
Perspectivizing World Literature

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Abstract. Rejecting Eurocentrism of the world literature concept, perspectivism promises an alternative to the center/periphery model. Although perspectivism tends to deny the world-systemic asymmetries, it rightly claims that peripheral cultural interaction may bypass global centers, establishing its networks and centers (e.g., the twentieth-century avant-gardes). Moreover, peripheries enable the reproduction and evolution of global metropolises, even though their contribution is exoticized and anonymized. The modernist poetry of Srečko Kosovel (1904–26) illustrates peripheral productivity and its response to evolutionary processes in the center. It also highlights the systemic obstacles that prevent this information from being globalized.

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What is world literature, after all? To my knowledge, an unequivocal answer still has not been given, although the question was first raised by Dionýz Ďurišin (1992) and later David Damrosch (2003). From canonical writings of the contemporary *troika* of world literature studies (Casanova 1999; Moretti 2000, 2005; Damrosch 2003), one may distill a provisional definition. According to the definition, world literature is a system that, by establishing interaction between particular literary fields and through translation, creates channels for the cross-national circulation of literary works, the reception and cultural impact of which become anchored relatively permanently within a multitude of foreign literary fields outside their local environment. A literary work entering world literature must find its place in the great foreign literature belonging to an internationally influential country, which, consequently, is the homeland of a world language. From the above definition, it follows that world literature is structured unequally, through relationships of mutual dependence. The international distribution of each work is dependent on the media and status within globally influential countries, as well as on translations into world languages.

As is known, the translation is the main channel for the global circulation of literary texts (Ďurišin 1992: 184–185; Damrosch 2003: 281–300; Eysteinsson 2006; Helgesson & Vermeulen 2016: 9). It enables particular literatures access to the world space, thus shaping their “images” (Lefevere 1992: 5–9) both in the current reception and in the social memory that reproduces the world literary canon. Since the production of translations is a subsystem of

national literatures *and* world literature, it is itself determined by the asymmetry in the distribution of cultural capital, as pointed out in relation to world literature by Franco Moretti (2000) and Pascale Casanova (1999). As Johan Heilbron explains, translation activity, too, knows centers and peripheries (Heilbron 2010: 306–314): whereas centers are predominantly export-oriented (more texts around the world are translated out of the central languages than out of peripheral languages), peripheries are predominantly import-oriented. In fact, it is in the translation system that the intertwining of the political-economic and linguistic-cultural factors of literary dependency is the most obvious (cf. Casanova 2010: 288). What is translated, as well as how and for what purpose it is translated, depends on the publishing industry as an economic activity, while the strength of the publishing industry is commensurate with the level of economic development and political influence of its social environment. Gisèle Sapiro has recently provided an excellent case study of the Parisian publisher Gallimard. With its geopolitically motivated strategies of broadening the number of languages and countries represented in its translation repertoire, Gallimard acquired a great “consecrating power [...] on an international scale” (Sapiro 2016: 143 *passim*). According to Sapiro, many international authors Gallimard published in French with introductions by renowned French writers and intellectuals won worldwide recognition through further translations and important literary awards, such as the Nobel Prize, whereas the publisher was able to (economically) capitalize the symbolic capital of authors it helped to promote as international classics.

Being a form of linguistic practice, literature is inevitably dependent on the relations between the languages of the world. Languages with hundreds of millions of speakers have less difficulty becoming established in the world than minor languages. More than by the number of native speakers, however, the international position of an individual literature is determined by how many multilingual speakers master its language (Casanova 2010: 289–290; Heilbron 2010: 306). The languages mastered by most multilingual speakers are world languages. Their dominant position also depends on the economic and political power of the countries in which these languages have been standardized – as a rule, world languages are heirs to the early modern empires. The connection between a country’s position in the global economy and the global position of its culture is established by the activity of the international publishing market. Eugene Eoyang measures the imbalance in the international trade in translations with a “Translation Index” (TI), i.e., the ratio between translation imports and exports. It is below one in the most translated literatures and over one in the literatures that

translate the most.¹ Eoyang calls literatures that more frequently translate *out of* than are translated *into* foreign languages dependent, whereas he considers literatures with the opposite export-import ratio hegemonic (Eoyang 2003: 17–26).

Inevitably, the recognition of inequalities within the world literary and translation systems has caused anxieties. I would venture to claim that the center/periphery opposition has drawn criticism mainly from the intellectual standpoint attempting to think and speak for the periphery. To be more precise, the harshest have been the critics affiliated with prominent academic locations who figured as spokespersons of peripheral others. These scholars have suggested pursuing literary studies within the post-national paradigm in a manner different from the one adapting Goethe's *Weltliteratur* to the heyday of globalization and its post 9/11 crisis. Adherents of post-colonialism and literary transnationalism blamed Casanova's and Moretti's materialist opposition between centers and peripheries for territorializing relationships between literatures and reducing them to the cultural market and diffusionism. As an unbearable consequence of the center/periphery dichotomy, authors in the dependent milieus would be destined to a belated imitation and bereaved of authenticity. In the opinion of post-colonial critics, the concept of the world literary system proposed by Moretti and Casanova thus only reproduces the outdated Euro-centrism of traditional comparative literature (Frassinelli & Watson 2011: 197–204). Proclaiming an utopian idea of “planetarity” and urging for a close philological interpretation of “texture,” Gayatri Spivak also rejects Moretti's “distant reading” together with his application of Wallerstein's economic world-system, on the assumption that they miss the complexity of inter-literary contacts, especially on the global South (Spivak 2003: 108; cf. Arac 2002: 38). Finally, Jean Bessière (2010) and Tumba Alfred Shango Lokoho (2010), supporters of the liberal concept of *littérature-monde*, stand for those who believe that global mobility of capital and population, as well as the capacities of digital communication, render the very notion of the center meaningless.

Franco Moretti's materialist concept of a one but unequal world literary system has been rebutted by critics who refuse to come to terms with the dependent position ascribed by the systemic concept to the community in whose name they speak. On the other hand, his

¹ Eoyang illustrates this by statistical data for 1985 showing that Japan was a major translating importer (its TI was 11,39) while UK and US were the biggest exporters of texts translated into other languages (their TI was 0,09); at the same time, German TI was 2,18, the Soviet (Russian) 1,27, and French 0,74. In the similar vein, according to Sapiro (2011), in modern core literatures the share of translation in their overall literary production is relatively small (from 3% in the US to 15% or 20% in France and Germany); it is higher on the margins (around 65% in Sweden). That literary traffic regularly flows from centers to peripheries, is evidenced by the fact that the majority of target languages translate mostly from English – in the 1980s, more than half of all translated books reproduced English originals.

concept is opposed by the metropolitan academic elite, who, due to their liberal textualism and humanism, cannot accept the systemic concept itself and its geopolitical stratification of symbolic impact. Critical voices were raised even against the cosmopolitan, aesthetic, and humanistic notion of world literature as represented by Damrosch's dialogic concept of reading as an "elliptical refraction" between linguistic and culturally heterogeneous literatures of the world (Damrosch 2003: 15, 283–300). Damrosch's explanation of the experience of a foreign text, in which the aesthetic mode of reading anesthetizes the political and cultural otherness to fashion a medium for the reader's self-reflection, appears to export Western aesthetic discourse as a universal model of literariness. Through world literature, the radically different social modalities of linguistic practices of the third world are compelled to adapt to the Western notion of literary art and what Arjun Appadurai calls "Eurochronology" (Appadurai 2000: 30; cf. Prendergast 2004: 6; Apter 2013: 57–69). Moreover, according to Emily Apter, the translated world literature canon, although intended to expand horizons of Western students, effaces the singularity and linguo-cultural situatedness of the original texts by turning them into fragmented items of the aesthetic museum (Apter 2013: 320–329). The international publishing, the producer of contemporary global literature in translation as well as world literature anthologies, only adds to the tendency to wipe out vernacular particularity in order to achieve general understanding. In Pieter Vermeulen's words, it is also able "to convert singularities into marketable differences, and to design niche markets for experiences that may initially seem too insignificant to count" (Vermeulen 2016: 80; cf. Apter 2006: 97–99).

To sum up, the concept of world literature haunts critics due to its Western-centrism. In its materialist-systemic interpretation relying on the center/periphery tension, world literature is said to reinforce the cultural model of modernity with which Western capitalism has conquered other parts of the planet. Nonetheless, world literature as interpreted from the perspective of liberal cosmopolitanism causes no less anxiety. It is accused of reproducing Western-centrism by privileging global English as the language of translation, globalizing the aesthetic mode of reading, and imposing the Eurochronology to the study of global literary history. Various trends have arisen as an alternative to the center/periphery model of world literature, ranging from the substitution of the concept of world literature with other notions (such as transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, post-colonialism, Francophonie, etc.), through the pluralization and decentralization of world literature, to an affirmation of the periphery.

Pluralism claims that there is no single world literature because it is always already perspectivized (cf. Juvan 2011: 85–86; 2012: 213–222). With their translation repertoires and canons, the various national literatures reproduce different versions of world literature. Perspectivism assigns world literature a plurality not only as a phenomenon but also as an idea. In fact, the universality of the idea of world literature is intrinsically marked with the particular loci in which it has taken shape. As mentioned above, Goethe originally launched the notion of *Weltliteratur* into the European cosmopolitan community because he felt that the coming era of world literature, with its growing intercultural exchange on the European market, might help German literature obtain a more central position in the international relations. There have been many other instances of stressing a particular perspective on world literature, such as Richard G. Moulton’s 1911 opinion that the essentials of Hellenic and Hebraic civilizations (which he regarded as fundamentals of Anglo-American culture) implied an “English point of view” on world literature (Moulton 2012: 31, 34). Similarly, Richard Meyer provided his contemporaneous 1913 book on the twentieth-century world literature with the subtitle “from a German perspective” (Meyer 1913). Today, John Pizer also emphasizes that world literature “presupposes a specific national perspective” and thus “conjures inevitably different visions, and will inspire quite different canons, in China, France, England, and Japan” (Pizer 2006: 89–90).

Arguing that concepts of world literature themselves are “geopolitically or ‘semiospherically’ conditioned,” Ilya Kliger suggests that the theory of the world literary system – with its focus on Western cultural industries – results simply from Moretti’s academic placement in the United States (Kliger 2010: 259–263). As an alternative, Kliger draws attention to “a second-world, or (semi-)peripheral, view of world literature” (259) such as Yuri Lotman’s semiotics, which focuses on the proclivity of the periphery for innovation. Dionýz Ďurišin, a pioneer of the theory of world literature, is another example of a view from the second-world margins. Unlike Casanova or Moretti, Ďurišin does not confine interliterary relations to inter-national or economic struggle, foregrounding instead cultural complementarity within the interliterary communities of Central Europe, Slavic nations, the Mediterranean, or the former Yugoslavia (Ďurišin 1992: 160–172). Instead of lamenting lagging behind the center, he stresses the irregular and accelerated development of minor literatures (179–183). In place of influence, he proposes a dialogic notion of creative reception of metropolitan patterns (93–95).

However, due to the “traveling concepts” (Bal 2002) and the cosmopolitan claim endemic to theory, the place of uttering does not *per se* determine one’s theorizing. For example, although identified with a perspective on world literature from the global center, Moretti’s world-system theory draws not only on the US-American theorist Immanuel Wallerstein. Equally important to him is Itamar Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory, which, placed in Tel Aviv, seems to be no less geopolitically peripheral than Ďurišin’s Slovak school of comparatistics. Moreover, two important non-Western predecessors – Russian Formalism and (Prague) structuralism – inspired the way Even-Zohar affirms the role of the periphery in the literary process. Even-Zohar admits that at the time of their emergence, peripheral literatures rely heavily on the already established centers, thus building their repertoire and an institutional basis. In so doing, however, they do not act as passive recipients because their relationship to interference from the center is strategic and responsive (Even-Zohar 1990: 24–25, 48, 53–72).

Still, by emphasizing the acts of selection and transformation of the literary import, the dependence of peripheries becomes even more evident. A peripheral literature does choose elements from abroad according to its needs but its choices are not free. The attractive, fashionable, and well-selling supplies on the international book market condition a peripheral demand for metropolitan products. Using the cross-national cultural trade, centers disseminate new patterns that trigger consumerist desire worldwide. As a result, metropolitan literary structures become an object of peripheral imitation. In the nineteenth century, for example, the demand for domestic novels “in the manner of Scott” spread in Europe, while some thirty years ago, the imported brand of metafiction helped second-world writers, longing for the Western postmodern, to become visible to the cultured audience of their countries (cf. Spiridon 2005). In his typology of “(inter)literary dependency,” Andrei Terian would class the examples listed above as belonging to what he terms “mimetic literatures.” The term denotes a category of peripheral literatures that “replicate literatures written in countries on which they do not depend in any way, politically or linguistically”; their voluntary mimetism, different from the imposed mimicry of (post)colonial literatures, “often acts as a catalyst that stimulates the construction of an ethnocultural identity” (Terian 2012: 28).

Stating the preponderance of diffusionist unidirectionality threatens to undermine the self-esteem of weaker literatures, even though Moretti – somehow anticipating frustrations triggered by his model of literary inequality – hastens to admit that it is margins that, being in the majority, actually instantiate the rules of literary evolution, and not centers: “The ‘typical’

rise of the novel is Krasicki, Kemal, Rizal, Maran – not Defoe” (Moretti 2000: 61). Moreover, Moretti does not deny peripheries innovation, for which he is wrongfully reproached:

Cultures from the center have more resources to pour into innovation (literary and otherwise), and are thus more likely to produce it: but a monopoly over creation is a theological attribute, not a historical judgment. [...]. The fact that innovations may arise in the semi-periphery, but then be captured and diffused by the core of the core, emerges from several studies on the early history of the novel [...], which have pointed out how often the culture industry of London and Paris discovers a foreign form, introduces a few improvements, and then retails it as its own throughout Europe (Moretti 2003: 76, 78).

Such observations allow for a reevaluation of peripheries that might do away with the trauma of delayed imitation. Inspired by Yuri Tynyanov’s and Mikhail Bakhtin’s respective affirmations of the evolutionary value of marginal, uncanonical, or subcultural genres (such as the parody), Itamar Even-Zohar is among those who argue that the central, representative and dominant zones of a particular literary polysystem would petrify without their tensions with and regenerating influx from non-canonized, marginalized, or subcultural repertoires (Even-Zohar 1990: 14–17). Likewise, Yuri Lotman’s semiotics emphasizes that the periphery, because of its tension with the center, produces “an excess of information” and a “perpetual reservoir of semiotic dynamism” (Kliger 2010: 266). The relationship between central and peripheral discourses within individual literary systems finds its equivalent at the level of contacts between literatures. Dominant literatures are able to reproduce and evolve not only due to their internal center-periphery dynamics but also because of the influence of peripheral cultural systems. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries bear witness to this fact by the international success of Nordic ballads, Icelandic sagas, South Slavic folk songs, Ibsenian dramas, Japanese haiku, Latin American magic realism, and African and Caribbean literature.

In contrast to the above consolatory concepts favoring the marginal, Casanova (1999: 343 *passim*), Gisèle Sapiro (2016), Sarah Brouillete (2016), and Stefan Helgesson and Pieter Vermeulen (2016) all stress that the global impact of a particular work depends on the consecration procedure that takes place predominantly in metropolises. It involves metropolitan cultural elites (recognized translators, critics, editors, and writers of prefaces), strategies of major publishers on the international literary market, topical issues of public discourse and the media, as well as internationally renowned literary prizes. Cosmopolitan networking of peripheral writers, their mobility, and taking positions near the global centers of decision-making further increase their opportunities for an international breakthrough. On this basis, a metropolis may recognize and acclaim the formal innovation of a peripheral work, insofar as the latter is considered *au courant* with metropolitan perceptions of

modernity; the work, however, is expected to remain saturated with cultural otherness and traces of the historic particularities of its original locus (cf. Casanova 1999: 127–138; Thomsen 2008: 48). A text imported from the periphery becomes attractive provided it oscillates between synchronization with the arts of the center and its proper alterity so that the center is unable to translate it fully into its own categories. Moreover, metropolises have secured their cultural privilege due to the economic and colonial exploitation of the periphery. Parallel to Western museums, their influential repertoires have been renovated by the appropriation of the cultural heritage of the third-world cultures (cf. Apter 2013: 325), by attracting outstanding authors from "exotic" milieus, as well as by the assimilation of distant poetics. In the metropolises, these have often been made to evoke otherness anonymously, without being reimbursed for refreshing the aesthetic pleasures of the West with the authorial function in the world canon. Thus, the imbalance within the world literary system corresponds to the division Vladimir Biti observes in cosmopolitanism between the “*agencies* [...] entitled to conduct the dialogue of equals, and the non-political *enablers*, excluded from this dialogue in order to procure its prerequisites.” (Biti 2016: 1 *passim*)

Galin Tihanov’s recent observation is a case in point. Writing on the existence of minor literatures, Tihanov points out that peripheral Slavic literatures such as Bulgarian first attracted the attention of the western center in the context of the post-enlightenment “anthropological curiosity” for folklore – that is, a *per definitionem* anonymous, unauthored creativity of a collective body. In Tihanov words, this interest for peripheries “was lifting entire ethnic communities from the obscurity of mere exoticism to that of benign cultural insignificance within the emerging framework of shared European values” (Tihanov 2014: 173). Consequently, considered unable to present a universally valid message, Bulgarian culture entered Europe with the translation of its specific folklore to provide further exciting details to a post-Herderian cosmopolitan gaze. Tihanov underlines that translating a peripheral folklore in the West represents “an asynchronic adoption, where cultural forms long gone are domesticated once again as a manifestation of anonymous (and thus already softened) exoticism; folklore reveals a previous archaic stage of cultural evolution that cannot be sustained, or indeed, recommended any longer in the West” (Tihanov 2014: 173).

In addition to the affirmation of the periphery, the opposition to Eurocentric diffusionism resulted in highlighting interliterary contacts between the peripheries. According to Pier Paolo Frassinelli and David Watson, literary traffic between the regions surrounding the Indian Ocean circulates not only through the global centers but also through direct

exchanges between the margins (Frassinelli & Watson 2011: 206). Granted, it is hardly possible to deny that the waves emanating from the centers shape the global physiognomy of literature, but regional cultural watersheds and a capillary osmosis between neighboring semiospheres play a no less important role in the structuring of the world literary system. A nineteenth-century episode I have discussed elsewhere may serve as a case in point (cf. Juvan 2015). In the context of the 1833 language and political controversy called the “Slovenian Alphabet War,” the literary historian and philologist Matija Čop (1797–1835) commented at length on the review of the Slovenian poetic almanac *Krajnska čbelica* that a prominent Czech poet František L. Čelakovský (1799–1852) had published in 1832 in the Prague journal *Časopis českého Museum*. Čelakovský’s sample translations and praise of France Prešeren’s poetry as an achievement that, speaking to a broad community of Slavdom, transcends backward conditions of its home literature was used by Čop as a foreign (i.e., international) argument supporting his Romantic and cosmopolitan version of Slovenian cultural nationalism. The Slovenian-Czech romantic alliance forged by criticism and translation was an instance of interliterariness through which, in the Austrian Empire, three types of literary systems emerged concurrently along with their respective centers and subcenters (Vienna, Prague, and Ljubljana). In addition to the nascent modern national literatures and the coming epoch of world literature, a regional literary circuit among literatures in Slavic languages came into being. Regional interliterary relations of the kind established what Đurišin’s school of comparative literature terms interliterary communities and centrism. Ideologically based solidarity among literatures related by linguistic kinship and common rulers served political needs – mutual support of stateless nations in their individual strivings for recognition and autonomy within the Habsburg Empire (cf. Tihanov 2014: 175–176).

Furthermore, the sources of international currents are not exclusive to established metropolises. The “temporary subcenters” that Mads Rosendahl Thomsen writes about (2008: 33–60) are less influential in terms of authors, and emanate influence into their proximity for shorter spans of time than do large metropolises. Nonetheless, they may be temporarily more important. Thus, from 1860 to 1880, a European echo was aroused by Russia’s Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky; between 1880 and 1900, by Scandinavia’s Ibsen, Strindberg, Hamsun, Jacobsen, and Brandes; while, at the turn of the twentieth century, this role was taken by Viennese Modernism (Thomsen 2008: 34–39).

In their verbal commitment to the symbolic elimination of global literary inequality, the approaches I have listed so far remind of Freudian denial (*Verleugnung*). Multicultural

humanism, textualism, and liberal cosmopolitanism adopt the deceptive view that texts move freely, and that they can be attributed global importance irrespective of their origin, the pressures of the economic and political system, and the mechanisms of the international publishing industry. As a system that has evolved from the end of the eighteenth century until the present day, world literature is a pertinent analytical category. In my opinion, it should be accepted, as it helps us to understand the very economic, political and linguistic-cultural overdetermination of global interliterary exchange. The asymmetries of the global literary circuit are structurally (but not geographically) analogous to the economic division of the central, semi-peripheral, and peripheral countries of world capitalism. The role of an intermediary between the global economic and literary systems goes to the international book market and the world system of translation, which are overdetermined by the geopolitical status and historic prestige of world languages. The relationship between center and periphery is both reversible and transitive: every center was once a periphery, a periphery constitutes a center as much as the opposite is true, a center can change to a periphery and vice versa, a periphery may become a (sub)center.

In his seminal paper “Do ‘Minor Literatures’ Still Exist,” Galin Tihanov gives more historical precision to the center/periphery opposition that Moretti and Casanova themselves already treat historically – that is, as pertaining to the modern world literary system or space that began to evolve in the eighteenth century together with the international book market. Moretti:

The term ‘world literature’ has been around for almost two centuries, but we still do not know what world literature is ... Perhaps, because we keep collapsing under a single term *two distinct world literatures*: one that precedes the eighteenth century – and one that follows it. The ‘first’ *Weltliteratur* is a mosaic of separate, ‘local’ cultures [...]. The ‘second’ *Weltliteratur* (which I would prefer to call world literary system) is unified by the international literary market. (Moretti 2006: 120)

Although Moretti underestimates regional coherence of literary circulation in pre-modern and early modern world systems, his distinction between two historical types of world literature is pertinent. What Tihanov adds to the notion of peripheral or minor literatures within the modern world literary system (whose infrastructure is an international literary market), is his observation that peripherality comes into existence (in Europe) only as a byproduct of Western modernity:

The true history of ‘minor literatures’, in the sense of small and poor relatives of the mainstream European literatures commences only with the end of the ‘exotic phase’ and the arrival of the more or less synchronized literary movements of the fin-de-siècle and later the avant-garde, the many isms

(Symbolism being one of the most recognizable such phenomena) which begin to coordinate the map of literary Europe and entangle the smaller literatures of the Balkans and of East-Central Europe) into a larger landscape of shared conventions and styles. (Tihanov 2014: 173–174)

Let me conclude with a brief case study on an innovative author from the periphery and his difficult and lingering posthumous way toward consecrating centers of world literature. The author under consideration perfectly fits the pattern Tihanov describes as pertaining to the period in which minor literatures of the East-Central Europe synchronized with Western modernist isms. In his short life, the Slovenian modernist poet Srečko Kosovel (1904–26) did not witness any published collection of his poems, while his landmark poetic “constructions” of the 1920s remained largely unknown until 1967 when their publication astonished Slovenian neo-avant-garde circles. Since Kosovel did not succeed to segment his abundant, imbalanced, and heterogeneous oeuvre by organizing it in a succession of collections, literary history – dazzled by the variety of his styles and forms – ended up in an aporia regarding its periodization. Kosovel almost synchronically wrote in the styles of lyrical impressionism and symbolism, expressionist catastrophism, and revolutionary constructivism. Whereas his poetic works that followed traditional conventions of the lyrical discourse gained wide recognition after Kosovel’s death, his avant-garde constructions published in 1967 were a discovery that shook the image of Kosovel as a subtle lyrical poet of the Karst region and an ethically committed expressionist seer of the downfall of the West.

Although being a young and unrecognized poet writing in a minor language of a minor literature, Kosovel was keen to address global literary-artistic and political conflicts, attempting to bring into line his essayistic and poetic work with transnational modernist currents. He did not only respond to the troubled condition of Slovenian literature, whose mainstream was languid in its provincial bourgeois complacency, while the nation, divided between the four states (Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia), found itself exposed to the pressures of Italian fascism in the Littoral region and an increasingly authoritarian rule within the boundaries of the Yugoslav Kingdom. Moreover, Kosovel’s poetry interiorized transnational chronotopes of the emerging crisis of global capitalism spanning India, Russia, the Balkans, and America. In 1924, he thus daringly proclaimed his creative work to be “mine, Slovenian, modern, European and everlasting” (Kosovel 1977: 320). Kosovel and his circle frequented public and university libraries where they closely studied the available coverage of European avant-garde, particularly Balkan Zenithism, Italian futurism, Russian constructivism, German expressionism, and transnational Dadaism. With their holdings stemming partly from what Venkat Mani calls “bibliomigrancy” (Mani 2012), local libraries

functioned as the hubs of world literature and heterotopias through which a marginal from a minor literature was able to get access to the network of the world's cultural spaces and actors (cf. Nethersole 2012). As a modernist cosmopolitan from the Central European "in-between peripherality" (Tötösy de Zepetnek 1999), Kosovel crossbred avant-garde styles he learned through his reading and refurbished them in his singular texts. Using the citation fragments of contemporary politics, science, art, and economics, Kosovel's poetic texts mingle the local sense of place with global scenes marked by the proximity of the October revolution, the ascendance of totalitarianism, and the crisis of the capitalist democratic order.

To take an example, in his poetic construction "Ljubljana is sleeping," Kosovel juxtaposes the local and the global, the nationally particular (represented, symptomatically, by the newspaper title) and the universally world-historical, the private and the public, the poet's love discourse and political visions, artistic reminiscence and the Biblical imaginary of deluge, close-ups of parochial urban life in Ljubljana and panoramas of the *Untergang* of Western civilization, petty-bourgeois inertia and the advent of "new humanity" radiating revolutionary energy:

In the red chaos
the new humanity is coming! Ljubljana is sleeping.
Europe is dying in a red light.
All telephones have been cut.
O, but there's the cordless one!
A blind horse.
[Your eyes are like those
in Italian paintings.]
White towers are rising from brown walls.
A deluge.
Europe is stepping into a tomb.
We are coming with the hurricane.
With poisonous gases.
[Your lips are like strawberries.]
Ljubljana is sleeping.
The tram conductor is sleeping.
In the Europa Cafe they are reading
the *Slovenian Nation*.
A rattle of billiard balls. (Kosovel 2008: 101; transl. by Bert Pribac & David Brooks)

The very space of Kosovel's text sublates the world-systemic opposition center vs. periphery in which the poet as an actor in Slovenian literary field was unavoidably caught. Being aware of the center/periphery divide, Kosovel's text transcends it by dramatizing the contrasts this opposition produces in his environment, what he does from a poetic metaposition able to intellectually grasp the global from the emotional perspective of a peripheral locality.

As an alternative to the bourgeois metropolises and the literary mainstream, European avant-gardists generally created their own transnational networks and promoted their own centers, such as Zurich, Berlin, Petersburg, Prague, Milan, Trieste, Belgrade, and Zagreb (cf. Dović 2012). In the constellation of the European avant-gardes, the Slovenian cultural space in the time of Kosovel had not yet boasted a center from which Kosovel, with his original contributions, could actively address at least the Central European or Balkan regions. Unlike Ljubomir Micić (1895–1971), a Yugoslav Zenithist, Kosovel failed to join any transnational avant-garde network (cf. Dović 2011; 2012: 306–307, 315–317). He communicated with the global modernist initiatives solely in the privacy of his minority language, in his unpublished manuscripts.

Kosovel's poetic singularity arose in the copresence of heterogeneous poetics. Such irregularity is impossible to affix firmly in the scheme of a belated following of the regular development driven by central literatures exclusively. The discourse of modernism and the avant-gardes was polycentric and globally paratactic, with manifold directions simultaneously intertwining and mutually permeating at an accelerated pace (cf. Eysteinson & Liska 2007: 1–3; Friedman 2007, 2015). I agree with Fredric Jameson's critique of the assumption that there exists "a norm for the development of modernism and its aesthetics" or "some master evolutionary line from which each of these national developments can be grasped as a kind of deviation" (Jameson 2002: 182). He recalls Marx's description of capitalism according to which "there is no 'basic' historical paradigm, all the paths of capitalist development are unique and unrepeatable. From the perspective of Marxian dialectics, the very universality of modernism, too, is enacted only through its particulars, all of them "specific and historically unique" (Jameson 2002: 183). The coexistence and interlocking of a number of stylistic directions can, therefore, be seen not only as Kosovel's youthful quest for a personal expression but also as a symptom of global modernism: its hybridity.

Kosovel's acceptance to the hyper-canon of world literature is difficult to imagine due to Slovenia's poor participation in the global distribution of cultural capital, its economic

semiperipherality, and meager influence in the international politics. If these factors were stronger, Slovenian writers would stand a better chance of being catapulted into the world. Otherwise, writers from minor literatures may win international recognition due to contingent circumstances and temporary niches on the book market, such as the need for an authentic experience or testimony of the critical events that occupy global media (e.g., the collapse of socialism, the wars in the Balkans, refugee crisis, etc.). The first obstacle to Kosovel's active presence abroad is, of course, his native language. Spoken by roughly 2.5 million people worldwide, the Slovenian language allows for a very limited audience, especially if we take into account Sarah Brouillette's remark that engaging in writing, circulating, and reading literature on the national or global scale is an elitist activity (Brouillette 2016). The problem is that language is central to poetry and, compared to prose fiction and drama, renders its translatability difficult or even impossible. Untranslatability Emily Apter (2013) uses as an argument against world literature applies *sensu stricto* only to the symbolic position of the translated authors and the connotations their texts trigger in the audience thanks to their embeddedness in a particular semiosphere (culture). No translation can reproduce a semiosis equivalent to that of the original text in his home tradition and social context. In the same vein, Kosovel, who, from the inner perspective of the Slovenian literary field, represents today the pinnacle of modern poetry, is unlikely to evoke equivalent associations in any translation or foreign literary system.

The first French translation of Kosovel belongs to the poet Marc Alyn and was printed in 1965 in the prestigious collection *Poètes d'aujourd'hui* (Kosovel 1965). It was in Alyn's translation (and not in the original) that Kosovel's most radical poetic constructions appeared in public for the first time. A series of German translations of the selections of Kosovel's poetry by minor publishers follows from the Munich edition of his avant-garde *Integrals* (Kosovel 1976), whereas English book publications in the US and the UK start only with Wilhelm Heiliger's translation of 1989 (Kosovel 1989). However, among Kosovel's existing book translations into major languages (eight in English, one in French, three in Spanish, 13 in German, 27 in Italian), no major international publisher has included Kosovel in its program so far. On the other hand, Slovenian translators, editors, promoters, and publishers have played an important role in persistent attempts to make Kosovel known internationally. Moreover, symptomatic of the functioning of the global literary system is the marketing strategy one can recognize on the cover of Kosovel's selection *The Golden Boat* (Kosovel 2008), translated by Bert Pribac and David Brooks. Here, Kosovel features as the "Slovenian

Rimbaud.” The international promotion of a peripheral poet relies on the consecrating power of a renowned name from the canonical constellation and on suggesting parallels with the opus of an author from the center whose importance is deemed epochal (cf. Thomsen 2008: 139). To conclude, Kosovel’s case confirms my observation that the asymmetric structure of the modern world literary system reflects the economic, political, and linguistic-cultural overdetermination of the global interliterary exchange.

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