
Introduction

On the fantail of a boat to Europe, T. S. Eliot was reclining with several passengers in deck seats, blue cloudy sky behind, iron floor below us. “And yourself,” I said, “what do you think of the domination of poetics by the CIA? After all, wasn’t [James] Angleton your friend? Didn’t he tell you his plans to revitalize the intellectual structure of the West against so-to-speak Stalinists?” Eliot listened attentively—I was surprised he wasn’t distracted. “Well, there are all sorts of chaps competing for dominance, political and literary . . . your Gurus for instance, and the Theosophists, and the table rappers and dialecticians and tea-leaf-readers and ideologues. I suppose I was one such, in my middle years. But I did, yes, know of Angleton’s literary conspiracies, I thought they were petty—well meant but of no importance to literature.” “I thought they were of some importance,” I said, “since it secretly nourished the careers of too many square intellectuals, provided sustenance to thinkers in the Academy who influenced the intellectual tone of the West . . . After all, . . . the government through foundations was supporting a whole field of ‘Scholars of War’ . . . the subsidization of magazines like *Encounter* which held Eliotic style as a touchstone of sophistication and competence . . . failed to create an alternative free vital decentralized individualistic culture.”

—“*T. S. Eliot Entered My Dreams*,” Allen Ginsberg¹

ARCHIVES OF AUTHORITY investigates a historically decisive period in the literary and cultural interstices of the Cold War and decolonization. Contributing to a growing body of scholarship that places a renewed emphasis on transnational literary history by analyzing the particular historical and cultural determinants that structure the emergence of dominant literary formations, *Archives* engages recent efforts to develop new paradigms for comparative literary historiography that have aimed to reconceive the ideal of *Weltliteratur*. A concept first articulated by Johann Wolfgang Goethe in 1827 in a conversation with his secretary Johann Peter Eckermann, Goethe’s term did not refer to world literature as a collection of world mas-

2 • Introduction

terpieces; rather, it pointed to the emergence of the multiple modes of articulation through which nations communicated the particular experiences and peculiarities they embodied. When Goethe first used the expression, he was making the observation that *Weltliteratur* was merely in the “process of formation.”² The widening circulation of journals, such as the *Edinburgh Review*, *Eco*, the *Foreign Review*, Mme de Staël’s *De l’Allemagne*, and *Le Globe* were gradually establishing the basis for different modes of recognition, understanding, and tolerance between the nations of Europe. Together these journals reconstituted the general contours as well as the limitations of a historically specific form of restrictive and Eurocentric cosmopolitanism. *Le Globe*, for example, had risen to Goethe’s defense against the vicious and hypernationalist attacks of the writer Wolfgang Menzel. These journals were not simply a way for Goethe to develop new and multiple perspectives of his own work but a way of becoming familiar with the works of other writers in English, French, and Italian as well.

Even if *Weltliteratur* could have persisted as a mode that was not disrupted by the corrosive forces of totalitarianism, nationalism, provincialism, racism, and imperialism, Goethe’s notion of *Weltliteratur* was never meant to suggest the full and complete realization of a universal literature, since if such a mode of understanding were to one day be achieved, *Weltliteratur*, as Goethe understood it, would be abolished. At the very most, *Weltliteratur*, as a mode of mutual understanding and coexistence between nations, was a distant potential. Goethe saw the development of these modes and the awareness that they generated as belonging to a “gradual” process. He spoke about *Weltliteratur* tentatively; he said that there “was talk of it.” He “ventured to announce it.” He saw “hope of it” emerging. It was “in the process of formation.”³ As the not-yet present that pointed to the future, *Weltliteratur* was, after all, a historically specific mode of cultural transmission articulated within and bounded by the specific project of German Romanticism. Geographically limited to Europe, *Weltliteratur* designated a process of translation and dissemination that at once depended on the particularities of national difference as much as it enabled an enlarged awareness of the shared, but discrepant experiences between nations.

Yet in spite of the historical impediments and challenges that *Weltliteratur* has encountered over the past two centuries, it has nevertheless often remained uncritically central to the aspirations of comparative literature.⁴ While its geographical limitations have been widely rejected, it has retained its strength as a concept to justify a practice of incorporation and appropriation that has threatened to undermine the historical and cultural contributions and achievements of postcolonial studies. Many of its most ambitious accounts have appropriated and intertextually juxtaposed texts across vast expanses of time and geography, apparently in an effort to align

themselves with an imaginary cosmopolitan avant-garde while overlooking the historical determinants of the concept as Goethe had used it. Advancing the illusion of a cosmopolitanism that is unaware of its own historically situated displacement, many of these works fail to question the false unity implied by the world it claims to represent.⁵ They manage to do little else but reinscribe neoliberal assumptions that maintain the illusion that world literature is real, which permits *Weltliteratur* to harmonically accompany the rhythms of globalization to which it is dutifully attuned.⁶ No discernible interest in the historical conditions and situation of the writers, the frameworks that structure their attitudes, the historical modes that shape their circulation, the cultural forces that determine their translation, or the social and political realities that structure the constitution of the reading publics, is evident in these accounts.⁷

Yet if we are to comprehend so-called world literature as a mode of circulation, we are often left to wonder, what are the precise modes to which *Weltliteratur* might refer to today?⁸ How do these modes intersect, overlap, and interact? How have these modes become the means through which forms of understanding and knowledge are expressed? Or have these modes of *Weltliteratur* been replaced by modes of *Weltkultur*? What are the conditions through which texts are transmitted and not transmitted via these modes? How do we take into account the multiplicity of these sites? What are the actual limits to linguistic exchange, and where are they located?⁹ What silences do they help to conceal? On the face of it, the nation and market *appear* to interact along the neoliberal rhythms of the global economy to produce recognizable international literary figures. Writers such as J. M. Coetzee, Gabriel García Márquez, Ahdaf Soueif, Nadine Gordimer, Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Ondaatje, Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott, and Wole Soyinka, among others, appear to belong to the field of so-called world literature. Yet the notion that Orhan Pamuk represents “the Turkish Writer” more fully than any other Turkish writer entails the marginalization of yet untranslated writers such as Hasan Ali Toptaş.¹⁰ A great many writers are rendered invisible by the seemingly totalizing circuitry of world literature, and upon closer scrutiny it becomes evident that their absences are the very conditions of possibility of world literature.

Many of the recent and rather original and elegant models that have provided the broadest and often most theoretically sophisticated accounts of literary history have hardly uncovered or excavated any of the silences produced by what Michel-Rolph Trouillot has described as the “North Atlantic universal.”¹¹ Lost in the muddle of abstract theories and models borrowed from historians of the Annales School, such as Marc Bloch and later Fernand Braudel and others whose theories and methods traveled only to become diluted into a set of rules and laws, the texts of an untold number

4 • Introduction

of writers are concealed, overlooked, or buried by concepts such as the *longue durée*, which vastly expands the scope of historical analysis to segments of time that can span centuries.¹² As part of a general attempt to provide a theory that offers a unified account of the evolution of literary forms, these ambitious studies are driven by a yearning for totality, a desire to provide a total history, *une histoire tout court*.¹³ Not since Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* has there been a theoretical attempt to provide an account of a "new literary universality."¹⁴ Yet even Lukács acknowledged that the historical and philosophical realities that the literary forms had confronted were not sufficient to provide the synthesis to which his theory of totality and historical development of literary forms aspired.¹⁵ Nevertheless, abstract assertions about the actual existence of a "world literary space"—a "parallel territory" of literary space that has a time of its own—are made in so sweepingly transhistorical movements that it would be hard to discern that the literature of this realm has anything to do with secular human history or even the specificities of experience and realities of human beings.¹⁶ As a result, the relationship between the overlapping aspects and the intermingling of cultures—those mutually shared and discrepant experiences that are the basis for the production of new modes of mutual understanding and coexistence—are undermined.¹⁷ A significant amount of theoretical work that developed in the wake of Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* is essentially dismissed, marginalized, ignored, or forgotten.¹⁸ What remains, however, is a disavowal of the way culture is entangled with power, even though many of these methods use metaphors of domination and marginalization. The interpretation of other cultures is seen to operate within the realm of an ahistorical vacuum—one that is pliable enough to permit interpretation to stand for a universalism devoid of any real social attachment. Said's notion of contrapuntal criticism—so central to an awareness that metropolitan history is narrated against those histories upon which the dominating discourse acts—faces the renewed challenge that a theoretical vantage point exists that is extricated from its own engagements and entanglements with the world.¹⁹ We must be reminded that "we are, so to speak, of connections, not outside or beyond them" (emphasis in the original).²⁰

The ongoing activity of providing an inventory of the interpellation of culture by empire has been contested most directly by Pascale Casanova. In her effort to develop a theory that relates the particularity of the literary text to the concept of literature as a world, Casanova wants us to understand that to restore the "lost bond" between literature, history, and the world, we must abandon textually based criticism (which institutes a break between the text and the world) and, at the same time, reject the idea that literature and history are identical. The limitations posed by postcolonialism, she asserts, is that it "posits a direct link between literature and his-

tory, one that is exclusively political.” Textually based criticism, she says, is internal; it is too narrowly focused on the text to see that it is part of the world. Postcolonial criticism is external; it broadly conflates literature with history. A question that initially appears to be posed in terms of a relationship between the particular text and the general concept of the whole world suddenly finds itself confronted with a different set of categories: an irreconcilable opposition between the internal and the external. Why these two practices of criticism cannot operate together as an ensemble Casanova does not say.²¹

The compulsive drive to detach oneself from the circumstances of the present and its connection to the past has diminished *Weltliteratur* into an instrumental mode of *Weltkultur* that has, in exceptional instances, played a defining role in establishing the zones of warfare and translation. Beginning in 2005, the U.S. Defense Department began embedding teams of cultural anthropologists within military units to function as cultural analysts of those subjects under military occupation. Described as the “Human Terrain System” (HTS; now referred to as the HTS Project), the operation recruited and mobilized teams of social scientists to produce an archive of knowledge about the Afghan, and later the Iraqi, populations and culture to supply the military command with more effective strategies to administer, manage, and control its subjects. The impetus behind the Defense Department’s initiative came from a small body of pseudoscholarship that claimed that the acquisition of cultural knowledge about the adversary would make military engagements a more effective and efficient means to subjugate a restless and resistant population.²² In 2008 the *Joint Force Quarterly* published an essay entitled, “The Military Understanding of an Adversary Culture,” which asserted that

The changing nature of warfare requires a deeper understanding of adversary culture. The more unconventional the adversary, and the further from Western norms, the more we need to understand the society and underlying cultural dynamics. To defeat non-Western opponents who are transnational in scope, nonhierarchical in structure, clandestine in approach, and who operate outside the context of nation-states, we need to improve our capacity to understand foreign cultures.²³

The subjects became a “terrain” to be analyzed, examined, documented, and transmuted into the dehumanized objects of anthropological, sociological, and cultural knowledge. In the *Counterinsurgency Guidance Source*, issued in October 2008, General Odierno declared that the “Iraqi people are the ‘decisive terrain’ . . . The environment in which we operate is complex,” he wrote, “and it demands that we employ every weapon in our arsenal, both kinetic and non-kinetic. To fully utilize all approaches, we must understand the local culture and history.”²⁴

Not since Napoleon's conquest of Egypt had so many scientists and scholars been mobilized to record, analyze, and study the culture, geography, and history of a people who had not invited such scrutiny and invasion from abroad. In his project to dominate Egypt, Napoleon sent his army with teams of surgeons, archaeologists, linguists, chemists, and antiquarians as part of an enormous effort to incorporate Egypt's values and its connections to a tradition that included Homer, Lycurgus, Solon, Pythagoras, and Plato. The results of this scrutiny were recorded in the *Description de l'Égypte*, a twenty-three-volume tome written between 1808 and 1828. Napoleon's project was a disciplinary practice, a mode of knowing, and a mode of understanding that was inextricably connected to power, according to Edward Said:

To institute new areas of specialization; to establish new disciplines; to divide, deploy, schematize, tabulate, index, and record everything in sight (and out of sight); to make out of every observable detail a generalization and out of every generalization an immutable law about Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom, or type; and, above all, to transmute a living reality into the stuff of texts, to possess (or think one possesses) actuality mainly because nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's powers: these are the features of Orientalist projection entirely realized in the *Description de l'Égypte*, itself enabled and reinforced by Napoleon's wholly Orientalist engulfment of Egypt by the instruments of Western knowledge and power.²⁵

Yet there is an important distinction to be made between an Orientalism that is situated on the terrain of war and the textual Orientalism to which Said is referring. While both forms of knowledge about the Other are placed in the service of power, the Defense Department's HTS Project entails the militarization of knowledge and the refinement of the techniques of a specific kind of biopower—a discipline and power that regulates human life itself.²⁶ The “terrain of operation” becomes a dehumanized place, a topos that is replete with references, quotations, observations, and citations—essentially figurative constructions that are used to justify and legitimize the exercise of power in advance, to establish order, and to provide a logic that transforms the human subject into a “terrain” to be colonized, reworked, and occupied; yet at the same time, it becomes the very means through which violence is avowed or disavowed. According to a 2009 report from the American Anthropology Association, the advisors use

a wide range of conventional ethnographic activities and techniques for data collection. Data collection, therefore, has been reported to include at least the following techniques: surveys, snowball sampling, semi-structured individual and group interviews with both “ordinary Iraqis”

(or, presumably, Afghans) and elites, the elicitation of oral-history narratives, kinship and genealogical analysis, as well as diverse “assessments,” all of which typically includes the use of interpreters as full research partners. Depending on the circumstances and objectives, these techniques are applied in different proportion and with different degrees of depth. Sometimes a given technique is simply impractical or impossible to use, as is true of field work everywhere.²⁷

The strategy develops its own epistemological framework through which the “terrain of insurgency” is made into an entity over whose destiny the United States believes it has some sort of unquestioned entitlement to rule, control, and govern. The strategy of analyzing the cultural disposition of subjects who live under foreign rule exercises power so that each aspect of human behavior can be reduced and objectified into particular categories that can be administered, observed, controlled, and manipulated. These ethnologists and social scientists are agents of total observation, although what they produce are hardly anything but stereotypical figures who possess a certain “mind-set” that can be measured, recorded, archived, inventoried, and objectified to serve the ends of a power that transmutes the field of human social activities into a zone of military conquest. In this respect there can be no consistent, coherent, intelligible “adversary” without the discourse of “counterinsurgency,” through which the discipline of biopower not only eliminates life but also regulates it.

In this crucial respect, it is not irrelevant that teams of embedded anthropologists that are mobilized by the HTS Project shape the very attitudes that indirectly inform the decisions in the chain of military command. These ethnographers of warfare have not simply been enlisted in the service of the military to provide knowledge for the purpose of power, which of course is by no means new,²⁸ but they have become incorporated into the technologies of violence in radically new ways. The militarization of the disciplinary practices of anthropology in the service of biopower is implicated indirectly in decisions regarding who is permitted to be killed and who is allowed to survive in the context of these lethal zones of cultural translation. If the mission of anthropology is to produce knowledge and understanding for its own sake, the techniques of militarized ethnography generate kinds of knowledge that are used belligerently in the very realm of armed conflict. “There is after all a profound difference between the will to understand for the purposes of coexistence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control and external enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control and external dominion.”²⁹

I am emphasizing these iterations of militarized Orientalism and the function that it has continued to serve in these military zones of rapid cul-

tural translation because it not only shows how brazen the connection between power and knowledge has become in our culture but also because it evinces how profoundly the modalities for understanding have become instruments of power. In many ways, *Archives of Authority* is an engagement with this reality insofar as it traces the genealogy of this view in the early years of the Cold War by describing the formidable structures and conjunctures of cultural domination, as well as the cultural mechanisms by which the United States rearticulated the discourse of British colonialism through the institutions and discourses of anticommunism. Both of these forces had very real effects on what is considered *Weltliteratur*. U.S.-sponsored Cold War organizations, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), did not leave the canon untouched, but rather helped to shape it, define it, regulate it, administer it, co-opt part of it, and in some cases silence and marginalize writers, particularly those whose dissenting practices threatened to undermine the episteme upon which the Cold War was based—a seemingly relentless conflict between “totalitarianism” and the “free world.”³⁰ In 1952, the philologist Erich Auerbach had, it appeared, already grasped the general contours of the problem:

All human activity is being concentrated either in European-American or into Russian-Bolshevist patterns; no matter how great they seem to be, the differences between the two are comparatively minimal when they are contrasted with the basic patterns underlying the Islamic, Indian, or Chinese traditions. Should mankind succeed in withstanding the shock of so mighty and rapid of a process—for which the spiritual preparation has been poor—then man will have to accustom himself to an existence in a standardized world, to a single literary culture, only a few literary languages, and perhaps even a single literary language. And herewith the notion of *Weltliteratur* would be at once realized and destroyed.³¹

Goethe’s conception of *Weltliteratur*—what Auerbach understood to mean “the human as a product of the productive exchanges between cultures”—thus assumed a degraded form in the aftermath of World War II. As he observed, the cultural activities of governments, institutions, and other Cold War organizations had effectively obstructed and limited the discourse of mutual understanding and coexistence: “There is no more talk now—as there had been—of the spiritual exchange between peoples, of the refinement of customs, and the reconciliation of races. Certain distinguished individuals, small groups of highly cultivated men always have enjoyed and will continue to do so. Yet this sort of activity has little effect on culture or the reconciliation of peoples: it cannot stand the storm of vested interests—and so its results are immediately dissipated.”³²

Through bodies such as the British Council and the CCF, the British and U.S. governments enlisted a particular group of postwar public writers and sent them abroad as cultural emissaries. Figures such as T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, and Isaiah Berlin, among others, came to occupy multiple transnational positions. They found their essays, poems, and short stories translated with greater speed and published in multiple magazines in cities such as Paris, Rome, London, Berlin, New Delhi, Mexico, and Beirut. The CCF—one of the most influential cultural institutions funded by the United States during the Cold War—published an international array of sophisticated monthly magazines, such as *Cuadernos* (Mexico City), *Cadernos Brasileiros* (Rio de Janeiro), *Encounter* (London), *Forum* (Vienna), *Der Monat* (Berlin), *Preuves* (Paris), *Quadrant* (Sydney), *Quest* (Mumbai), *Tempo Presente* (Rome), and *Transition* (Kampala). A disingenuous cosmopolitan montage, these magazines of culture and politics made unlikely juxtapositions between writers of different nationalities, positioning, for example, an essay by the German writer Thomas Mann adjacent to a short story by the Mexican writer Juan Rulfo, not only in one language but also in several languages and multiple publications and places concurrently.

The emergence of transnational institutions such as the British Council and the BBC helped to mobilize national literary figures abroad, and, in doing so, fundamentally altered the relationship between public writers and their readers. Essays by critics such as R. P. Blackmur and Lionel Trilling renegotiated the expansion of American power and expressed a heightened awareness of the nation's seeming boundlessness. Cold War magazines and institutions such as *Encounter*, *Transition*, *Black Orpheus*, the Ford Foundation's *Perspectives USA*, and the BBC's *African* and *Caribbean Voices* and its *Third Programme* established new regimes of consecration—a literary and cultural order through which certain authors became specifically identifiable as world authors in a new kind of international literary system. New technologies of transmission placed both writers and readers in different orders of circulation. A whole ideology and mode of world literature underwent a historically decisive transformation during the Cold War.

Instead of mutually recognizing the intertwined histories and experiences between peoples, however discrepant those experiences may be, the dominant structural and cultural conditions that cohered in the aftermath of World War II were largely defined by new and increasingly efficient modes of transmission, translation, and dissemination. As an investigational genealogy of the Cold War and its intersections with decolonization, *Archives of Authority* provides a critical and interpretative account of the forces that established a conjuncture between the numerous modalities available for diffusion and the writers who were incorporated, mobilized,

and sometimes co-opted as part of the divisions, hierarchies, and epistemological practices of the Cold War. A dominant group of writers enjoyed what had become by the mid-twentieth century new modalities of articulation: the accelerated transmission and translation of short stories and essays published from multiple sites of transmission. The analysis of these practices contributes not only to the study of the emerging cultural features of globalization and its relation to the history of modernities but also to the inventory of the asymmetrical flow of translations that were directed and shaped by organizations such as the CCF. In this respect, in the early phase of globalization (and the process of decolonization that marked its new stage), the idea of *Weltliteratur* was largely defined by the frameworks of the Cold War, not only within Europe but in Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well.³³

If *Archives* provides an account of the circulation of the public writer in the age of technological replication, then it does so in order to allow us to document the cultural determinants of the absences that are the conditions of possibility of *Weltliteratur*. If these absences have forced us to conceive of *Weltliteratur* in negative terms, then a particular analysis of the specific historical conditions through which *Weltliteratur*'s silences are deposited permits us to apprehend the idea of *Weltliteratur* in the most materialist sense—as an “Idea which is in the process of its own actualization.” As Slavoj Žižek argues:

What the notion of the Idea as a product of itself makes visible is . . . not the process of self-engendering, but that materialist fact that the idea exists only in and through the activity of the individuals engaged with it and motivated by it. What we have here is not a historicist/evolutionist position . . . , but something much more radical: an insight into how historical reality itself is not a positive order, but a “not-all” which points to its own future. It is this inclusion of the future as the gap in the present order that renders the latter “not-all,” ontologically incomplete, and thus explodes the self-enclosure of the historicist/evolutionary process.³⁴

As a work of investigational criticism, and cultural and literary historiography, my overriding intention is that this book's analysis of the modalities through which cultural authority was exercised in the aftermath of the Second World War produces a critical awareness of how *Weltliteratur* was implicated in a historical world that is made by human beings, and can be unmade and remade by them as well.