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Afterword

World literature in the making

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The making of the world. If we dwell for a moment on this phrase, two things become apparent. There is a point, first of all, where the world is *not yet* made, where it is unfinished, or rather *in the making*, as the felicitous English idiom has it. Secondly, the making can fail or terminate. Beginnings, endings, emergences, failures: these are temporal phenomena, in keeping with a world-conception that emphasizes time as much as space as its defining category. Pheng Cheah's (2017: 87) claim that 'the world is not in the original instance a spatial container but the *process* of worlding' (emphasis in original) is relevant to such an understanding, in which, inevitably, 'making' and 'unmaking' suggest notional directionalities rather than empirical finalities. The world, one could say, is never quite *in place*, nor can it be.

The chapters in this book, while moving across a diverse range of geographical locations and moments in time, have all in different ways engaged with the transitory nature of literary world-making, and hence with moments of emergence or loss – or both. They thereby illustrate empirically that emergence and loss are not successive phases in a one-directional process of expansion or progress, but that these directionalities appear, disappear and reappear over time. More specifically, each chapter adds to the general topic of this book by exploring in detail how cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamics have been at stake at different moments within the conceptual spaces of literary world-making. The multilingual inscription of turn-of-the-century Constantinople in Helena Bodin's chapter, for example, commemorates a lost world of emergence in incipient vernacular literatures. Lu Xun's search, in Lena Rydholm's chapter, for a vernacular literary language that is adequate to the need for a changed

society in early twentieth-century China draws on a range of cosmopolitan resources. Per Ståhlberg's discussion of the career of the South Indian novel *Ghachar Ghochar* contends with the present – but by no means definitive – conjuncture of market forces, institutions and cultural trends. The nineteenth-century Siberian narratives in Mattias Viktorin's chapter are involved in the textual construction of a world hitherto absent from both literary and scientific discourse. Anette Nyqvist, by contrast, demonstrates how the semiotic saturation of our contemporary digitized world, in which nothing *appears* to be distant or unknowable, causes a crisis for a Western genre of travel writing and hence a certain 'end' of the world – or an end, rather, to a particular way in which the world has been made conceivable and consumable for readers. Focused more on materiality, both Irina Rasmussen's and Stefan Helgesson's chapters engage with ephemeral and even obscure forms – the scrapbook, little magazines – that offer a glimpse into the activities and practices that *precede* the consolidation of particular literary worlds. And so on.

What do these investigations have to offer the current field of world literature studies? Firstly, we must reiterate that this book contributes to what the introduction identified as the 'world'-turn in the field – that is, the clear tendency in recent years to theorize the world-concept, rather than assume the world as just a spatial backdrop for the circulation of literature. The 'world' in our chapters is never a generalized given, but rather a specific and dynamic construct. Even the supposedly normative centre of nineteenth-century Paris is revealed in Annika Mörte Alling's readings to be in flux, subject to the social mobility and changeable desires of the characters. When examined closely, the novels of Balzac and Flaubert fail to confirm Parisian centrality but expose rather the illusory nature of wholeness, totality and overview.

Secondly, and this follows from the first point, by looking at emergence, experimentation, accumulation and failures of representation, these studies de-emphasize the centrality of circulation and mobility in world literature. Circulation and mobility are, one might say, necessary but not sufficient criteria to conceive of the modes of world-making we find in our separate cases. Without the circulation of texts, Alexander Gumbly would have had nothing to put into his scrapbook, nor would Per Ståhlberg have had a story to tell about *Ghachar Ghochar* without a transnationally connected publishing industry. Similarly, Joseph Brodsky's personal mobility, marked by the particular pathos of the Soviet-era dissident, was a precondition for his autobiographical account of Venice, as can be seen in Anna Ljunggren's

chapter. Lu Xun's literary revolution was similarly premised on his own mobility. Yet, these are precisely *preconditions* that need to be accounted for in relation to other situated factors, such as the valencies of distinct languages, the sedimentation of tradition and the pressures of local social worlds and political conjunctures.

Thirdly, as should be clear by now, this book makes a strong plea for looking at the full range of textual genres and text types within the context of world literature studies. The novel, partly because it is a genre that can accommodate other genres, remains the exemplary focus of world literature, and its continued relevance is confirmed in Alling's and Ståhlberg's studies. The potential, however, for generating significantly new world literary knowledge by broadening the methodological scope to include text types such as journals or scrapbooks is enormous. This is not a wholly original point – there is much current work in the field being done, for example, on periodicals – but it remains to be fully integrated in revised conceptions of world literature.

Fourthly, this book manifests the crucial importance of considering world literature from a multilingual and translingual angle, challenging thereby not just the anglophone bias in the field but, more importantly, the habit of treating language as a general and transparent phenomenon. Language has an irreducible significance in world-making, and different languages will make the world differently – not because of some metaphysical essence, but because of the historicity of languages and their endlessly diversified capacity to constitute publics, in Warner's (2002) sense. One methodological possibility emerging from our chapters is to approach literary texts as 'translingual events' (Helgesson and Kullberg 2018), and hence as specific outcomes of linguistic hierarchies as well as centrifugal and centripetal tendencies in language contact. Such an optic may range quite freely across historical determinations such as empire, nation, the world republic of letters and ethnically defined communities.

The points listed paint a broad canvas, and so as not to present our contribution mistakenly as simply a congeries of diverse studies, it is equally important to reflect on the book's two-part structure – 'worlds in texts' and 'texts in worlds'. While Bourdieu's (1993) field concept remains productive and operative in some of our analyses, our choice of the word 'world' provides a slant on the literary that is not exclusively explicable in terms of dispositions and position-takings, but points rather towards a dynamic of the life-world positioned in relation to the 'global world' as a historical construct. Put differently, our premise is that there exists a world outside the text and the literary field, but that textuality can both

offer conditional access to such a world and impact on some of its substantive qualities.

The two-part structure makes, then, a common-sense distinction between the worlds of texts constructed by authors and recognized by readers, and worlds of all scales in which these texts are produced, distributed and consumed. This points towards the split in much world literary scholarship between the two poles – between the circulatory bias of Damrosch's (2003) earlier formulations, say, and Cheah's (2017) Heideggerian emphasis on worlding as a text-immanent capacity. This, ultimately, is what motivates our liberal use of the world concept: it becomes a means to emphasize the inevitable entanglement of – but not the equation between – the two, of textuality and worldliness. This intricacy needs, however, to be demonstrated empirically. Thus the two-part structure of the book is rather a matter of engaging contrasting methodological starting points and preferences (in literary texts or social contexts) than a division of perspectives. All chapters oscillate, in fact, between worlds in texts and texts in worlds, though with varying amplitudes and distinct points of departure.

If, then, worlds and texts relate to each other in our studies as the two sides of a Möbius strip, this is also where we locate our volume's specific contribution to the overarching methodological lens of the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic. In the Constantinople narratives, as well as Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary', we see how the cosmopolitan is vernacularized, whereas the Siberian exile narratives and the Kannada novel *Ghachar Ghochar* present instances of the cosmopolitanization of the vernacular. Gumbrecht's scrapbooks, by contrast, tend to be both trans-vernacular and trans-cosmopolitan in their idiosyncratic constellation of distant and local materials. Ultimately, what the terms 'cosmopolitan' and 'vernacular' alert us to are the shifting and combined modes of relationality that go into the constitution of publics, whose worlds will never settle but attempt to achieve a measure of duration in the precarious flux of historical change.

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