutic practices and yet recognizes, as Said so clearly does, that the legacy of philological humanism is not and never was a Western versus non-Western problematic; it was, and remains, a history of intellectual import and export in which the provenance labels have been torn off. René Etiemble clearly intuited this legacy when, in 1966, he called for recasting comparative literature to accommodate future demographics:

6. The most complete account of Spitzer and Auerbach's Istanbul careers may be Geoffrey Green's *Literary Criticism and the Structures of History: Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1982). Green maintains that Istanbul was not a place of hardship for Spitzer. While there, he maintains, Spitzer “concentrated upon ‘the inner form’: with the ‘brazen confidence’ that comes from placing one's faith in Providence, he viewed his surroundings—despite their shortcomings—as being vitalized by a divine spirit” (p. 105). Thomas R. Hart is one of the few to credit the influence of Istanbul and Turkish alphabetization on Auerbach's oeuvre. See Thomas R. Hart, “Literature as Language: Auerbach, Spitzer, Jakobson,” in *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology: The Legacy of Erich Auerbach*, ed. Seth Lerer (Stanford, Calif., 1996), esp. pp. 227–30. Azadé Seyhan is currently completing her essay “German Academic Exiles in Istanbul.” It contains many points of intersection with my own critical account of Istanbul's forgotten place in literary history and theory. Seyhan is especially strong on links between the work of Istanbul exiles and the Frankfurt school emigres. She also elucidates Turkish language politics as they pertain to the politics of translation.

One or two billion Chinese who will claim to be of the first rank among the great powers; Moslems in hundreds of millions who, after having asserted their will to independence, will re-assert (as indeed they are already doing) their religious imperialism; an India where hundreds of millions will speak, some Tamil, others Hindi, still others Bengali, others Marathi, etc.; in Latin America tens of millions of Indians who will clamor for the right to become men again, and men with full rights; at least one hundred and twenty million Japanese, besides the two present great powers, Russia and the United States, who perhaps will have become allies in order to counterbalance new ambitions; a huge Brazil, a Latin America perhaps at long last rid of United States imperialism; a Black Africa exalting or disputing *négritude*, etc. As for us Frenchmen, we are quite willing to create an *Agrégation* of Modern Letters, provided, however, that it does not include China or the Arab World.⁷

Etiemble's prescient vision of contemporary literary politics extends to his disciplinary reformation of comparative literature in the year 2050. The topics he came up with—"Contacts between Jews, Christians, and Moslems in Andalusia; Western influences during the Meiji era; Role of the discovery of Japan on the formation of liberal ideas in the century of the Enlightenment; Evolution of racist ideas in Europe since the discovery of America and Black Africa; . . . Bilingualism in colonized countries; The influence of bilingualism on literatures," and so on—are profoundly in step with the kind of work being done today in transnational and postcolonial literary studies.⁸ If Etiemble fashioned a futuristic global comparatism for the 1960s relevant to the year 2003, he inherited a vision that had already been put into pedagogical practice in the 1930s by Leo Spitzer. The story of Spitzer's Istanbul seminar, and the model of global *translatio* that it affords, thus has special bearing on comparative literature today.

Most famous in the United States for a group of essays on stylistics published in 1967 under the title of the leading essay, *Linguistics and Literary History*, Leo Spitzer was rivaled only by Auerbach in his breadth of erudition and role in the academy as the teacher of multiple generations of comparatists. Paul de Man placed him squarely in an "outstanding group of Romanic scholars of German origin" that included Hugo Friedrich, Karl Vossler, Ernst Robert Curtius, and Auerbach.⁹

7. René Etiemble, *The Crisis in Comparative Literature*, trans. Herbert Weisinger and Georges Joyaux (East Lansing, Mich., 1966), p. 56.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

9. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis, 1971), p. 171. Several recent publications attest to renewed interest in the Romance

In his introduction to the collection *Leo Spitzer: Representative Essays*, Spitzer's former student at Hopkins, John Freccero, acknowledged Spitzer as the premier forerunner of deconstruction.¹⁰ Spitzer preferred hermeneutical demonstrations to books devoted to single authors. His oeuvre was sprawling and unsystematic, unified primarily by his consistent attention to heuristics, and by a preoccupation with select writers of the Spanish Golden Age, the Italian Renaissance, the French Enlightenment, and the Decadents (Cervantes, Góngora, Lope de Vega, Dante, Diderot, Baudelaire, Charles-Louis Philippe).

Spitzer was profoundly unprepared for the institutionalization of anti-Semitism in the Nazi years preceding World War II. Like Victor Klemperer, he assumed he would have immunity from political persecution as a result of his distinguished record of military service during World War I (his experience as a censor of Italian prisoners' letters formed the basis of an early publication on periphrasis and the multiple "words for hunger").¹¹ Unlike Klemperer, who stayed in Dresden throughout the war—somehow managing to survive and keeping himself from suicidal despair with the help of a "philologist's notebook" in which he documented the perversion of the German language by Nazi usage—Spitzer fled to Istanbul in 1933. On 2 May 1933 the Ministry of Education approved his replacement at the University of Cologne by Ernst Robert Curtius, and in July of that year he was denounced along with other Jewish faculty members in a report submitted to the university president authored by the head of a National-Socialist student group.¹² With the writing on the wall, Spitzer resigned shortly after receiving

philological tradition prior to and during World War II. See also Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Vom Leben und Sterben der grossen Romanisten: Karl Vossler, Ernst Robert Curtius, Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, Werner Krauss* (Munich, 2002), and Peter Jehle, *Werner Krauss und die Romanistik im NS-Staat* (Hamburg, 1996). For a fine review of Jehle's book, emphasizing the timeliness of reexamining the career of Werner Krauss, the "militant humanist" and Enlightenment scholar who joined the party in 1945 and emigrated east to become chair of the Romance Institute at Leipzig, see Darko Suvin, "Auerbach's Assistant," review of *Werner Krauss und die Romanistik im NS-Staat*, by Jehle, *New Left Review* 15 (May–June 2002): 157–64.

10. See John Freccero, foreword to Leo Spitzer, *Leo Spitzer: Representative Essays* (Stanford, Calif., 1988), pp. xvi–xvii.

11. See Spitzer, *Die Umschreibungen des Begriffes "Hunger" im Italienischen* (Halle, 1921).

12. Curtius's careerist opportunism vis-à-vis Spitzer's vacated post has been read as evidence of his compromised position with respect to the bureaucracy of National Socialism. The debate is still on with respect to Curtius's vision of Europeans as citizens of humanity. Earl Jeffrey Richards frames these concerns in terms of a series of important questions: Was Curtius's vision of a supranational Europe, put forth in his 1948 masterwork *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, a dangerous rampart offered to Himmler's ideology of Fortress Europe or to the Nazi vision of a new Germania built on romantic neomedievalism? Was Curtius politically naive to assume that his ideal of European humanism would remain untainted by historical circumstances? Or was he simply the scapegoat for all the German Romanic scholars who continued to work unscathed or who profited from the emigre departures under the Third Reich? Was Curtius unfairly misread given his consistent and, some would say, courageous refutation of national character theory? See Earl Jeffrey Richards, "La Conscience européenne chez Curtius et chez ses détracteurs," in *Ernst Robert Curtius et l'idée d'Europe*, ed. Jeanne Bem and André Guyaux (Paris, 1995), esp. pp. 260–61.

invitations to teach at the University of Manchester and the University of Istanbul. As he sailed for Turkey, his entourage included his wife, his children, and his teaching assistant Rosemarie Burkart. Burkart and Spitzer enjoyed a passionate liaison in Istanbul.¹³ By all accounts a gifted philologist in her own right and, judging from her photograph, a thoroughly “modern woman,” with cropped hair and a passion for sports, art, and music, Burkart helped alleviate the melancholy that one would expect to have accompanied Spitzer’s expulsion. It is perhaps no accident that in his article “Learning Turkish” he employed the language of love when describing what it felt like to learn a foreign language late in life.

Spitzer’s situation in 1933 was comparable to that of hundreds of Jewish academics dismissed from their posts at the time. Many emigrated to Palestine, others found asylum in unoccupied European capitals (the case of art historians Fritz Saxl, Nikolaus Pevsner, Gertrud Bing, and Otto Pächt in London), and quite a few landed in Latin America (especially Brazil, Peru, and Mexico). The United States was a destination of choice, but unless they were internationally renowned scholars like Einstein or Panofsky, many who fled to the United States discovered limited employment opportunities in their adoptive country, largely because of anti-Semitism in the American academy. As the recent documentary film *From Swastika to Jim Crow* (2000; prod. Steven Fischler and Joel Sucher) effectively demonstrates, it was America’s black colleges in the South that often extended a helping hand, creating a generation of black academics trained by Jewish emigres who would later attest to a sense of shared history as persecuted minorities. One of the lucky few, Spitzer secured job offers easily and spent three years, 1933–1936, at the University of Istanbul as the first professor of Latin languages and literature in the faculty of literature and as director of the School of Foreign Languages. It was at Spitzer’s invitation that Auerbach joined the department in 1936, not quite the isolation from European pedagogical circles that he would have us believe in the afterword to *Mimesis*. Auerbach’s jaundiced depiction of his loneliness in the wilderness really appears to be a distorted picture of what it was like to live and work in Istanbul.¹⁴

When I interviewed Süheyla Bayrav, an emeritus professor of literature at the University of Istanbul and a member of Spitzer’s seminar in 1933, it became clear that a familial atmosphere prevailed.¹⁵ Turkish students and

13. Though Spitzer received an offer from Harvard in 1934, Rosemarie Burkart was unable to obtain U.S. residency papers, and they stayed in Turkey for another two years.

14. Despite Auerbach’s oft-repeated criticism of the bibliographical shortcomings of the Istanbul library, he managed to edit a Romanology seminar publication around 1944 that included well-referenced essays on Shakespeare, Péguy, Shelley, Marlowe, Rilke, and Jakobsonian linguistics.

15. The interview took place in the summer of 2001. It was conducted in French at Süheyla Bayrav’s house, located in a suburb on the Asian side of Istanbul.

teaching assistants—Nesteren Dirvana, Mina Urgan, Sabbattin Eyüboğlu, Safinaz Duruman—joined in discussion with the emigres—Heinz Anstock, Eva Buck, Herbert and Lieselotte Dieckmann, Traugott Fuchs, Hans Marchand, Robert Anhegger, Ernst Engelburg, Kurt Laqueur, Andreas Tietze, and Karl Weiner. The teaching sessions frequently took place in Spitzer's apartment, which was equipped with an extensive personal library of literature and reference works. When the young Süheyla Bayrav (who did a thesis with Spitzer on the *Chanson de Roland*) solved an etymological mystery that Spitzer had been wrestling with for some years, he instantly confirmed that her intuition was accurate with the help of volumes on his shelf. From then on, she was anointed a serious philologist and eventually joined the ranks of Spitzer's department as a faculty member. Bayrav belonged to the first generation of Turkish women to attend university and pursue professional academic careers. Spitzer's seminar, though intimidating, professionally launched a number of women scholars: Rosemarie Burkart played an active and productive role as a Romance philology professor; Eva Buck, a translator of German origin brought up in China and educated by British nuns, used her comparative background in languages to compose an anthology of European literature in Turkish; Azra Erhat, a Belgian-educated humanist, edited a dictionary of Greek mythology and became a well-known translator; and Bayrav forged a transition between philology and structural semiotics through her work on linguistic literary criticism, in addition to becoming an intellectual magnet for Turkish writers and visiting intellectuals such as Barthes and Foucault.

Bayrav and her cohort carried on the tradition of East-West exchange and commitment to translation fostered by the Spitzer seminar well into the seventies and eighties. By contrast, Auerbach and his students, most of whom, like Walter Kranz or Herbert Dieckmann, hailed from Germany and concentrated on European languages and literatures, seem to have been relatively uninterested in the potential for an enlarged vision of world lit presented by the conditions of their exile. On meeting Harry Levin in America for the first time, Auerbach discredited the scholarship of his Turkish colleagues, pointing to the case of a Turkish translator of Dante who admitted to working from a French translation chosen at random.¹⁶ A more important cause of his intellectual dyspepsia was political. Auerbach bitterly opposed the climate of burgeoning nationalism in Turkey. In a letter to Wal-

16. See Harry Levin, "Two *Romanisten* in America: Spitzer and Auerbach," *Grounds for Comparison* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 112–13. Levin argues that Spitzer and Auerbach reacted in contrasting ways to "the lack of scholarly paraphernalia" in Istanbul. He casts the former's *Wortbildungslehre* or word-formation approach as "infra-scholarship" and the latter's "sociohistorical rather than strictly stylistic" approach as "para-scholarship" (p. 118).

ter Benjamin written in 1937, he repudiated the “fanatically anti-traditional nationalism” that came out of Atatürk’s “struggle against the European democracies on the one hand and the old Mohammedan Pan-Islamic sultan’s economy on the other.” The emigres, he conjectured (in an argument that has become familiar in the wake of 9/11), were in Istanbul as part of the Turkish government’s premeditated scheme to free itself from imperial hegemony, acquiring European technological know-how with the aim of turning it back on Europe:

rejection of all existing Mohammedan cultural heritage, the establishment of a fantastic relation to a primal Turkish identity, technological modernization in the European sense, in order to triumph against a hated and yet admired Europe with its own weapons: hence, the preference for European-educated emigrants as teachers, from whom one can learn without the threat of foreign propaganda. Result: nationalism in the extreme accompanied by the simultaneous destruction of the historical national character.¹⁷

The new Turkish nationalism, and its repressive cultural arm, was certainly in evidence during Auerbach’s eleven-year sojourn in Istanbul, but one could argue without really overstating the case that it was the volatile crossing of Turkish language politics with European philological humanism that produced the conditions conducive to the invention of comparative literature as a global discipline, at least in its early guise. A fascinating two-way collision occurred in Istanbul between a new-nations ideology dedicated to constructing a modern Turkish identity with the latest European pedagogies and an ideology of European culture dedicated to preserving ideals of Western humanism against the ravages of nationalism.

Auerbach’s self-portrait as a lonely European scholar seems increasingly questionable the more one takes account of the sizeable professional, artistic, and political European community that was well established in Istanbul (and Ankara) by the time he arrived in Turkey in 1936.¹⁸ The mythographer Georges Dumézil worked in Istanbul between 1925 and 1931, having come

17. Quoted in Karlheinz Barck, “Walter Benjamin and Erich Auerbach: Fragments of a Correspondence,” trans. Anthony Reynolds, *Diacritics* 22 (Fall–Winter 1992): 82.

18. Gumbrecht suggests that the Istanbul period was the culmination of a sense of intellectual melancholia already fully fledged in Auerbach’s pre-exile professional life. Gumbrecht wagers “that his passionate and distanced view of European culture emerged during his exile in Istanbul or even after his emigration to the United States in 1947. At most, the experience of expatriation that the National Socialist regime had inflicted upon him gave Auerbach the opportunity to become fully aware of his distanced and sometimes melancholic perspective on western culture as a culture that had entered its final stage” (Gumbrecht, “Pathos of the Earthly Progress”: Eric Auerbach’s *Everydays*,” in *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology*, p. 31).

at the invitation of Atatürk to help prepare the ground for alphabetization in 1928. Leon Trotsky found safe harbor there between 1931 and 1933 as did Gerhard Kessler, the German socialist political exile who helped found the Turkish Worker's Syndicate. Spitzer was preceded by the Romanist Traugott Fuchs, who taught at Roberts College and helped facilitate his appointment at the University of Istanbul (known, at this time, as the *Emigré Universität*).¹⁹ Shortly after his arrival, Spitzer was joined by a large number of German-speaking academics and creative artists, including the distinguished philosopher of mind Hans Reichenbach (who taught at the University of Istanbul from 1933 to 1938), Fritz Neumark (economy and law, Istanbul University), Georg Rohde (a classical philologist based in Ankara in 1935, who studied Arabic influences on world literature and initiated a "Translations from World Literature" series), Wolfram Eberhard (Chinese language and literature in Ankara University), Paul Hindemith (1935–37), who founded the Ankara State Conservatory with Carl Ebert and brought Béla Bartok in 1936, and a host of innovative architects and planners, among them Bruno Taut (who taught between 1936 and 1938 at Istanbul Technical University) and the French urban planner Henri Prost.²⁰ Later arrivals whose impact was equally significant (in more ways than one: many of them were apparently engaged in espionage during the war) were the British historians Sir Ronald Syme (a specialist of Rome and Anatolia, appointed professor of classical philology at the University of Istanbul from 1942 to 1945), the classical archeologist George Bean (at Istanbul University starting in 1944, where he worked on *Aegean Turkey* and *Turkey's Southern Shore*), and the historian of Byzantium and the Crusades, Sir Steven Runciman.²¹ An essay by Runciman demonstrating the Eastern origins of Western tropes and poetic devices, published in 1959, anticipates many of Said's discussions in *Orientalism* of suppressed Muslim cultural influences.²² In addition to

19. See Anne Dietrich, *Deutschsein in Istanbul: Nationalisierung und Orientierung in der deutschsprachigen Community von 1843 bis 1956* (Opladen, 1998).

20. Other notable German visitors included Ernst Reuter, Rudolf Nissen, Rudolf Belling, Alexander Rüstow, Wilhelm Röpke, and Hellmut Ritter.

21. Sources here include *Cogito*, no. 23 (2000) and the appendix to Horst Widmann, *Exil und Bildungshilfe: Die deutschsprachige akademische Emigration in die Türkei nach 1933* (Bern, 1973).

22. See Steven Runciman, "Muslim Influences on the Development of European Civilization," *Şarkiyat Mecmuası [Oriental Magazine]* 3 (1959): 1–12. Runciman argues that

the medieval French romance, *Floire et Blanchefleur*, is an eastern story; while one of the most famous and lovely of all European romances, *Aucassin et Nicolète*, betrays its Muslim origin. The hero's name is really al-Qāsim, while the heroine is stated to be a Muslim princess of Tunis. It seems, also, that the use of rhyme in medieval European verse was inspired by Arabic models. . . . Long before Europe knew of the collection of stories which we call the *Arabian Nights*, Muslim romance and poetry were making a mark on European literature. [P. 22]

the presence of these renowned British scholars, the American writer James Baldwin and the structural linguists Emile Benveniste and A. J. Greimas also worked in Istanbul in the 1950s. According to Fredric Jameson's recollection, Greimas, Michel de Certeau, and Louis Marin claimed to have invented semiotics when they overlapped in Istanbul in the 1950s. These successive generations of scholars and critics appear as so many *couches* added to the city's historic role as a magnet for diaspora, migration, and cultural fusion and as a capital of world-historical power from the Holy Roman Empire to the Ottoman Empire.

Istanbul's tradition as a cultural crossroads, combined with the fact that it already had established Jewish and German enclaves (and had served as a way station for Jews immigrating to Palestine), made university posts there in the early thirties especially coveted by European exiles.²³ When financial hardship took a turn for the worse in July 1936, one year after his dismissal from the Dresden Technical University, Victor Klemperer recorded in his diaries the extent to which jobs at the University of Istanbul were jealously monitored. After noting that "Spitzer's post in Istanbul has finally been given to Auerbach," he confided with a touch of pique the story of how Auerbach had lobbied Benedetto Croce to secure the position, succeeding despite his inadequate fluency in French:

This morning, with a recommendation from "Vossliir," I was visited by Edmondo Cione, a little librarian from Florence, amico del Croce, anti-fascista. Would like to be a lecturer in Germany, did not know that I had lost my post. I recommended him to Gelzer in Jena. He will see if he can be of assistance to me in Italy. He told me how Auerbach came to the Istanbul appointment. He had already been in Florence for a year, and Croce provided an opinion on him. [. . .] Now Auerbach is brushing up his French in Geneva. And Spitzer had been saying in Italy that only someone who could really speak French would get the appointment! If I go off to Geneva for a couple of months then I too could "really speak French" again.²⁴

23. Despite Turkey's neutrality, the Nazis also maintained a significant foothold in the city, taking over the banking and administrative structure of the "Deutschen Kolonie" once they assumed power. There were branches of the Hitler Youth, German press outlets for propaganda, and a program of Nazification in the German schools in Istanbul. The tensions between these two German-speaking communities—proximate yet offshore—were needless to say rife. For an account, based in part on the documentation of Liselotte Dieckmann (who worked with Spitzer as a lecturer), see Dietrich, *Deutschsein in Istanbul*, chap. 4. Dieckmann also echoes the fears expressed by Auerbach that modern Turkish nationalism would come to resemble National Socialism.

24. Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years*, trans. Martin Chalmers, 2 vols. (New York, 1999), 1:175, 178.

Istanbul was particularly popular because it *was* Europe as far as many of the Austrian and German emigres were concerned. As Klemperer's friend the physicist Harry Dember wrote in a letter of 12 August 1935 on learning he had been appointed at the university: "It is certainly right on the edge—you can see across to Asia—but it is still in Europe."²⁵

The influx of emigres to Istanbul grew. Victims of Nazism who had been fired from their jobs in Germany and Austria satisfied the opportunism of a young Turkish republic (1923–1930) eager to Westernize by instituting "reforms" within the academy (often at the expense of scholars already there). It is nothing short of historical irony that, in many cases, a Turk's job lost was a German's job gained. Firings, at both ends, were crucial to the formation of this humanism at large. In hindsight, one wonders whether emigre professors in Turkey were aware of the Turkish government's manipulation of their circumstances. Did they know, for example, that in 1932 the government had commissioned the Swiss pedagogue Albert Malche to write a report on the state of the Istanbul Darülfünun (as it was called)? It was then used to justify mass dismissals of Turkish faculty in 1933.²⁶ Malche's scathing report recommended a complete overhaul of the university, citing insufficient publications, inferior foreign language training, and inadequate scientific instruction. In his agenda for reform, Malche envisioned a cosmopolitan university with professors from "Berlin, Leipzig, Paris or Chicago." This cosmopolitan culture, he insisted, would be the only guarantor against single schools becoming dominant. Charged with a global recruitment mission, he received acceptances of his offers mainly from German or German-speaking professors.²⁷ It was Malche, working closely with an organization charged with placing German scholars abroad—"Notgemeinschaft deutscher Wissenschaftler in Ausland"—who helped bring Spitzer to Istanbul. Spitzer's initial mandate was daunting; "he was in charge of coordinating classes in four languages for several thousand students," "lectured to his classes—through an interpreter—in French and used a multitude of other languages to communicate with his teaching staff."²⁸

Though the department that Spitzer built was in many respects an island of Eurocentric insularity, he was clearly more willing than Auerbach to engage with Turkish culture, publishing an article, "Learning Turkish"

25. Harry Dember, letter to Klemperer, 12 Aug. 1935, in Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii, a Philologist's Notebook*, trans. Martin Brady (London, 2000), p. 159; hereafter abbreviated *LTI*.

26. For an account of Malche's role in the reform, see Widmann, *Exil und Bildungshilfe*, pp. 45–48.

27. See *ibid.*

28. Green, *Literary Criticism and the Structures of History*, p. 105. Green bases these assertions on a 1952 interview published by Spitzer in *The Johns Hopkins Magazine*.

(“Türkçeyi Öğrenirken”), in the journal *Varlık* [*Being*] in 1934. Though Auerbach spent over a decade in Istanbul,²⁹ he apparently never mastered the Turkish language, and there is little evidence to suggest seepage of his “foreign” surroundings into *Mimesis* or into his textbook *Introduction to Romance Languages and Literatures*, the latter “written at Istanbul in 1943 in order to provide my Turkish students with a framework which would permit me to better understand the origin and meaning of their studies.”³⁰ One can readily appreciate how Herbert Dieckmann (Auerbach’s “star” German student in this period who later went on to a distinguished career as a literary critic, coauthoring the influential *Essays in Comparative Literature* with Harry Levin in 1961) could become an Enlightenment specialist in a purely European mold. Unless they went on to become Turcologists (like Robert Anhegger or Andreas Tietze, who founded Turkish studies at UCLA after working at Istanbul University from 1938 to 1958), the non-Turkish students and faculty in literature tended to hew to a standard European curriculum. On the one hand Auerbach endorsed the enlarged cultural purview of his own generation of European philologists (Vossler, Curtius, and Spitzer), but on the other he was concerned to maintain exclusive boundaries around European civilization, keeping it “from being engulfed in another, more comprehensive unity,” a unity that in today’s parlance might correspond to global comparatism.³¹

It comes as no surprise that Auerbach’s *Introduction to Romance Languages and Literatures* packages the Romance syllabus with few concessions

29. It is strange that Paul Bové does so little with the impact of Istanbul on Auerbach’s work given his criticism of the inattention paid to “the cultural and political roots” of Auerbach’s work and his argument that “Auerbach’s project of writing ‘a synthetic history-from-within’ owes much to its own academic cultural context” (Paul Bové, *Intellectuals in Power: A Genealogy of Critical Humanism* [New York, 1986], p. 79). Ideally one would match Bové’s useful reappraisal of the impact of Weimar culture and German modernism on Auerbach’s thought with a discussion of the influence of Turkish alphabetization on Auerbach’s analysis of literary language and its public.

30. Auerbach, *Introduction to Romance Languages and Literatures*, trans. Guy Daniels (New York, 1961). The Turkish edition, translated by Bayrav, appeared in 1944.

31. Auerbach, *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter* (Bern, 1958); trans. Ralph Mannheim under the title *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1965), p. 6. Adopting the same gloomy tone that one finds in the afterword to *Mimesis*, Auerbach articulates his profoundly pessimistic fear that Western civilization would be subsumed by modern global culture:

European civilization is approaching the term of its existence; its history as a distinct entity would seem to be at an end, for already it is beginning to be engulfed in another, more comprehensive unity. Today, however, European civilization is still a living reality within the range of our perception. Consequently—so it seemed to me when I wrote these articles and so I still believe—we must today attempt to form a lucid and coherent picture of this civilization and its unity. [Ibid.]

to his Turkish audience beyond the addition of a chapter on Christianity. And yet, on closer inspection, the attention paid in this work to Romanization and the long-term impact of Roman linguistic colonization on the history of European languages might well be attributed to the fact that Auerbach bore witness to the process of Romanization in Turkey.³² Auerbach greeted the massive literacy campaign in which he himself was a participant with extreme pessimism (placing it in the wider context of a global standardization of culture—"an International of triviality and a culture of Esperanto")³³—but the issue of literacy became a crucial theme in his 1958 masterwork *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*. Here he showed how linguistic "conservatism"—the grammatical stability of literary Latin that resulted from efforts made during the late Roman republic to standardize spelling and grammar—helped form a literary public that in turn guaranteed the legacy of Western culture. Though it remains a matter of speculation as to whether or not the standardization of modern Turkish directly inspired Auerbach's *Literary Language and Its Public*, it seems safe to assume that Turkey's self-colonizing policy of *translatio imperii* afforded compelling parallels to imperial Rome.³⁴

Varlık, the journal of art, literature, and politics in which Spitzer's "Learning Turkish" was published, can be seen as a direct outgrowth of the language reforms of 1928 instituted by the newly minted Turkish republic. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of these reforms on Turkish politics and culture despite the fact that the elite, during the nineteenth century, was already turning to the European novel. Abolishing the Arabic alphabet used in Ottoman writing and abruptly introducing a phonetic, Romanized,

32. Thomas Hart has surmised that the break with tradition induced by the banning of Arabic script "may have reminded Auerbach of the loss entailed by the decline of classical studies in the West" (Hart, "Literature as Language: Auerbach, Spitzer, Jakobson," p. 230), and in support of this claim he cites a letter sent by Auerbach to Benjamin shortly after his arrival in Istanbul in December 1936:

Here all traditions have been thrown overboard in an attempt to build a thoroughly rationalized state that will be both European and extremely Turco-nationalistic. The whole process is being carried out with a fantastic and unearthly speed [*es geht phantastisch und gespenstisch schnell*]; already it is hard to find anyone who can read Arabic or Persian or even Turkish texts written in the last century, since the language has been modernized and reoriented along purely Turkish lines and is now written in roman letters. [*Ibid.*, pp. 230–31]

33. Quoted in Barck, "Walter Benjamin and Erich Auerbach," p. 82.

34. See Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*. Auerbach argues that the stability of Latin as a literary language was crucial to the formation of a literary public during the Empire. After imperial decline, written Latin endured as a language of law and religion because "there was no other written language and because it had long served, with the same homogeneity and the same conservatism. . . . as the specialized language of the various branches of public life" (p. 252).

modern Turkish script, Atatürk effectively rendered the older educated classes illiterate, while ensuring that the next generation would be unable to access historical archives, legal documents, or the Ottoman literary tradition.³⁵ Spitzer's article on "Learning Turkish," appearing as it did under a rubric called "language debates" that attracted contributions from Turkish intellectuals ranging from university professors to the minister of education, must thus be situated in the political maelstrom of this literacy revolution.

Spitzer and Auerbach published substantial essays on philology alongside the work of their students in the Istanbul university journal—*Publications de la faculté des lettres de l'Université d'Istanbul*—edited by Auerbach. The table of contents of the 1937 issue, which included Spitzer's Romanology seminar, attests to its cosmopolitan reach:

- Azra Erhat, "Üslup ilminde yeni bir usul"
 Eva Buck, "Die Fabel in 'Pointed Roofs' von Dorothy Richardson"
 Rosemarie Burkart, "Truchement"
 Herbert Dieckmann, "Diderots Naturempfinden und Lebensgefühl"
 Traugott Fuchs, "La Première Poésie de Rimbaud"
 Hans Marchand, "Indefinite Pronoun 'One'"
 Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, "Türk Halk Bilmeceleri"
 Leo Spitzer, "Bemerkungen zu Dantes 'Vita Nuova'"
 Süheyla Sabri, "Un Passage de 'Barlaan y Josaiat'"
 Erich Auerbach, "Über die ernste Nachahmung des Alltäglichen"³⁶

It is tempting to read this table of contents as the *in vitro* paradigm of a genuinely globalized comparative literature, as evidence of critical reading practices that bring the globe inside the text. Though merely a coda of working papers, it offers a glimpse into the way in which European humanism Atatürk-style (that is, attuned to Turkey's modernizing agenda) played a key role in transforming German-based philology into a global discipline that came to be known as comparative literature when it assumed its in-

35. For a fascinating discussion of how the theme of intergenerational language loss, acquisition, and recovery informs the work of a modern Turkish writer living in Germany, see Azade Seyhan's examination of Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Mutterzunge* (1994) in *Writing outside the Nation* (Princeton, N.J., 2001), pp. 118–19.

36. The translated essay titles are: Azra Erhat, "A New Method in Studies of Style" (a study of Spitzer's word art); Eva Buck, "Color in Dorothy Richardson's 'Pointed Roofs'"; Rosemarie Burkart, "Go-Between"; Herbert Dieckmann, "Diderot's Nature-Empathy and Life Feeling"; Traugott Fuchs, "The Early Poetry of Rimbaud"; Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, "Turkish Anonymous Riddles"; Leo Spitzer, "Remarks on Dante's 'Vita Nuova'"; Süheyla Sabri, "A Passage from 'Barlaan and Josaiat'"; and Erich Auerbach, "On the Serious Imitation of the Everyday."

stitutional foothold in postwar humanities departments in the United States.³⁷ The contributions of young Turkish scholars to the seminar publications are particularly significant in this regard. Azra Erhat, whose essay treated Spitzer's methodology and word art, dedicated her career to the translation of Greek and Latin classics for a state-sponsored project to create a modern library for the newly minted Turkish republic. The library formed part of a concerted mission to "Greekify" Turkey and thereby consolidate the state's efforts to establish non-Islamic, anti-Ottoman cultural foundations on which secular nationalism could be built. Initiatives as far-ranging as the "Blue Cruises" (boat trips featuring sites of Greco-Roman civilization along Turkish shores) or the government's investment in classical philology in the university system were linked to the myth of Turkey as a new Greece. The appropriation of classicism for the purposes of cultural prestige and national identity is a familiar enough move since imperial Rome, but in the specific context of Atatürk's reforms it took on new implications, forcing comparative literature, in its nascent form, to renegotiate its relation to nationalism (the emigre generation tended to be *antinationalist* in reaction against the hypernationalist Nazi *Kulturkampf*) and opening up philological humanism to historic debates over "who claims Greece" in the Balkans, the countries bordering the Black Sea, and Asia Minor.³⁸

37. When comp lit took root as a postwar discipline in the U.S., the European traditions were dominant, the Turkish chapter of its life was effaced. What attracted the American academics was European erudition. As Carl Landauer notes, in his consideration of "Auerbach's Performance and the American Academy, or How New Haven Stole the Idea of *Mimesis*," the idea of the "virtuoso performer created by the author of *Mimesis* in Istanbul in the 1940's played perfectly to American audiences of the 1950's." "But Auerbach was not alone," Landauer writes,

for a number of émigré scholars with their obvious erudition and their mastery of an enormous range of cultural artifacts became prized possessions of their adopted culture, so that reviews of books by Kantorowicz, Panofsky, Cassirer, Jaeger, Spitzer, Kristeller, and Auerbach seem to blend into one another. It was not just an encyclopedic range that marked these scholars but a sense that they brought a certain "depth" to the study of culture and history from which Americans could learn. It was, then, as a masterful scholar and a translator of European "depth" that the author of *Mimesis* made his name in an American academy looking for exactly such exemplars. [Carl Landauer, "Auerbach's Performance and the American Academy, or How New Haven Stole the Idea of *Mimesis*," in *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology*, p. 180]

38. This appropriation of Greek culture in Turkey must be considered against the backdrop of the history of Greek minorities in the region. For a lucid account of historic religious and ethnic tensions, see Neal Ascherson's lucid book, *Black Sea* (New York, 1995):

Greece, in a wild imperial venture supported by Britain, had invaded western Anatolia, hoping to make itself an Aegean 'great power' and to construct a 'greater Greece' out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. But the invasion ended not simply in Greece's defeat at the battle of Dumlupınar in 1922, but in a calamitous rout and slaughter which drove not only the Greek armies but much of the Greek population of Anatolia into the sea. The Treaty of Lausanne, in 1923, settled the frontiers of the new Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The universal caliphate—a sprawling, multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire—now

If the complex relationship between classical philology and nationalism were represented in the Spitzer seminar through the work of Erhat and her associates, the seminar also acted as a laboratory for working through what a philological curriculum in literary studies should look like when applied to non-European languages and cultures. Spitzer's assistant Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, an editor of *Varlık* and a strong participant in the language debates, was a crucial player on this front; he adapted Spitzer's methods to analyses of folk tales, stories, and poems written in Turkish vernacular tongues. Eyüboğlu's predilection for linguistic and generic morphology, as well as Süheyla (Sabri) Bayrav's work on morphology, tilted old-school philology towards formalism.³⁹ With the arrival of Benveniste and Greimas (who introduced the structural linguistics of Roman Jakobson), Istanbul (and Ankara) assume renewed importance in literary history and theory, as institutional sites in which the transition from philological humanism to semiotics and structuralism occurred.

Philology Wars

Spitzer's seminar in Istanbul was obviously not an inaugural or unique example of global comparatism. The idea is as old as that of culture itself and extremely widespread, especially if one takes into account successive generations of avant-garde writers and intellectuals working on journals or political initiatives outside the academy and within transnational circuits of exchange. Nonetheless, Spitzer's seminar would seem to afford an example of global *translatio* with contemporary relevance insofar as it furnished the blueprint for departments of comparative literature established in the post-war period. I would like to suggest that comp lit continues to this day to carry traces of the city in which it took disciplinary form—a place where East-West boundaries were culturally blurry and where layers of colonial history obfuscated the outlines of indigenous cultures. Edward Said was clearly aware of the importance of Auerbach's location in Istanbul when he chose him as a disciplinary figurehead of *Weltliteratur* in exile. Paul Bové maintains convincingly that Auerbach bequeathed to Said a "critical humanism," whose "progressive secular potential" Said would spend much of his career seeking to fulfill.⁴⁰ I would suggest here that Said might have made

imploded like a dead star, metamorphosing itself into a compact, homogenous modern state of Moslem religion and Turkish speech. At the same time, Greece and Turkey agreed to exchange minorities. Nearly half a million Moslems (many of whom were Greeks in all but religion) were forced to leave Greece, while more than a million Christians (some of whom were culturally Turks) were expelled from Turkey. Most of the Christians were Pontic Greeks, who abandoned their monasteries and farms, their town houses and banks and schools, and fled with what they could carry down to the docks. [P. 177]

39. This information is based on the interview with Bayrav.

40. Bové, *Intellectuals in Power*, p. xiii.

his case for retaining Auerbach as a precursor of his own brand of secular humanism even stronger had he been more familiar with the story of Spitzer in Istanbul.

It may seem forced to resurrect Spitzer as a figure of transnational humanism *avant la lettre*, but the stakes in construing this figure are high because laying claim to comparatism's philological heritage is synonymous with securing symbolic capital in the humanities.⁴¹ Carrying the illustrious tradition of Renaissance humanism into modern scholarship and having, so to speak, mapped the etymological genome, philology claims a long history of shaping literary institutions and national politics.⁴² As Bernard Cerquiglini has observed: "At the dawn of the nineteenth century, extremely diverse phenomena of order, nature, and evolution all seemed to converge, forming a coherent semantics connected with the practice and study of texts. Philology is the most significant expression of this coherence. Its history is the history of our spontaneous philosophy of the textual."⁴³ For Michael Holquist, philology and, more broadly, the study of language allowed Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Friedrich Schelling to "resolve the Kantian paradox of how to institutionalize autonomy" in the context of the newly formed Berlin University, itself, of course, the template for the American academy.⁴⁴

Even if one insists that the Kantian ideal of secular humanism embodied in German philology became irredeemably tainted by the worst kind of German nationalism, philology's history contains distinguished counterexamples. Victor Klemperer kept his will to survive intact during World War II by devoting himself to his "philologist's notebook" (referred to affectionately as his "SOS sent to myself" or "secret formula"); it is a meticulous chronicle of the damages of Nazi diction to everyday life (*LTI*, pp. 9, 10). Klemperer employed the Latin expression *lingua tertii imperii* (or LTI for short) when designating the Language of the Third Reich.⁴⁵

41. Timothy Brennan makes a similar argument in his essay "Places of Mind, Occupied Lands: Edward Said and Philology," in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Sprinker (Oxford, 1992).

42. On the problem of philology and genetics see my essay, "The Human in the Humanities," *October*, no. 96 (Spring 2001): 71–85.

43. Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore, 1999), p. xiv.

44. Michael Holquist, *Association of Departments of Foreign Languages Bulletin* 33 (Winter 2002): 18.

45. Klemperer treated LTI almost as if it were a linguistic totem warding off the evil effects that Nazism wrought upon language. In his posthumously published book he wrote:

The label LTI first appears in my diary as a playful little piece of parody, almost immediately afterwards as a laconic *aide-mémoire*, like a knot in a handkerchief, and then very soon, and for the duration of those terrible years, as an act of self-defence, an SOS sent to myself. A tag

By retrieving the Roman legacy of *translatio imperii* and reconnecting it to the *lingua imperii* of the Third Reich, Klemperer not only drew an analogy between Nazi and Roman linguistic imperialism, but he also emphasized the very particular contempt for original meaning that characterizes translation under conditions of conquest. In this view, he seems to have subscribed to the position of his fellow philologist Hugo Friedrich who drew on Saint Jerome's assertion that "the translator considers thought content a prisoner (*quasi captivos sensus*) which he transplants into his own language with the prerogative of a conqueror (*iure victoris*)." "This," Friedrich concluded, "is one of the most rigorous manifestations of Latin cultural and linguistic imperialism, which despises the foreign word as something alien but appropriates the foreign meaning in order to dominate it through the translator's own language."⁴⁶ For Klemperer, Nazi discourse provided a comparable model of language domination. In examining the term *Strafexpedition* (punitive expedition), a word initially registered in the speech of a former family friend and the first term recognized as being specifically National Socialist, he noted "the embodiment of brutal arrogance and contempt for people who are in any way different, it sounded so colonial, you could see the encircled Negro village, you could hear the cracking of the hippopotamus whip" (*LTI*, p. 43). Klemperer discerned in Nazi language a pattern of violent semantic usurpation similar to the one that Friedrich ascribes to Roman translations, even though the language of the original in the Nazi case was one and the same with the target. This *intralingual* or German-to-German translation (in Jakobson's terms a "rewording" or "interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language")⁴⁷ covered a host of travesties. There was what Klemperer called the "poisoning of the drinking water of language," an expression applied to the casual adoption of Nazi-sanctioned words by ordinary citizens; a coworker of his, without apparent malice, fell into using words like *artfremd* (alien), *deutschblütig* (of German blood), *niederrassig* (of inferior race), or *Rassenschande* (racial defilement). There was semantic substitution: the replacement of the word *Humanität*, for example (with its "stench of Jewish liberalism"), by the "manly" term *Menschlichkeit*, which went along with the program of germanicizing lexical roots and stamping out "foreign" etymons. Klemperer also noted the Nazi technologization of language, the

with a nice erudite ring—the Third Reich itself after all delighted from time to time in the rich sonority of a foreign expression. [*LTI*, p. 9]

46. Hugo Friedrich, "On the Art of Translation," trans. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, ed. Schulte and Biguenet (Chicago, 1992), pp. 12–13.

47. Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *Theories of Translation*, p. 145.

new privileging of a verb like *aufziehen*, meaning "to wind up a clock or mechanical toy" or "mount warp on a loom." In conjuring up automatic, robotic actions that are both comic and deadening, the verb mimicked the hollow, deanimating rhetoric of Nazi speeches or the goose-step march. And then there was the prevalence of pictograms capable of emitting subliminal psychological messages. Klemperer decodes the letters SS sported by the Nazi storm troopers as a rune based on the visual appropriation of a common symbol for Danger! High Voltage!⁴⁸

Klemperer's powerful use of philology as a prophylactic against Nazi-think (complementing the strategic use made of philologically trained literary critics such as I. A. Richards and Leo Marx, both deployed as cryptographers during the war) bears directly on the politics behind Spitzer's and Auerbach's philological practice during the war. It is a "resistance" philology with an impeccable ethical pedigree, which is perhaps one reason why the fight over who claims philology continues in the context of contemporary canon and culture wars. Charles Bernheimer's *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (1995) may be read in this light as a turf battle with Lionel Gossman and Mihai Spariosu's *Building a Profession: Autobiographical Perspectives on the History of Comparative Literature in the United States* (1994). In the former essay collection the critics tend to frame postcolonial theory as the logical outcome of comparative literature's polyglot, international heritage, whereas in the latter, the postcolonial turn, if recognized at all, tends to be positioned as a reductive politicization of comparative literature's distinguished European foundations.⁴⁹ Though the stakes involved in these most recent philology wars appear academic and parochial in comparison to those of Klemperer et al., they are linked to important critical problems, ranging from the cultural implications of literary methodology, to rethinking world lit beyond Anglocentric parameters of the "foreign" languages, to the question of whether European humanism will continue to have traction in the global marketplace of culture.

48. Klemperer writes:

Long before the Nazi SS even existed, its symbol was to be seen painted in red on electricity substations, and below it the warning "Danger—High Voltage!" In this case the jagged S was obviously a stylized representation of a flash of lightning. That thunderbolt, whose velocity and capacity for storing energy made it such a popular symbol for the Nazis! Thus the SS character was also a direct embodiment, a painterly expression of lightning. Here the double line may well suggest increased energy, because the little black flags of the children's formations only bore one jagged bolt, what you might call a half-SS. [*LTI*, pp. 68–69]

49. For more background on the disciplinary schisms within comparative literature induced by the advent of postcolonial theory, see my essay "Comparative Exile: Competing Margins in the History of Comparative Literature," in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer (Baltimore, 1995), pp. 86–96.

In the battle zone of Europe pro and con, Saidian humanism has remained a major flash point. Said's 1978 watershed book *Orientalism* and his 1993 *Culture and Imperialism*, which introduced his notion of "contrapuntal reading" (the "simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which [and together with which] the dominating discourse acts"), have been assailed on the grounds that they shortchange aesthetic value by reducing texts to sociological example, while fostering "victim studies" and antihumanism.⁵⁰ But, as Herbert Lindenberger reminds us, when Auerbach's *Mimesis* was attacked by the Left for its Eurocentrism in the early 1980s, it was none other than Said who rescued it as a model work of broad cultural authority and *Welt-lit*, earning him, at least in Lindenberger's estimation, the Auerbachian mantle.⁵¹

Saidian humanism views Europe from outside Europe ("provincializing" it, to borrow Dipesh Chakrabarty's phrase), while criticizing the habit of referring to traditions such as Islam in an impacted, monolithic way.⁵² "It is very much the case today," Said would argue in *Representations of the Intellectual*, "that in dealing with the Islamic world—all one billion people in it, with dozens of different societies, half a dozen major languages including Arabic, Turkish, Iranian, all of them spread out over about a third of the globe—American or British academic intellectuals speak reductively and, in my view, irresponsibly of something called 'Islam.'"⁵³ Taking translingual perspectivalism as an a priori, Saidian humanism pivots on the vision of the intellectual who refuses to see languages and cultures in isolation. What legitimates the intellectual's claim to knowledge and freedom is a sensitivity to the demography of Babel.⁵⁴ The radical side of Saidian humanism—its agitation of the status quo and refusal of congruence with the contoured, habituated environments called home—lies, I would suggest, not so much in its philological ecumenicalism (which could easily become watered down linguistic multiculturalism), but rather in its attachment to the shock value of cultural comparison.

If, instead of taking Auerbach's work for its *Ansatzpunkt* (and, by extension, the fetish of exile; the record shows that Auerbach was in pretty good cosmopolitan company during his Istanbul sojourn), Saidian humanism

50. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), p. 51.

51. See Herbert Lindenberger, "On the Reception of *Mimesis*," in *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology*, p. 209. My thanks to Howard Bloch for bringing this article to my attention.

52. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J., 1999).

53. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York, 1994), p. 23.

54. See his statement, "An intellectual is fundamentally about knowledge and freedom" (*ibid.*, p. 59).

had started with Spitzer, it might have gleaned from Spitzer's critique of Ernst Robert Curtius—the scholar who swooped in to take his job just as he was dispatched to Istanbul—its very own practice of a "lightened" philology; a philology that has shed its "solidity," "aridity," "asceticism," and "medieval garb."⁵⁵ Said's memoir *Out of Place* exemplifies this culturally lightened and globally expanded philology, placing Shakespeare with Shirley Temple, Kant *avec* Wonder Woman. The narrative mobilizes a lexicon in which American product labels are grafted onto Arabic and Anglophone expressions. The anomalous acoustic effect of words like Ping Pong and Dinky Toy vie with Britishisms (BBC, Greenwich Mean Time) and local brand names (Chabrawichi cologne) on a single page. "Like the objects we carried around and traded, our collective language and thought were dominated by a small handful of perceptibly banal systems deriving from comics, film, serial fiction, advertising and popular lore that was essentially at street level," Said tells us, as if to dispel any temptation to make humanism the high serious preserve of an indigenous culture untouched by global capitalism and trademark literacy.⁵⁶ Said's sense of marvel at the way in which the coinage of popular culture interacts with the hard currency of European aesthetics recalls, perhaps not surprisingly, Spitzer's landmark 1949 essay, "American Advertising Explained as Popular Art," in which he analyzed the Sunkist orange juice logo as a modern-day equivalent of medieval heraldic insignia.

So, given this Spitzerian lineage, who, for Said, might embody Spitzer in transnational times? In *Out of Place* the author's family friend Charles Malik emerges as the most obvious choice, despite Said's political differences with him. A spokesman for Palestine in the 1940s and a former U.N. ambassador for Lebanon, he became a professor of philosophy at the American University of Beirut, having studied with Heidegger in Freiburg and Whitehead at Harvard. With his "strong north Lebanese village (Kura) accent affixed to a sonorously European English," Malik becomes, in Said's ascription, a kind of Spitzer of the Middle East; demonstrating fluency in English, Arabic, German, Greek, and French, while ranging, in conversation, from Kant, Fichte, Russell, Plotinus, and Jesus Christ, to Gromyko, Dulles, Trygve Lie, Rockefeller, and Eisenhower (*OP*, p. 264, 266).

Though Said himself (by his own account) never rivals Malik's language

55. Spitzer, review of *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, by Ernst Robert Curtius, *American Journal of Philology* 70, no. 4 (1949): 426, 425; cited by Gumbrecht, "'Zeitlosigkeit, die durchscheint in der Zeit: Über E. R. Curtius' unhistorisches Verhältnis zur Geschichte,'" in *Ernst Robert Curtius: Werk, Wirkung, Zukunftsperspektiven*, ed. Walter Berschin and Arnold Rothe (Heidelberg, 1989), pp. 233–34.

56. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York, 1999), p. 205; hereafter abbreviated *OP*.

proficiency, his intellectual interests and accomplishments—in music, politics, and literary criticism—make him an equally compelling example of the secular humanist. As a “self-reader” he is mindful of the *translational* transnationalism of humanism, a condition that, I would surmise, is ultimately more significant for the future of humanism than the premium placed on exile throughout many of Said’s writings. Reading the hyphenations of his identity as a Palestinian-Arab-Christian-American, or the mutations of his own name at various stations of life, Said is above all a self-translator. In Cairo, he is Edward, a symbol of Arab Anglophilia. In his father’s stationery store, he is Mister Edward or Edward Wadie. And in Mount Herman boarding school, he is “Americanized as ‘Ed Said,’” which on the page begs to have the second name pronounced to rhyme with the first. *Ed Said* becomes a place-holder for the expectation of speech: Ed said. . . . what? (*OP*, p. 236). What Said says, it turns out, is flush with the polyvalent associations around his name, now, in its own right, a transnationally circulating signifier of global comparatism, ethical militance, exilic humanism, and contrapuntal reading practices. But this overreading of a name begs the question of defining transnational humanism; it shifts the burden of definition to identity, thereby evading the complex issue of how transnational humanism selects for culture; that is to say, how it excludes as well as culls a philological example from an unsorted jumble of texts. To give this problem its due, one must reflect more fully on the role played by philology in reaching for connections across languages while at the same time respecting the recalcitrance of the original.

Global *Translatio*

Looking again more closely at the table of contents of the Istanbul literary review, we see a paradigm of *translatio* emerge that emphasizes the critical role of multilingualism within transnational humanism. The juxtaposition of Turkish, German, and French attests to a policy of *nontranslation* adopted without apology. Spitzer’s own contributions are exemplary here; in each individual essay one hears a cacophony of untranslated languages. And as a literary critic in command of French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Latin, Greek, Italian, English, Provençal, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Rumanian, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Sanskrit, Lithuanian, Old Church Slavonic, Albanian, Neo-Greek (and now, we ascertain, Turkish as well), he had many languages to choose from. It was, of course, a common practice among highly educated European literary scholars to leave passages and phrases free-standing in a naked state of untranslation; but for Spitzer nontranslation was a hallowed principle of his method, enunciated most fa-

mously in a starred passage of the 1948 essay "Linguistics and Literary History":

*The frequent occurrence, in my text, of quotations in the original foreign language (or languages) may prove a difficulty for the English reader. But since it is my purpose to take the word (and the wording) of the poets seriously, and since the convincingness and rigor of my stylistic conclusions depends entirely upon the minute linguistic detail of the original texts, it was impossible to offer translations. [Since the linguistic range of readers of literary criticism is not always as great as Spitzer's, the editors of this volume decided to provide translations.]⁵⁷

The editors' remarks in brackets are literally beside the point. Their well-meaning pandering to Anglophone readers may well facilitate accessibility, but it renders moot Spitzer's explicit desire to disturb monolingual complacency. Spitzer inserted this note not just to admonish his readers to refer to the original but to insist on their confrontation with linguistic strangeness. In allowing the foreignness of the original to shine through, he resembles the ideal Benjaminian translator for whom the model translation is a scriptural "interlinear" rewording, proximate to the original to the point of being, almost, no translation at all.⁵⁸

Spitzer's practice of nontranslation is not an argument against translation per se but, rather, a bid to make language acquisition a categorical imperative of *translatio studii*. A profound respect for the foreignness of a foreign language—of foreignness as the sign of that which is beyond assimilation within language itself—motivated Spitzer's plurilingual dogma, allowing him to be linked, albeit somewhat anomalously, to Benjamin, Adorno, and Paul de Man. Adorno's paraphrase of how "Benjamin spoke of the author inserting the silver rib of the foreign word into the body of language" shows how important this idea of the foreign became to critical theory. The rib represents Hebbel's "schism of creation": in "sticking out," Adorno noted, it embodies "suffering in language" and "in reality as well."⁵⁹ Adorno's formulation echoes in Paul de Man's idea of translation as "the suffering of the original" ("die Wehen des eigenen"), by which he refers to the "bottomless depth of language, something essentially destructive, which is in language itself."⁶⁰ Responding to questions posed after a

57. Spitzer, "Linguistics and Literary History," *Leo Spitzer*, p. 35.

58. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York, 1969), p. 82.

59. Theodor Adorno, "Words from Abroad," *Notes to Literature*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, 2 vols. (New York, 1991), 2:187–88.

60. De Man, "Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis, 1986), p. 84; hereafter abbreviated RT.

lecture he gave on "The Task of the Translator" at the very end of his career, de Man contended that what was interesting about Benjamin's "language of historical pathos, language of the messianic, the pathos of exile and so on" was the fact that it "really describes linguistic events which are by no means human" (*RT*, p. 96).⁶¹ De Man then associates Benjamin's "pains of the original" with "structural deficiencies which are best analyzed in terms of the inhuman, dehumanized language of linguistics, rather than into the language of imagery, or tropes, of pathos, or drama, which he chooses to use in a very peculiar way" (*RT*, p. 96). De Man dries out the residual humanism of Benjamin's sacred language (*reine Sprache*) and turns it into something technical, "purely linguistic." Though Spitzer's humanist credo of linguistic foreignness for its own sake and de Man's theory of linguistic inhumanism may seem very far apart, they come together in a common love for linguistic foreignness.

Spitzer's abiding respect for the integrity of individual languages resonated in the concluding remarks of his lecture "Development of a Method," delivered four months prior to his death in 1960. Adopting a credo of linguistic serial monogamy, he posits that each and every language, at the time of the critic's engagement with it, lays claim absolutely to his or her unconditional love:

Philology is the *love* for works written in a particular *language*. And if the methods of a critic must be applicable to works in all languages in order that the criticism be convincing, the critic, at least at the moment when he is discussing the poem, must love *that* language and *that* poem more than anything else in the world.⁶²

Now even if Spitzer failed to demonstrate the same degree of passion for Turkish as for classical, Germanic, and Romance languages, he placed Turkish on an equal footing as a language worthy of love. And in his essay "Learning Turkish" he showed more affection for the language than one might expect; he compares the effort of a linguist in midcareer trying to learn Turkish to "the situation of an old person learning to ski," a figure of speech connoting on the one hand *le démon de midi* (midlife crisis) and, on the other, the pulse-quickenning thrill of dangerous liaisons. Despite the fact that he is no expert in Turcology and despite his rudimentary grasp of the language, the intrepid philologist throws himself willy-nilly into analyzing the word for *veil*—*Kaçgöç* (meaning "the flight of women when a man enters

61. For a further discussion of the status of the human in Spitzer and de Man, see my "The Human in the Humanities."

62. Spitzer, "Development of a Method," *Leo Spitzer*, p. 448.

the house," "the necessity for women to hide and escape from men"). Focusing on its usage in a Turkish novel by Resat Nuri Güntekin called *Casual Things*, Spitzer draws parallels with Roman carnival masks and links the word to the expression "this is no laughing matter" in Balkan languages.

Below its philological surface, Spitzer's explication resembles a classic captivity narrative in which the European gentleman rescues Turkish womanhood from the clutches of Muslim repression. And Spitzer's conclusion—that the spirit of the Turkish people inclines more towards emotionalism than logic—falls prey to familiar Eurocentric refrains. But the "love" of Turkish is manifest, evident in the author's admission of "inferiority" in the face of a language with so old and venerable a tradition and discernible in the second part of the essay in which he searches in vain among the European languages for the spiritual equivalent of Turkish expressions of prudence and precaution. By the time we get to part 3, Turkish has become a language uniquely blessed with a quality he names "symbolical hearing," or "psychophonics." This subtle parallelism between "real and phonetic resemblances" lends itself to fantastic abilities to represent the mood of reality, emerging, in this regard, as the non-Western corollary of the German *Stimmung* or atmosphere to which Spitzer devoted an entire book. Muting his earlier dismissal of Turkish "emotionalism," Spitzer, by the time he reaches the essay's third section, is extolling the calibration of abstraction and reality unique to the Turkish language. Though Spitzer never states the case in so many words, his reading challenges the shibboleth that Indo-European languages are superior because of their higher incidence of abstraction.

In disrespecting narrowly construed East-West dichotomies; in learning Turkish (in learning, even, to love a non-Romanic language); and in establishing a seminar in which Turkish assumed its place alongside European languages as a subject field of philological research and criticism, Spitzer forged a worldly paradigm of *translatio studii* with strong links to the history, both past and present, of *translatio imperii*. The strange parallelism of Latinization during the Middle Ages, Romanization under Atatürk in the 1920s, and the institutionalization of the language of the Third Reich under Nazism produced a heightened awareness of the political complexities of linguistic imperialism in the work of European emigre scholars, even when they defined their pedagogical mission around the preservation of High Latin's cultural remains. Scanning the grammars of the world in search of connections that unlocked the secrets of a cultural unconscious, tracking, to paraphrase Geoffrey Hartman, the sources and intentions that turn words into psychic etymologies, even at the risk of destroying the identity of the sign, Spitzer's seminar yielded a linguistically focused world-systems

theory that stands as a counterweight to Moretti's narrative-based paradigms of distant reading.⁶³ If distant reading privileges outsized categories of cultural comparison—national epic, the “planetary” laws of genre—philology affords its micrological counterpart as close reading with a world-view: word histories as world histories; stylistics and metrics in diaspora. Where Auerbach, according to David Damrosch, established an ethics of textual autonomy in which texts discover order and relationality because they are “allowed to live freely,” Spitzer created a similar ethics for the language of the original, whereby originals are not surrendered to translations but instead find each other freely, attempting connection even at the risk of failure and shock.⁶⁴ The practice of global *translatio* as Spitzer defined it is patterned after untranslatable affective gaps, the nub of intractable semantic difference, episodes of violent cultural transference and counter transference, and unexpected love affairs. In retrospect, Spitzer's invention of comparative literature in Istanbul transformed philology into something recognizable today as the psychic life of transnational humanism.

63. See Geoffrey Hartman, *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* (Chicago, 1975), p. 121. See also Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture* (New York, 1997) for a discussion of the contrast between the idea of culture that arose from emigre cosmopolitanism and culture as it is being defined within a globalized literary studies today.

64. David Damrosch, “Auerbach in Exile,” *Comparative Literature* 47 (Spring 1995): 109.