

Allocentrism and Alterities. Ultra-Short World History of the Genre of the Travelogue

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Travel reports

Travelogues can be defined as a type of text that occurs in a wide variety of forms in all cultures – mostly, of course, as oral performance, but in a surprising number of cases also in written form. When a traveller returns home, when they return after a longer absence, when they return from a journey or a stay in a foreign country, then they may not only, but often have to report about their absence, stay, and experiences in the foreign country, about their journey. In anthropological terminology, the travel report can be described as the ritual by which the returnee reintegrates into the community to which they have temporarily not belonged and from which they have temporarily been separated. The travelogue allows the traveller to belong to the community again. Or more precisely in Victor Turner's words: one can describe the liminal phase in which the traveller is still absent, but at the same time is already back home, as a travelogue. In other words, the travelogue is the transition from the state of absence and non-belonging to the state of regained belonging and presence.

We owe the realisation that the travelogue, as a ritual, follows a certain textual course at all times in all cultures and societies to the Russian linguist and literary scholar Nikolai Troubetzkoy, who in his analysis of the Old Russian travelogue of Afanasy Nikitin, published in 1926, was the first to distinguish between the dynamic-narrative and the static-descriptive sections of the text (Troubetzkoy

1982; Harbsmeier 1982, 1997a). This makes it possible to compare the most diverse travelogues with each other. Usually, the dynamic-narrative passages accumulate at the beginning and end of the report, i.e. where the text is concerned with the outward and return journey, whereas the static-descriptive passages accumulate in the middle, where stays give rise to and provide opportunities for impressions, observations, experiences, and adventures that are reflected in the static-descriptive text sections. Accordingly, the dynamic-narrative itinerary is interrupted by a series of static-descriptive accounts and renderings which, on a general anthropological level, can perhaps best be characterised as experiences of alterity.

Although Troubetzkoy himself probably did not have such far-reaching comparative intentions, the concept of experiences of otherness or states of otherness subsumes everything that the travelogue, so to speak, brings home from the journey: the strange customs and traditions of the savages and barbarians visited, for example, or the ecstasy in which the pilgrim felt transported in the face of the holy places, or just the sight of the rivers, mountains, ravines or landscapes the traveller saw himself facing, or even the buildings, bridges, tools, vehicles, and equipment, with whose strangeness and superiority the traveller amazes his readers or listeners through his report, or the more or less exotic goods and products which they have acquired on commercial journeys and taken home: all of this can take the place of the

static-descriptive highlights of the report, framed by the dynamic-narrative course of the journey in the form of description and narration.

Thus defined, the experiences of alterity in the travelogue correspond very precisely to the objects and items that Bruno Latour defined as ›immutable mobiles‹: the preparations and mementoes, the souvenirs and curiosities, the pictures and photographs, and also the natural-historical and ethnographic objects that make travel appear as a form of science: all this can be understood as the material equivalent of the static-descriptive passages of the travelogue.

By no means always, but very often, the traveller brings home more than just the report of his or her experiences of alterity. Be they spoils of war or just a keepsake, be they a precious work of art or just a souvenir, be they a photograph for the family evening or a splendid piece for the museum, be they large or small, cheap or expensive: the sheer range of objects brought home gives an idea of how varied and diverse the experiences of otherness contained in the travel report, which will be the subject of the following, can be.

Alterities

While the commonalities of the afterlife journeys of a shaman and the holiday travels of a tourist may be of general anthropological interest, those travelogues are of particular historical interest which bear witness to experiences of alterity in and with other, foreign, unfamiliar, and unknown ways of life, cultures, societies, traditions or civilisations. The earliest and clearest examples of such written documentation of experiences of otherness come from the encounters of sedentary travel reporters with nomadic tribes, as recently described by Siep Stuurman in his large-scale study *The Invention of Humanity. Equality and Cultural Difference in World History* based on the ›travelogues‹ of Herodotus, Sima Quian and elsewhere also based on Tacitus as an ›anthropological‹ or rather, perhaps,

an ethnographic turn (Stuurman 2017). While experiences of alterity may in anthropological generality be described as universal, the travelogues that may be defined as ›ethnographic‹ can only come about when the traveller has been exposed to a social and cultural reality, a different world, experienced as ›foreign‹ and ›different‹.

From a conceptual-historical perspective, the travelogues that are ethnographic in this general sense can be recognized by the use of asymmetrical counter-concepts, such as when Herodotus, Sima Quian or Tacitus speak of ›barbarians‹ and barbarian tribes and peoples, or when later travellers report of ›pagans‹ and ›savages‹, ›superstitious‹ people or even ›brutes‹. In all these cases, they do indeed distance themselves from the respective ›others‹, but at the same time the very minimum of empathy is presupposed which makes this distancing possible in the first place and then demands it. Thus, they could potentially put themselves in the position of the respective ›others‹ and, at the moment of the experience of alterity, the traveller is actually identifying themselves (or, respectively, the traveller is forced to identify themselves) with the other. For this reason, the necessity arises in the static-descriptive text passages to seek proximity in order to distance oneself or, conversely, to distance oneself in order to be able to get close. And it is precisely this contradiction that ultimately explains the performativity of the travelogue as a ritual.

Impressive examples of the dramatic character of this contradictoriness, which is otherwise found in milder forms in most travelogues, can also be found among the travelogues from the early modern era of Europe and the so-called Age of Discovery. Only a few of these are mentioned here, mainly because they illustrate the role of travelogues as rituals of returning home in a particularly vivid way.

Originally, the descriptions of the journeys of the Greenlandic *angakkuq* to the devil's grandmother in the depths of the sea gave me the idea to consider all

travelogues in equal terms. I realized that not only the trance journey of the shaman, who, accompanied by singing and drum rolls, reports not after but during his journey, how he brings the mistress of the sea animals to release them again, only to return from the depths with a tremendous blow and groan afterwards. In the same way, the description by the Danish missionary Hans Egede of this very ritual can be understood as a ritual act as well. Like later eye-witnesses of the shaman's journey, Egede attempted in his 1742 German edition of *Des alten Grönlandes neue Perlustration oder Naturell-Historie* (The Old Greenland's New Perlustration or Natural History) to put himself in the shoes of the *angakkuq* and his audience, while at the same time distancing himself from them in the most definite way. Just as the *angakkuq*, according to Egede, almost loses his mind in the face of the devil-mother, Egede himself portrays the shaman's journey as a journey which he claims to have observed, but which in reality could not have taken place at all because the shaman does not report on his journey when he returns home, but while it is in progress (Harbsmeier 1992).

Our next example, Hans Staden's *Wahrhaftig Historia und beschreibung eyner Landtschafft der Wilden / Nacketen / Grimigen Menschfresser Leuthen in der Newenwelt America gelegen* of 1557, can already be recognized by the title as static-descriptive, but owes its fame and spectacular success to the dramatic, dynamic-narrative story of hostage-taking, nine-month imprisonment and finally salvation from the violence of the cannibals and return home. Overwhelmed and traumatised by his experiences, Staden first reported his adventures orally. His reintegration into the society of his homeland was only possible because Johannes Dryander, Professor of Cosmography and Medicine at the University of Marburg, took on his role as editor and helped him to write and then print his travel report, which was thus emphatically divided into a first dynamic-narrative and a second, smaller,

but all the more systematic static-descriptive section (Harbsmeier 1994, 2008).

Many other German travellers of the early modern era were also helped by editors and other authorities to reintegrate themselves into society in such a way that they have been recognized as authors of travelogues neatly divided into static-descriptive and dynamic-narrative sections. In this way, more or less dramatic and traumatising experiences of alterity could be domesticated and transformed into a kind of cultural reintegration capital. Thus, around the middle of the 17th century, the scholar Adam Olearius succeeded in a masterly manner, as accoucheur and editor of a whole series of travelogues, in helping the returnees to achieve social recognition and reintegration. Jürgen Andersen, for example, had to undergo several oral interrogations before Olearius, on the basis of a comparison of the oral version of the travel report, which he had secretly recorded, with the written version of the report, which Andersen himself had written, came to the conclusion that the report should be printed (Harbsmeier 1994).

A myriad of additional, though perhaps less vivid, examples of the travel report as a more or less successful reintegration ritual could easily be identified, not only in German but also in most other European languages, especially in the early modern period, the golden age of printed travel reports. Elsewhere and at other times, it was less often possible to link static-descriptive passages so closely with dynamic-narrative ones and to keep them in a kind of dialectical balance. From a world-historical point of view, the normal case is just the other way round, when there is not much else left of the, perhaps originally oral, travel report in the text and in the travel description than the static-descriptive passages robbed of their dynamic-narrative integration, i.e. for example descriptions of the 'immutable mobiles' brought home by the traveller: the tribute gifts that the Chinese envoy, returning from his mission to the barbarians,

presents to his ruler over the Middle Kingdom, the list of temples and sanctuaries in India from which the Buddhist pilgrim brings home holy scriptures, dead or living spoils brought home from the campaign, conquered or captured while on campaign, the news of foreign parts of the world collected and compiled by geographers or cosmographers, the *ethnographica* brought home by missionaries, or souvenirs brought by tourists. All of these can be contained in travel reports, in travel descriptions and countless other genres or, for example, in curiosity cabinets and museums, but they can also lead an independent existence.

Only in exceptional cases, therefore, do travel reports in the narrower sense represent a majority among travelogues in the broader sense, which have existed and exist in the most diverse forms in apparently all traditions, cultures or civilisations based on writing. The question therefore arises as to why it was precisely in the so-called Age of Discoveries and Voyages of Discovery that there was such a flowering, especially in Europe. It would distract us from the topic at hand to treat this question in sufficient detail, so it must suffice here to point out the extent and nature of the experiences of alterity to which European travellers in particular have been exposed and were thought to have been exposed since the late Middle Ages.

Allocentrism

In a comparative global history of travelogues as a genre, the late medieval pilgrimages to Jerusalem in the Holy Land are of particular importance, if only because here for the first time we are talking about a whole series of written reports that are very similar to and imitate each other, but which were nevertheless put down on paper by the respective travellers themselves. This is not because these travellers were following an official order or even a command, but on the contrary, they were trying to bear witness to their experiences on their own initiative. In this way one could and had to report on one's own visit to the

biblically attested holy places under the foreign rule of the unbelievers (Sommerfeld 1924; Huschenbett 1985; Hippler 1987).

The reports of the Jerusalem pilgrims of the 14th and 15th century not only represent the earliest series of travel reports recognizable as homecoming rituals in their combination of static-descriptive with dynamically narrative passages, but are above all characterised by allocentrism, which brings to bear and repeatedly allows a centre located in the distance and under foreign rule to be seen as a travel destination and a space of travel and alterity. Other pilgrimage destinations in Europe, China, India, Japan or the Islamic world were also far away, however mostly not beyond but within the boundaries of the language area, sphere of power and influence, and territory to which pilgrims also belong and feel affiliated. And it is precisely this allocentrism that may explain why so many of the late medieval pilgrims to Jerusalem became travel reporters. This still applies even if the reports were written before or without any intention of returning. It is not only the shaman who reports on his journey while still travelling, but also many other travellers have, so to speak, anticipated their return home through the letters they were able to send to those remaining in their homeland. And, for example, many Jewish travellers of the Middle Ages told their fellow believers who had remained in the diaspora about the distant destination of their journeys to the Holy Land or to the tribes of Israel, which they thought had been lost, but which they had now rediscovered, in order to persuade them to continue their journey.

Allocentrism, then, also characterises the countless European travelogues of the first centuries that followed, which are almost exclusively about journeys to new or also to long-known worlds, which lie beyond the political, linguistic, cultural, religious, and denominational borders of the travellers' own worlds. And in this allocentrism, the European travel

descriptions of the early modern era differ very clearly from the traditions of travel descriptions in China, Japan, the Indo-Persian or Arab world, which also flourished in those very centuries (Strassberg 1994; Eggert 2004; Nenzi 2008; Alam/Subrmanyam 2007; Elger 2011). Usually, these travel descriptions are not so much about journeys outside a world of their own, but rather about journeys within a different and foreign world (Harbsmeier 1985).

On the one hand, to summarise our previous observations, travelogues can be seen as discursive elements that are possible and permissible everywhere and at all times, as anthropological constants. On the other hand, however, it has been shown that, at least in written form, they can and have become a serially reproduced literary genre only under very specific, greenhouse-like conditions, under the pressure of multiple and mass experiences of alterity in the narrower, ethnographic sense. Historically speaking, the genre of travel reporting began with the late medieval pilgrims to Jerusalem, only to develop in the following century, especially in Europe, as an almost universally spread ritual of homecoming. Specifically, in a Europe fragmented and divided by rival powers and denominations, and in a Europe that is at the same time allocentrically fixed on the rest of the world, travelogues and travel descriptions experienced a golden age.

From this historical perspective, the genre of the travelogue may appear to be an almost exclusively European achievement and an exclusively European instrument of power. But a closer look reveals that, conversely, even if only in isolated cases, but therefore all the more interestingly for us today, it has come to pass that non-European visitors, on the occasion of their return home from Europe, in their travelogues about Europe and the Europeans held forth and wondered just as much as the Europeans did about them – ›marvelous possessions‹ existed on both sides. In Europe itself, the auto-ethnographic potential of this reversal in the genre of the *Lettres Persanes* was

then only exhausted in the course of the 18th century, without any particular attention being paid to the actually existing visitors to Europe (Weisshaupt 1979; Roscini 1992).

Temporalisations

So far, in our comparative analysis of travelogues as rituals of homecoming, we have assumed that the experiences of cultural, social, and societal alterity have primarily been understood as spatial differences and have been described, narrated, and depicted accordingly in the static-descriptive passages. However, if we now turn to the late 18th and especially to the 20th and 21st centuries, it becomes apparent in an increasing number of cases that travellers, in their descriptions, deal with states and conditions that they experience in the context of their spatial mobility, but which, conversely, they describe primarily as past or future conditions and states. The late medieval pilgrims, already, were not only concerned with their suffering and their interactions with the Ottomans, Saracens, Turks, and other local ›unbelievers‹, but especially also with the places and sites of the events of salvation of prehistoric and past times, as witnessed in the Bible.

Since the late Middle Ages, both Christian pilgrims and antiquarian humanists have followed the traces of past times and epochs and have often reported on them after their return home. But only since the Age of Enlightenment, since John Locke's ›in the beginning all the world was America‹, since the stage theories of human history, and since the transformations of the ideas of progress, development, and history into *Kollektivsingulare*, a new mode of interpretation emerged. In the context of journeys, it became possible on a broader basis to represent conditions and circumstances experienced as ›other‹ primarily as ›premature‹ or ›postmature‹, as conditions and circumstances already overcome by development at home, or as conditions and circumstances worth copying and catching up with. Since then, travelogues have not only been able

to establish and at the same time overcome spatial distances and intervals with their static-descriptive passages, but also to transform them into temporal distances and intervals, into developmental disparities and non-simultaneities (Harbsmeier 2020a).

The turning point of temporalisation, which Reinhart Koselleck and, after him, François Hartog described as the end of *historia magistra vitae* and the divergence of the space of experience and of the horizon of expectation (Hartog 2003), is reflected in the development of travelogues precisely the other way round, as an increasing coincidence of expectations of alterity in the past or future with the experiences of the traveller in a foreign country. The religious, cultural, and social conditions and circumstances that were previously strictly separated from one another and described by travellers as other can now be presented as a continuum through history, development, and progress. The neat separation of the dynamic-narrative and static-descriptive passages of the travelogue and their dialectical tensions is softened and undermined by the fact that the travelogues of the 19th and 20th centuries can only be interpreted as homecoming rituals to a limited extent.

It would be going too far to try to present in due detail the far-reaching consequences of this temporalisation that we will call the allochronism characteristic of travel reporting in the 19th and 20th centuries, which in a way replaces and continues allocentrism. Here, a reference to François Hartog's analyses of the travelogues of Volney, Chateaubriand and Tocqueville (2003) must suffice to make clear how 19th-century European travellers were able to present and understand the New World as different in the temporal sense, as non-simultaneity.

The allochronism of travel reporting in the late 18th, 19th and 20th centuries has two consequences: on the one hand, the associated loss of authority and legitimacy of the traveller, who can now not

only be accused of lying and exaggeration as has always been the case, but who is now subject to an insurmountable and restrictive sense of location in general, is compensated for by the dramatically increasing number of scientific disciplines and literary genres colonising travel reports as unreliable but still indispensable suppliers. Reworked into literature, the homecomer turns back home in novels, satire and other genres. As a supplier, the traveller provides the natural-historical and historical disciplines with data, information, objects and preparations, which the researchers in their ›centers of calculation‹ avail themselves of, expressing greater or lesser gratitude, but mostly without showing any signs of recognition. Thus, for literature and science, travel and expedition reports continue to play an indispensable role, but as rituals of returning home from happy or traumatising, enriching or death-threatening experiences of otherness, they are considered marginal and are validated only in exceptional cases in their own right.

On the other hand, and this can be noted as a success in the global history of the genre, the allocentric travelogue, under the sign of allochronism, completely loses its seemingly deep-rooted and exclusive ties to its European home, to spread most consequentially since the second half of the 19th century to literally all corners of the world: Whether from China or India, Japan or Persia, the Ottoman Empire or the Maghreb, or even from Greenland and Africa (Chen 2001; Sun 1997; Sen 2005; Burton 1998; Miyoshi 1979; Cobbing 1998; Beasley 1995; Sohrabi 2012; Agai/Conermann 2013; Agai/Pataki 2010; Saffar 1992; Harbsmeier 1995, 1997b, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2017, 2019), innumerable travellers embark to visit 19th-century Europe, and sometimes, to visit each other. They report on their travels in diaries, memoirs and travelogues, and thus provide themselves and their readers with a globalised understanding of themselves and others.

Translated from the German by Frederic Ponten.

Europe Before and After Eurocentrism. The Test Case of World Literature

Erhard Schüttpelz

The claim that European culture was not ›Eurocentric‹ in the concrete sense of the term for a very long time – roughly from the fall of the Roman Empire in the West to the global rise of modern European empires – is neither new nor uncontroversial. Unfortunately, the most passionate approach to this topic so far has been that of Rémi Brague, who essentialized the ›non-Eurocentrism‹ of Europe and quite explicitly followed a historico-theological agenda with the purpose of furthering Europe's perennial catholic mission. The point here is not that Europe was never Eurocentric at heart, nor that Christianity was and is a model of religious tolerance. In fact, it was not. We should not forget that we owe our hard-won tolerance not to Christian doctrine and piety, but to forces strong enough to weaken the authority and missionary zeal of Christian churches and missionaries in Europe. And it remains indisputable that European empires and European intellectuals became Eurocentric, often fanatically so, in the context of the modern imperial culture of the last decades of the 18th century and that we are the heirs of this culture. The point here is rather that it took a long time for Europeans to become Eurocentric and that the violence of achieving this task between 1770, when the old universal histories went into decline, and today, when new such histories are on the rise, has been continuously closely linked to the possibility of relativising and doubting the history and elements of European superiority. That is why we need an empirical approach to the rise of Eurocentrism in all relevant fields. Focusing on only one of these fields, I will consider here in this regard the modern concept of literature. Michael Harbsmeier, the pioneer scholar of global travelogues, has summarised the findings of his researches after decades

of comparative reading of travel accounts and oral narratives from all over the world. What his findings demonstrate is the particularity of European travel reports: For late medieval and early modern European travellers the centre of the world was neither in Europe nor anywhere else in the contemporary world. I will try to spell out some of the consequences of this fact, but only as far as they are relevant to the concepts and classifications of literature.

How Eurocentric was Europe before, during, and after the period of modern literature? To answer this question, we have to find a criterion for being ›-centric‹, as in Eurocentric, Sinocentric, Indocentric and so on. Chinese cosmology has certainly been sinocentric ever since the reign of the First Emperor – the very meaning of ›China‹ is ›the empire of the middle‹, that is, the middle of the world. And as Sheldon Pollock has demonstrated, Indian, or rather literary Hindu, cosmology is based on the concept of replicating an elementary mythological landscape for and in each regional or local setting, like avatars of the ever-same sacred landscape of the gods, so that one remains ›centred‹ wherever one turns or travels on the subcontinent. For Muslims, the religious centre of pilgrimage is Mecca, which is mostly regarded as a ›centre out there‹, one which is to be visited only once in one's life-time; but Mecca lies in the middle of Muslim territory, and thus, is ›centred‹. While unable to go into the details of the cosmologies of all of the many populations and we-groups of the world, we can briefly recapitulate William Graham Sumner's most important insight in this regard, namely, that most tribal names in the world simply mean ›humans‹ or ›true humans‹ thus implying the belief of all humans that ›true humanity‹ is where one already is, which

is in the centre of the world or just nearby. This, of course, is what Sumner meant by ›ethnocentrism‹. And this makes the exceptions all the more interesting.

Whereas in China, India, and the Islamic world the centre was respectively in Chinese, Indian, and Islamic territories and whereas in many tribal settings the centre can be defined by a world that was arranged for collective accommodation or arrival, European cosmology had two ›centres out there‹: one in religious and one in secular time and space. In the religious time and space, the centre of the world was Jerusalem, which was in the Orient, in the lands of the Bible. This was also where the Second Coming was expected to occur and where the world was expected to come to an end. In the secular time and space, the centre was Rome, which had been not only the empire but also the civilisation that had once ruled the world, consisting of the entire Mediterranean and its environs, but which lied, just as well, in the past. Christianity and Rome had become intertwined in Jerusalem and in Rome; but then religious authority and political authority split again and both became decentred and even prone to further schisms. Roman and Greek antiquity was the cultural yardstick; but Roman antiquity, considered in itself, was also a political yardstick, measuring both the inferiority of the present kingdoms and empires and the secular weakness of the Pope and the church, the sacred heirs of the Roman administration. European territories were ›territories of grace‹, but only as extensions of the real settings of Jewish and Christian world history, of epiphanies and revelations which had not been witnessed in Europe.

Europe itself was ›missionary territory‹ rather than the centre or origin of its own dominant religion. Even its sacred language was a missionary language, a language of translation, and the original languages of the Holy Scriptures were never really spoken or used, except by those who were not Christians and by the inheritors of Rome in Greek. Further, the antiquity

of Europe was mostly ›provincial‹ in the sense that European territories had been the provinces of the Roman Empire. Thus the contemporary post-colonial theory's imperative of ›provincialising Europe‹ implies in effect a return to the European default state of mind, which was itself post-colonial. Living in Cologne, on the graveside territory of the old Roman CCAA, I hope the reader will excuse this vital pun.

For more than a thousand years the culture of Europe was what can be called ›cosmopolitanism in reverse‹: it followed the models and fragments of a non-European religious revelation in provincial settings, a superior form of cultural sophistication established in a distant past and a superior form of ancient political power no one, at least in West and Middle Europe, could compete with in the present. Likewise, from the Eurasian perspective, Western Europe was regarded in many respects as marginal relative to the civilisations of the Near and Far East. Thus, this peculiar acknowledgment of weakness in pre-modern European cosmology can be understood as a ›sense of realism‹: after all, Europeans were not in charge of the world, and they acknowledged this fact by paying tribute to a superior cultural past, a superior religious territory outside Europe, and a monopoly on world power they no longer exercised. And we should not forget that for Christians, world history meant the history of salvation, the *Heilsgeschichte*, which belonged to the past and was expected to repeat itself in an unknown future, so that profane historical events did not count as part of what mattered in life or death, being regarded as external to the soul's sacramental relationship to the Godhead.

If we keep these preconditions of the *longue durée* of European history in mind, we see much more clearly how much of a challenge it was for Europeans, when they did conquer the world, to transform the old cosmological devices so as to become ›Eurocentric‹. For this meant making Europe or one's own territory both ›topocentric‹ and ›chronocentric‹, what neither

the territories nor its intellectuals had been before. Further we see that, quite obviously, they had three possible ways to ›centre‹ Europe or their own territory within Europe.

First, they could claim a new monopoly on world power, which meant a revival of the Roman Empire or the idea of *imperium*. This is how the Spanish and Portuguese empires justified themselves; and likewise modern imperialism arose after Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor following the decline and abolition of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, that multilayer network of shared power and privileges. Recent research on empires, for instance the work of Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, has conclusively shown that the nation state initially emerged as one of the political instruments and by-products of imperialism or the ›quest for empire‹: as a political instrument of empire building in the case of England, France and Germany and as a political instrument of separation from empires and imperialist domination (and recursively in the wake of the separation of nation-states), whose utilization started with the Americas and still prevails in the present. But nationalism as we know it today would not have been possible without the competitive European quest for empire, that is, for reviving as well as for surpassing the *imperium*. In fact, it is arguable that the first ›nationalist‹ ideologies are justifications of dynastic imperial ambitions, of a universal and imperial ›history of salvation‹, as in the case of Guillaume de Postel or Isaac La Peyrère.

Second, if Europeans wanted to legitimately rule the world, they had to make sure they inhabited a religious centre – which was of course in Rome for Catholics, but for others Rome still meant a place inferior to the Orient. But for Europe, being what it had been for a thousand years, namely, a missionary territory, the easiest way to become central was to continue to pursue the task of missionising, to become a centre of aggressive and well-founded Christian

missionary practices. Protestantism emerged precisely at the moment when all European territories were finally Christian, transforming the task of converting the pagans into the task of turning belief into practice – and in pursuit of this goal the schismogenetic force of Protestantism came to the fore. Only after a period of intense religious wars was Christian belief separated from statecraft, but this separation entailed unbridled missionary zeal aimed now at the colonized world. And the ultimate proof of Europe becoming ›central‹ through missionary zeal was regarded as one that would be attained by missionizing the pagan world, including the Orient, the Far Orient and the Near East – an enterprise which, of course, was pursued and which, in many respects, failed. But we have not yet seen the end of that history as missionary activities have been expanding ever since 1989 and are thus amongst the most prominent expressions of a globalized European heritage anchored in the *longue durée*.

Third, if Europeans wanted to prove they were culturally superior, they primarily had to prove they were equal or superior to the civilisations of antiquity. Thus, there is not only a *querelle des anciens et modernes* but also a connection between the external colonial world and European or Mediterranean antiquity, one that was expressed in the colonies and in the Mediterranean and the Orient alike. To describe their cultural superiority vis-à-vis the ancient civilisations, Europeans often used the metaphor, or allegory, of America, which signified the discovery of new territories, both spatial and cognitive. Further, the tripartite division of historical time into antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Modern Age – in German *Antike, Mittelalter, Neuzeit* – has been correlated to the discovery of the ›New World‹. This implies that at least part of what the Modern Age, the *Neuzeit*, has had to offer as proof of its superiority is ›news‹, the constant production of ›news‹ and ›discoveries‹. Yet the crucial axiom of this age, which extended well

into the Age of Print and was even enhanced in its early phase, nonetheless affirmed the superiority of ›antiquity‹, such that the ›news‹ from the New World had to fit into European conceptions of antiquity.

Antiquity was three things at once: a repertoire of models and texts, a canon (or ›yardstick‹) of technical expertise and competence and an archive. ›Antiquarianism‹ was the collection and reconstruction of the archive of antiquity, and it turned out to be the ›primeval soup‹ from which all later historical disciplines would evolve. Antiquarianism itself, as already suggested, developed from a ›cosmopolitanism in reverse‹, that is, from the process of ›provincialising Europe‹ by tracing the fragments of an aesthetically superior civilisation and empire.

Eurocentrism thus remained related both to the origination in non-Eurocentrism, as in the ›Orient‹ of ›Orientalism‹, and to the experience of different forms of expertise in power and knowledge, be it military violence, as in the case of Napoleon in Egypt, or the expertise in classifying and occupying territories pertaining to both scientific and administrative knowledge. But it took a long time to get used to the idea of European superiority. In the Age of Gunpowder Empires, non-European empires could be regarded as equal or superior in some respects, yet not in religious terms. Thus, between 1500 and 1700, it was more a religious than a political, cultural, or technical difference that accounted for the qualification of non-Europeans as ›savages‹ and ›pagans‹. And culturally, within the short biblical chronology, pagan antiquity became, through antiquarianism, a world-wide stratum of ›antiquity‹, one that underlay the conquests of and contacts with America, Africa, Asia.

The turning point between the acknowledgment of foreign power and knowledge (as in the case of Leibniz and China, or the *querelle des rites*) and the new experience and monopoly of Graeco-Roman Eurocentrism stretched out over the whole 18th century. Unfortunately, this turning point coincided

with the most crucial transformation of the concept and practices of literature in Europe. Literature and Eurocentrism changed in the same texts and the same institutions, but even more important than that was the transformation of *techné*, because this term covers both the hitherto existing continuity and the emergent discontinuity with European antiquity. European continuity with its Graeco-Roman past was thus turned into a fetish – or an ideology – at exactly the time when this continuity was broken in practice, including in everyday practices.

First of all, in the long 18th century, there was a pervasive upheaval of the educational and aesthetic institutions, or of the *institutio*, of learning and teaching. The old system of the arts had been a system of techniques that had lent themselves to reuse by anyone with the right education. Thus, production, reception, and distribution were basically part of one cycle. Or, in Jan Assmann's words: archive, canon, and repertoire were manifestations of the same resources. In the 18th century, all of that changed for good. The archive was not a canon but it had to be scientifically elaborated; the repertoire became a compromise between market forces and institutional constraints; and the canon became a matter of what Benedict Anderson has called ›imagined communities‹, that is, communities held together by imagining their commonality, by an imagination distributed through mass media. The production and reception of literature, as of any art, fell apart, only to be bridged by the figure of the third party, i.e. ›criticism‹, ›critique‹ and ›interpretation‹.

The modern system of the arts, as Paul Oskar Kristeller has called it, re-classified the arts as we still know them: as sources of aesthetic appreciation (poetry, music, fine arts), technology, and useful crafts. It is this division into arts, technology, and crafts that, more directly than any other distinction, separates the modern European arts from any non-modern and non-European technique, but also from any religious

practice of musical, linguistic, or audiovisual performances and artefacts. One reason for this separation lies in the fact that modern science and technology are essentially united, forming a kind of ›magical circuit‹: technical entities are derived from a scientific theory and scientific entities rely on technical infrastructures and their instruments of inscription. All the instruments and media that are excluded from this circular relationship lose their ontological grounding in the sciences and, eventually, even in mathematics. And there is no aesthetic art and no religious practice that has been able to reconquer this lost territory of what had formerly been united under *techné* and found its last apogee in the mechanical inventions and stagecraft of Baroque churches and the concepts of ›natural magic‹ as envisaged by Athanasius Kircher and Francis Bacon.

As already noted, the historical conundrum we face consists in the fact that the rise of Eurocentrism, the splitting up of *techné* into separate realms of experience and the emergence of an aesthetic realm have all happened simultaneously and resulted in a consecutive *Entdifferenzierung* of the non-European corpora. This simultaneity could point to the general fact that the innovations of the 18th century were mostly what Gregory Bateson called ›schismogenetic‹, that is, ›generating difference from rivalry‹ and by aiming at different kinds of superiority. The modern system of the arts divided the unity of technical production and reproduction into aesthetic reception, artistic, creativity, and art criticism, each position being unable to encompass the other two. It is important to note that at the time when modern literature was codified in a new and universal term – namely ›literature‹ – the balance of power had already shifted from the Mediterranean and Baroque world powers (Portugal and Spain) to the Atlantic-only powers of the world in north-western Europe. What these countries had in common was a stronger individualism and a rebellion against classicism.

Anti-Classicism was part of the founding moment of the modern system of the arts; it allowed for the reversal of all genre hierarchies, more ›schismogenetic‹ genre conventions and the acknowledgement of non-European arts. This brings us to the crucial question: Why is it possible to declare non-European songs, dialogues, narratives to be literature or poetry? The answer is not as straightforward as it may seem. If we look at the sources of editing, writing, and transcribing non-European literature after the Columbian exchange, we find several categories of accepting the ›literature of the other‹:

First of all, because of the missionary zeal of Europeans, grammars of foreign languages were written, from the start, with the goal of converting pagans so that they could share the Christian revelation. And because the European sacred texts were already translations, it was easy to accept the idea that any language and any human soul could be saved in its own language, and thus that revelation was possible in any kind of translation. Thus, one of the weaknesses of European non-Eurocentrism definitely turned into a source of strength and violence and enabled an easier acceptance of a ›literature written by others‹, of transcribing others, for it is very often in the grammars of missionaries that one can find ›first texts‹ about ›first things‹, which missionaries thought they could use for their catecheses, whether to modify, to abolish, or to argue about.

Second, and to cut a long story short, missionaries and administrators everywhere accepted the fact that other warriors, officials and chiefs had a ›natural eloquence‹, sometimes even elaborated as a technique (or as a magical procedure). And because rhetoric formed one part of the educational basis, and poetry, as *oratio ligata*, another, it was much easier to find the poetry in other people's utterances too. Thus, rhetoric, the meta-art of the early modern period, definitely enabled an acknowledgment of non-European literature.

Third, there were Songs (*carmina*), especially oral songs, that had been convincingly proven to be equivalent to European songs and fairy tales. Mythology, too, was recognised as part of an ›oral tradition‹, a term invented by Protestants to demolish formal arrangements made by Catholics without basis in scripture or written law. The pagan, the magical, the folkloristic (as it would be called later), and the Catholic were deeply connected, at least in Protestant eyes. Catholics, of course, had their revenge by seeing pagan elements in Protestantism. Thus, the life of savages could be seen by both sides as something akin to the other Christian belief, not with the purpose of understanding the other, but with that of marking the differences, of ›othering‹.

But fourth, ›othering‹ is only a part of the European religious heritage. Concerning the sacred or secular quality of the holy scriptures, the European religious ›schismogenesis‹ enhanced a quite peculiar development. The Qurʾan is the Word of God, as dictated in the original language to Muhammed. But the Bible is a collection of works, and it consists of two parts: the Hebrew bible and the Gospels and corollaries. European ›biblical criticism‹ opens an opportunity for debate that didn't occur in other sacred traditions. Biblical philology, in the long run, was more radical than Voltaire's famous dictum: If God didn't exist, we would have to invent Him. For European biblical criticism, from Erasmus to Bultmann, Spinoza to Richard Simon, Lowth to Wellhausen, had one simple methodical task: to understand the revelations of the Bible correctly, to which end all revelations had to be reconstructed as if they had been fabricated by humans. Thus, the European philological tradition inherited not only the devices of rhetoric and grammar and the history of antiquity, but also a secularizing device and task of Christian theologians. Religion itself could appear man-made and had to appear so in order to be treated in the sciences and humanities as part of a secular expertise, even by theologians. Theology itself,

the ›higher criticism‹ of biblical philology, was established as an institutional core for the idea of human societies and cultures inventing their own worlds and their own revelations, and in the 19th century it was here – in the midst of *Bibelkritik* – that the European Christian writings, rituals and beliefs were finally recognised as variants of older writings, rituals and beliefs, where they were finally ›provincialised‹ by people like Robertson Smith and James Frazer.

Thus, the potential for accepting non-European verbal arts and verbal behaviour as ›literature‹ was in fact quite positive and sophisticated around 1750: Native Americans were renowned for their rhetoric; oral traditions made Catholics and pagans similar in Protestant eyes; the Bible itself was rediscovered as an ›oral book‹ with songs, proverbs and versifications; all languages were supposed to be capable of biblicality and promised an anti-Babel by promoting translation; and classical mythology was akin to non-European mythologies, however crudely. And even the European religious book, the Bible, could be understood to be ›fiction‹ or treated as a ›document‹ of cultural invention or as ancient ›literature‹ and ›poetry‹ (as envisaged by Lowth and Herder). European hermeneutical culture emerged not from the margins of religious power but from its long and inherently problematic relationship to the ›centre out there‹: from wanting to know what the translation of the sacred text is a translation of, and for.

Let us assume for one moment that these were the preconditions for how literature was universalised in Europe and could refer to texts and oral performances from all over the world, that is how literature became World Literature: by universalising rhetoric, poetry, oral poetry, and oral tradition, the written and oral forms of religious revelations, mythology and their intersections. And of course also by universalising European genres, by subsuming non-European genres under the headings of poetry, drama, epos, and the longer form of narrative prose called ›the novel‹ as

well as shorter ones called (quite arbitrarily) a ›story‹, a ›fairy tale‹, a ›legend‹, a ›myth‹.

If we look at the most general categories of publications of World Literature today, we still find exactly these genres – and no others – in bookshops, but also in the anthologies of literary departments. It seems nothing has changed since the long 18th century, when the whole assemblage of ›literature‹ was universalised. The first cut was the deepest, but maybe it was also the last for a very long time. Thus, we are able to resolve the paradox of the universalisation of literature in Europe, of Eurocentrism and earlier European non-Centrism:

When rhetoric, poetry, mythology, and the genres of revelation were universalised, this certainly meant that Europeans were still not ›Eurocentric‹ enough to impose their categories onto the world – instead, they tried to acknowledge the literary and rhetorical potential of a shared antiquity of mankind wherever they went, which certainly was not what other literary cultures did when encountering foreign populations challenging their cultural superiority. But the net result of this acknowledgment is the fact that the genre categories of our book market and even of our philologies are still basically the same as when this process started, which means they are as ›Eurocentric‹ as they can get, for they refer to genres that had a *longue durée* or a long history of debate in Europe, and not necessarily elsewhere.

Thus, our main result is a new paradox. Let us call it the ›paradox of globalised European literary concepts‹: It was the early moderns who supplied the categories of World Literature as we accept it; and these categories still referred both to the ›technical‹ world of teaching and learning inherited from antiquity and to the ›human‹ reconstruction of divine revelation.

The ›modern moderns‹ did not add any literary categories of their own, but they became ›Eurocentric‹ exactly in the moment when they turned away

from the practical, i.e. educational, continuity with Graeco-Roman antiquity and older ritual forms of belief. And this break with the religious and educational past made it difficult for them to accept the contemporaneity of foreign modes of literature and religion, relegating them to a ›past‹ or a ›timeless present‹: the ›modern moderns‹ thought they had left behind, especially through science and technology.

The results of this conjunction of centring and decentering of literature between 1770 and 1830, or of World Literature, are at best ambivalent. If we conceptualize World Literature as a project of documenting, circulating, and appreciating the literary heritage of past and present linguistic communities across language barriers – a project that was clearly envisioned in the 18th century, for instance in Herder's anthology *Stimmen der Völker in ihren Liedern* – we have to acknowledge that this project was only half realized in the epoch that followed. This failure – or half-failure – has several reasons, and I can only name three of them.

First, the language barrier turned out to be insurmountable. Because the concept of literature was universalised as World Literature and because any non-European language could take a life-time to learn, it was an easy move to restrict discussions of the universal nature or universal properties of literature to European literature, which is basically what has happened in literary theories since the late 19th century. Non-European languages and their literatures were not studied by philologists, except when they became specialists in the relevant fields. The languages and the corpora which even the specialists had in common were necessarily European. This made finding a common ground even in Sanskrit literature difficult, though Sanskrit was supposed to be at the origins of modern grammar and modern historical linguistics. And if linguists and literary scholars could not even discuss Sanskrit poetics, and if Sanskrit was increasingly employed to sustain nationalist and even

racist views of language and culture, how much hope was there for non-European comparisons on the basis of other languages?

Thus, the interest of scholars of European languages and literature in a common ground of non-European literature was minimal, even amongst scholars, let alone literary authors. Music and the fine arts were different in this respect, because one could listen and imitate, sing along, draw along, paint along, sculpt along the models in reproductions or recordings. In language, this facile move of first imitation is impossible. The missionaries and some administrators were the only people who had the duty to talk and appreciate the beauty – as well as the cosmogonies, theologies, mythologies, and songs – of a different language, and to translate their concepts into their own. But of course, the missionaries, too, had a universal literary conception and if their translations went awry or even gave rise to new heretical movements, as happened to Placide Tempels with *Bantu Philosophy*, this event is still comparable to what happened with the Bible in Europe.

Second, along with the language barrier, there were an institutional barrier and a ›time barrier‹. The politics of European imperialist literary institutions – missionary schools, high schools, schools in general, committees, universities – was not conducive to upholding world-wide literary traditions. In fact, it was as detrimental as imperialism could be. The most destructive factor in administrative and political behaviour was the belief that other traditions were static, timeless or only fit for a traditional past, in Johannes Fabian's term: ›allochronic‹. Not only the Indian textile industry was destroyed by British administrative measures, but also the literary tradition of Sanskrit texts was shattered and fragmented. It took Sheldon Pollock and generations of scholars to prove that this tradition was not dead or static at the moment the British took over and made India part of their empire, that it had still been flourishing and renewing itself

before it fell apart. Textiles and texts were discontinued alike. The exportation of the European publishing system meant that it was mostly in academia that non-European literary texts could be archived and circulated, but that, in turn, usually meant, without their authorship or approval of editing decisions. Thus, the fatal combination of literary universalism and colonial rule lay not in the concepts involved in literary universalism – in fact, those were probably as open as concepts could get – but in colonial practices that made linguistic barriers into institutional barriers and allowed only samples of linguistic permeability, especially where other systems of writing and oral traditions were concerned.

When we look back at the history of literature and philosophy, anthropology, and popular theory, it is only in the age of ›High Imperialism‹, from 1870 to 1950, that the challenge of non-European ›modes of thought‹ was taken up by scientific, philosophical, and literary elites in the West. It was, and still is, a crucial moment in the entangled histories of anthropology and literature, because most of our terminological devices for primitive ›modes of thought‹ that have been resuscitated in recent debates are from this period: animism, totemism, mana, effervescence, *rites de passage*, participation, agency. Even today, our terminological innovations refer back to this lasting terminological creativity of the Victorian age: Philippe Descola refers again to ›animism‹ and ›totemism‹ long after their deconstruction by classical modernist anthropology, and Viveiros de Castro only slightly modified this controversy by calling his non-animism or animism ›perspectivism‹. It seems we are more Victorian than the Victorians themselves, as we are unable to invent new terms for the old problem of categorising foreign ›modes of thought‹.

The imperialist union of knowledge and power was bound to be exclusive: ›Only in Europe...‹, so Max Weber proudly prefaced his presentation of all kinds of innovations, only a few of which were genuinely

European. This exclusivity, though, had a drawback that was only spelled out by philosophers like Émile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in their *fin de siècle*.

The exclusivity of progress, of Western progress, excluded the excluders from the majority of mankind, of human history, and humanity itself. Thus, the scientific search for a biological and cultural origin and for a non-racist ›psychic unity‹ of mankind – for a human ›ecumene‹ – had to turn ›primitivist‹, and so did some parts at least of art, literature, philosophy, and anthropology. And as I have argued in my book *Die Moderne im Spiegel des Primitiven (Modernity in the Mirror of the Primitive*, Schüttpelz 2005), it was only in the short ›window of opportunity‹ between 1870 and 1960 that the project of World Literature was partly realized as it had been initiated in the 18th century, not so much in literature itself as in the literary infrastructure provided by scholars and amateurs: in the form of monumental corpora of ›folklore‹, as by the Boas School; in the creative interventions into the philosophical debates about primitive ›modes of thought‹, as in the Durkheim school; in the narratological or mythological desire to write the world-wide ›Story of all Stories‹ or, in Carlo Ginzburg's words: the ›matrix of all possible stories‹, versions of which can be found in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Propp's *The Historical Roots of the Magic Tale*, or Campbell's ›Monomyth‹; in the literary translations by scholars of Chinese, Indian, Arabic, and Persian poetry and mysticism, by people like Edward Conze, Arthur Waley, and Hellmuth Ritter; in the apocryphal literature of modern esotericism (for modern mystics were the only group who constantly treated non-European experts as superior or as peers); and of course in very few specimens of modern literature that defied any convention, in order to think from and for the ›ecumene‹ of mankind, notably *Masse und Macht* by Elias Canetti and, last but not least, *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce, which was and still remains the only text that is written in a non-existent world language,

designed to encompass everything a literary centring and decentring of European Literature was supposed to accomplish.

Where are we after this period, ›after the fact‹ of World Literature, so to speak? My proposal is that Europeans are about to fall back to where they started from. Our movement is elliptical. Europeans oriented themselves towards a ›centre out there‹ in space and time: a centre outside Europe and before and after profane historical time in Jerusalem and a centre originating from a bygone Empire and civilisation in Rome. They transformed these de-centralities into devices of centring their own aspirations of power and knowledge, by catapulting themselves into the centre of progress and ›allochronising‹ the non-Europeans of oriental or primitive origins. But when they encountered their ›origins‹, the very same groups became the representatives of universal origins beyond and within Europe and even within the ›self‹. When imperialism waned, the barrier of allochronism evaporated, and Europeans found themselves within a temporally receding imperialist past, and a spatially disorienting setting, partly ›allochronised‹ by others as ›Old Europe‹ or through the task of ›provincialising Europe‹. What the *imperium romanum* had been for Europeans of early modern beginnings, our own imperialist past could become for future European and non-European citizens, scholars and artists: the realm of reference for a ›cosmopolitanism in reverse‹, but in this case, not of a Mediterranean, but a world-wide ecumene. When Hegel did not accept Humboldt's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* as proof of non-European skills of original philosophical reasoning, their controversy already pointed to the possibility that Eurocentrism would be defended and attacked with the same academic weapons (and that Hegel's dogmatic objections would appear to be as silly as they did to Humboldt). The critique of Eurocentrism and even of European imperialism has a

distinctly European genealogy. After all, nearly all modern motifs and arguments of anti-Eurocentric critique were forged by Europeans in their critique of Imperialism and modern colonialism, of their very own capitalism and racist politics; and they were appropriated by Post-Colonial Theory from the self-critique of Eurocentrism.

And maybe this elliptical movement could point to the possibility that we are in the midst of a much longer historical cycle, and that the project of World Literature will be resuscitated by others, in a *ricorso* that will start where Europeans and their heirs left the project and the corpus of non-Eurocentric World Literature unfinished. Provincialising Europe, we

should not be afraid to acknowledge its ancient weakness and marginality. For before and after Eurocentrism, this is where the tasks of translation and travelling and of documenting the corpora of non-European languages and literature originated. »In the beginning is the void, in the middle is the sounddance, and thereinafter you are in the unbelieved again« (Joyce 1966: 378.29f.).¹

1 The ideas of this essay were first discussed at the conference *East-European Literature In/As World Literature* in June 2019 in Budapest; thanks to an invitation by Zoltán Kulcsar-Szabó. My regards to all participants and especially to István Fried.

Responses

Colliding Circles

Haun Saussy

»European culture was not ›Eurocentric‹ [...] for a very long time – roughly from the fall of the Roman Empire in the West to the global rise of modern European Empires«

»Rather than Eurocentric, medieval and early-modern European culture was ›allocentric‹«

The critical force of these observations can hardly be overstated: Europeans had to learn to be Eurocentric. They were not, so to speak, born that way. A tension in contemporary discourse about identity and power is thereby revealed. We easily agree that all knowledge is an affair of social construction, but go on to talk about ›situated‹ and ›located‹ subjects as if their subjecthood and its placement had not needed to be constructed, as if they were logical, topographic or natural givens. If your subject-position is European, so goes the assumption, then Eurocentrism must be your default attitude unless a long and deliberate process of education changes it. Although epistemological

narcissism is certainly widespread, and Europeans and their inheritors give daily evidence of it, there is more to a subject position than a pin dropped on a map. Were we to think of the subject as constituted by desire, in this case a geographical, temporal desire, we would not be so quick to attribute to it a delusive stability. What if Europeans were those who *wanted* to be Eurocentric?

Conceiving of the subject as constituted by lack and desire brings into play a number of passions and plots the historical development of an identity as a result of contingencies and symptomatic illusions. Under this new construction, over much of their history Europeans' relation to the rest of the world will not simply have been one of domination. The shift to Eurocentrism is the dramatic moment of transformation. Some economists have pointed out how the Europeans entered the global market: first as hitchhikers on the Asian inter-country trade,

then as gamblers operating with New World silver, eventually as armed monopolists (Frank 1998). No longer the ›self-made man‹ of history, the European is a creature of such mixed feelings as envy, resentment, competition, emulation, devaluation, and jealousy. The attitude of superiority will be seen as built on the denial of certain obtrusive realities, rather like the sudden adoption by ancient Athenians of a language of ›autochthonous‹ citizenship that erased previous narratives in which Athens was renowned for her hospitality to immigrants (Detienne 2003: 48–59). In so transparently counterfactual a subject-position we must recognize a »deep unrest« due to »basic impossibilities«, a »basic insecurity, hidden under an appearance of self-evidence, which can so easily lead to violence« (Geschiera 2011: 331, 339).

No one will deny the injustices done by Eurocentric ways of thinking. Here it is a matter of tracing differently the origins of such thinking. Integral to the Europeanisation of Europe was the acceptance of Roman law and Christianity, a process that took centuries. It located real cultural authority in the past and in remote parts. Dante combines two reputable *loci* of such authority in book II of his *De Monarchia*: »Regarding the question at issue, I say that the Roman people acquired legitimately, not by usurpation, that Monarchy over all humanity which is called ›imperium‹. This is shown by the following reasons: it is appropriate for the most noble people to take precedence over all others; the Roman people was most noble of all; therefore it should have taken precedence over all others [...]. I say moreover that if the Roman imperium was not such by right, then Christ, by being born, intended an injustice; but as the contrary of the premise is true, the consequence must be false«. (Dante 1965: 270, 289; my translation).

Dante wrote, of course, at a time when the city of Rome commanded only a few square miles of territory and Jerusalem was in the control of *infidels*. Unification

of all Europeans under one monarch was needed to reverse both conditions in his view, expressed here and frequently in his *Comedy*. A revival of Empire would put solidier political ground under »quella Roma onde Cristo è romano« (›that Rome of which Christ is a Roman«, *Purgatorio* xxxii, in Dante 1965: 612, my translation).

While such schemes awaited their realisation, other means could be found to close the gap. Travel accounts brought Jerusalem before the imagination of readers (Whalen 2011). Architectural installations restaged the holy places in the Italian, French, German, or Spanish countryside (Kühnel 2012). Cloistered nuns asked well-travelled priests to aid their visualisations with verbal accounts (Beebe 2007). One bedridden visionary visited the Holy Land without leaving her room and witnessed the crucifixion in all its horror through time-travel (Brentano 1854, 1864; Landfester 2005). She was also able to fly in thought to Ephesus and identify the house of the Virgin Mary there. These shamanic phenomena were, if I may use Harbsmeier's words, »more or less dramatic and traumatising experiences of alterity [that] could be domesticated and transformed into a kind of cultural reintegration capital« – but diversely according to their receivers. While Emmerich's visions from abroad were taken as fact by pious antiquaries who established a Marian pilgrimage-centre at the house in Ephesus that most closely corresponded to her descriptions, Brentano's reports of her revelations were not allowed to be used as evidence in her beatification process. They were considered too free and too reminiscent of other famous mystical writings. ›Reintegration‹, in other words, means different things for different communities: for believers, Emmerich's visions were a classic travel narrative (à la Harbsmeier) that deserved to be answered with return and welcome, but Brentano's transcriptions of them could only be exiled to the twilight realm of the imagination, in other words, to literature. And for literary readers, their unclear relation to fictionality leaves them as a hybrid and embarrassing part of his corpus.

This series of examples exhibits a range of devices created to fill in the gap between the distant *loci* of authority and the yearning European subject. Their dates, as the reader will have noticed, run from the 1300s to the 1860s, long enough to establish a trend. Collectively they could be called a testimony of the power of words to overcome, in imagination and momentarily, the isolation of Europe.

Granted, for a period Europeans could go anywhere and do anything they could imagine. Their ships entered every port, their armies were victorious. But even during that time a profound spiritual displacement, an allocentrism as Harbsmeier terms it, stayed on from the medieval and early-modern condition. The identity-politics of Eurocentrism's rising affirmation asked for more. Watching from afar the turbulence of the French Revolution, the young Hegel asked why the Germans had for so long adopted the foreign tradition of *Heilsgeschichte* as their own: »What is the historical knowledge of our people? A genuine national tradition is absent; their memory and imagination are full of the creation of man, the history of a foreign people, the deeds and misdeeds of their kings, that have nothing to do with us« (Hegel 1971: 1:45; my translation). National consciousness balked at such alienation, seemingly the first in a series of alienations needing to be overcome. *The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism*, a fragment written in Hegel's hand and dating from his days in the Tübingen seminary, seems to have been a joint effort of Hegel, Schelling and Hölderlin. Before breaking off, the fragment proposes »a new mythology [...] a mythology of reason« that will enable »the enlightened and unenlightened to join hands« and »eternal unity to reign amongst us« (Hegel 1971: 1:236). A home-grown contemporary mythology is here summoned up to replace the social divisions of the past rooted in allocentrism, and Beauty (*Schönheit*) is expected to reconcile the sensuous with the intellectual and the local with the universal. Is this not the program

for literature, once it has split off from the domains of rhetoric, history, and reportage? In any case, the mission awaits its fulfillment.

Yet the habit of nostalgia dies hard. In Hölderlin's poetry the gods of Greece favor Germany with flickers of their presence. Beyond Greece is Asia:

»Anfänglich aber sind
Aus Wäldern der Indus,
Starkduftenden,
Die Eltern gekommen«.

»But in the beginning the elders
From the perfumed
Forests of India
Came«.

(*Der Adler*, Hölderlin 1983: 3: 110; my translation)

And Hölderlin seems aware of the then-recent linguistic investigations linking the languages of Europe with Sanskrit and a hypothesised proto-language: witness the etymological puns and assonances in *Brot und Wein*:

»Vater Aether! So riefs und flog von Zunge zu Zunge
Tausendfach...
Vater! Heiter! und halt, so weit es gehet, das uralte
Zeichen, von Eltern geerbt, treffend und schaffend
hinab«.

»Father Aether! The call rose and flew from tongue
to tongue
Thousandfold...

Father! Brighter! The age-old sign echoes, wherever it goes,

Handed down from the elders, it strikes and sparks where it lands«.

(*Brot und Wein*, Hölderlin 1983: 1: 169; my translation)

»Vater Aether« becomes, on German soil, »Vater! Heiter!« – a call to unity under the all-encompassing

sky of Jupiter, Dyauspitar, or whatever »uralt / Zeichen, von Eltern geerbt« »hallt« (»age-old / sign inherited from the elders« »echoes«), showing it can give our language its fullest resonance. Hölderlin needed Asia to give Europe a proper dwelling-place. Comparative philology celebrates a new Pentecost.

By revisiting these strategies for overcoming allocentrism I merely mean to make recognizable the need they met. Europeans in the medieval, early modern and romantic periods knew quite well that their culture was a patchwork, that it was zigzagged with seams and *ad hoc* resolutions, and they sought to overcome its provincially by re-appropriating the ancients, by affirming extra-European origins, by calling on the heavens or the People to give new foundations. Eurocentrism had to be invented; it was anything but self-evident.

Is there a culture that is not allocentric? A properly centro-centric culture? One might look to China, *Zhongguo* 中國, the Middle Kingdom (or ›Central States‹ – for China has not always been unified). Even there, though, the repose of sitting at the centre of the earth was never total. Buddhist missionaries brought news of a cosmology for which China was just one of a number of outlying territories: educated Chinese, like educated people everywhere, learned to make room for this alternate universe. Those who paid little attention to Buddhism, too, found unrest in their conceits of centrality and canonicity. The founders of Chinese civilisation themselves had been, so said an ancient tradition, aliens: »an Eastern Yi 夷 tribesman«, a »Western Yi tribesman« (Mencius 1983: 317), living a thousand years apart. Genuine orthodoxy in rituals, music, measurement, ethics, taxation, and any number of other domains of concern had been lost and could be recovered only by strenuous study and effort. Moreover, although few liked to admit it, the debts of Chinese civilisation to its ›barbaric‹ neighbors were many – debts of a cultural or technological nature, but also debts of blood incurred in

the countless border conflicts that defined ›China‹ in relation to those neighbors.

Perhaps there are no autocentric cultures, only differently allocentric ones. But the differences among the latter must count for something. Future study and comparison will bring the shades and types of allocentric being to light. To have shown the »manque à être« (»lack or failure of being«, Lacan 1966: 623) at the centre of Eurocentrism is already quite an accomplishment.

In all branches of knowledge, a new explanation, if successful, puts previously known facts into a new context. By making Eurocentrism a recent and willful phenomenon, the historian of ideas supplants a simplistic, essentialistic *mise-en-scène*. Let us consider the difference this would make. ›Decolonial‹ historiography and pedagogy insinuates (successfully enough at least for the humanistic academy of my country) that Europeans, Westerners, Christians, or white people (terms treated as synonymous) are and have always been engaged in an unequal cowboys-and-Indians struggle with black and brown, non-Western, Third World, subaltern people. Critical scholarship is tasked with reversing this injustice by exalting the inherent virtues or the bold resistance of those so oppressed. An identitarian fable and morality tale of this kind allows one to forget that the Europeans were not always on top; that the ruses of empire were not invented by them; that the Euro-American episode in world history covers at most five hundred years, and more accurately two hundred; that every culture contains domination, injustice and conflict, though efficient killing technologies greatly magnify those flaws. The decolonial repudiation of Eurocentrism imports the distortion of history that makes Eurocentrism possible. And if we correct for that distortion, we will know Europe in a wider ensemble of languages, territories, religions, epistemologies, ontologies, and forms of life, dispensing once and for all with ›the West and the rest‹. It is good to meet fellow travellers on that road.

Comment on Harbsmeier's and Schüttpelz's Essays

Harry Liebersohn

The central argument of Michael Harbsmeier's essay seems to be that travel accounts are best understood as a ritual of departure and return: to paraphrase from his comments, the travel account permits the returning traveller to reintegrate into the community to which he temporarily did not belong and from which he was temporarily separated. A second argument follows fast upon the first (although the links between the two are not spelled out): travel accounts – in all times and places – alternate between ›dynamic-narrative‹ and ›static-descriptive‹ sections, with the static sections putting experiences of otherness on display. Third, a frequent feature of travel writings is that they work through dichotomies, using terms such as ›barbaric‹, ›pagan‹ and ›savage‹ to separate the peoples observed abroad from society at home.

Throughout all three of these assertions, Harbsmeier gives the impression that travel accounts in general operate through clear-cut dichotomies between separate worlds, the ones encountered abroad and the familiar ones at home. For an example of a traveller who completed the reintegration of return through his travel account, Harbsmeier turns to Hans Staden, a mid-16th-century traveller who wrote about his experience among the Tupinambá Amerindians of Brazil. However, in their 2012 monograph on Staden, Eve M. Duffy and Alida C. Metcalf (2012) portray a more ambiguous Staden, a ›go-between‹ who tries to fit into Tupinambá society before returning and trying to do the same in his native Hesse. An even more striking example of mediation between worlds (rather than separation of them, as in Harbsmeier's interpretation) is the travel account of his contemporary Jean de Léry, who was also captured by the Tupinambá. Although, as a Huguenot minister, Léry was appalled by some of his captives' practices and beliefs, he nonetheless admired their courage, their rhetorical powers, their

brilliant costumes, their women's modesty. Léry returned to a France of terrible cruelty, torn apart by civil war; he thought back with nostalgia to the better features of Tupinambá society. For him there was no more than an ambivalent reintegration.

Anyone who has read early modern travel accounts will recognize Harbsmeier's description of their static and dynamic components: the lists of vocabulary, flora and fauna alternating with the voyage story. But it is hard to understand why this should be viewed as universal or, as Harbsmeier suggests, the mark of a golden age of travel writing. Georg Forster's narrative of his voyage around the world on the second circumnavigation of Captain Cook (1772–1775) is arguably one of the outstanding travel accounts of the past five centuries. It captures the world of Oceania at a moment when its island societies were still intact and fresh for the European visitors, who made a shimmering tour of New Zealand, Tahiti, and Easter Island as well as Melanesian islands outside the Polynesian triangle. Forster's narrative is conceptually acute throughout its descriptions comparing the different degrees of hierarchy and equality across Oceania; he evokes friendship as well as foreignness in his nuanced portraits of islanders. I find it hard to imagine how separate lists of information would have improved this masterful travel account.

Finally, there is the matter of the polarities which structure observations of foreign places. They have indeed been a frequent and, in retrospect, disturbing feature of European travel writing. Yet such rigid oppositions have hardly been universal. On the contrary, many accounts have been characterised by a complexity and ambivalence at odds with Harbsmeier's assumption of rigid separation of the familiar and the foreign. Take the case of Baron

Lahontan (Louis-Armand de Lahontan), who went as a soldier to French Canada in 1683. Disgusted by the bureaucrats and creditors of his native France, he felt at home on hunting expeditions with his Native American friends. He not only enjoyed the hunt and the male camaraderie, but also praised his companions for their high powers of reason and ability to create a well-ordered society. Lahontan's account was important in its own right as welcome reading for the *philosophes*; it is also an example of the widespread attraction of Native American society to European – especially French – settlers.

In their different ways, the stories of Jean de Léry, Georg Forster, and Baron Lahontan are reminders of the complexities of identity in travellers' experiences and the accounts they write of them. Travellers are often not the same after their return; I am not persuaded by Harbsmeier's model of the travel account as performance of reintegration. While some may reintegrate, others remain somewhere between worlds, their writings an attempt to translate between them.

Erhard Schüttpelz offers a sweeping tour of *Europe Before and After Eurocentrism* by surveying the relationship of Europeans to the rest of the world from the early modern era to the present. He provides few dates or specific examples for his succession of theses about the de-centring of European civilisation before the 19th- and 20th-century age of imperialism. The focus of his essay is the project of world literature: it was doomed from the start, he argues, for linguistic barriers, among other differences, could not be breached (or if so, then only by specialists), even in the prominent case of Sanskrit.

In order to judge the idea of world literature, one needs to define it, and that requires going back to its historical beginnings. The phrase World Literature was given wide currency by Goethe in the years 1827–1831. Recent research by Hendrik Birus, Anne Bohnenkamp and others has emphasised that Goethe did not have in mind the creation of a static taxonomy of literary greats. Rather, world literature

referred to a dynamic process of exchange between the representatives of different literary traditions, which would take place through dialogue and translation. How did world literature as a process of communication actually look in the age of Goethe?

There is no single answer to cover an entire epoch. With regard to Sanskrit, we can point to one prominent case, the play *Sakuntalā* by the Indian playwright Kālidāsa (fourth century CE?). A work of transcendent wisdom and insight, alternating between eros and the sacred, personal feeling and social duty, the play enjoyed tremendous admiration among German readers after Georg Forster published a German translation in 1791 and Herder added a discerning review of Forster's translation the following year. Goethe was among the smitten readers and may have used its prologue as a model for the prologue of *Faust I*.

How it reached Germany is instructive for our understanding of World Literature. Sir William Jones, a British judge in late 18th-century Calcutta, arrived knowing Persian and quickly turned his attention to Sanskrit. As Michael J. Franklin observes in his 2011 biography, Jones was an agent of British rule, but was also a critical political observer with republican sympathies and a profound interest in Indian culture. Conversation with a Hindu scholar led him to *Sakuntalā*, which he translated into English in 1789. Forster discovered it two years later when he and Alexander von Humboldt visited London. Schüttpelz states that Europeans pressed foreign works into European genres, which would already be a debilitating fall from a world literature that broadens horizons. Yet one section of Herder's 1792 review takes up precisely the question of genre across cultures, noting that Kālidāsa's play does not follow Aristotle's prescriptions and rebutting objections to it on that account. Herder accords the play an aesthetic value at least equal, if not superior to, European theatre.

As Goethe's formulation and the example of *Sakuntalā* suggest, the conception of world literature

took shape in the late 18th and early 19th century with considerable self-consciousness about the difficulties of mediating between cultures. Translation took place in this era; so did reflection on structural differences between European and Indian literary forms; so too did influence on European literature. As for *Sakuntalā*, reception of the play continues to this day. Fine recent commentaries by Romila Thapar, Dorothy Figueira, and other scholars await the interested reader, as does a fresh and winning English translation by W. J. Johnson.

Travel, translation, sympathetic reception and commentary: the story of *Sakuntalā* is but one example of the broad movement toward world literature that has continued, with ebbs and flows, from Goethe's time to today. Despite Schüttpelz's scepticism, we are the inheritors of generations of worthy texts and contextualisations. The work of translation should and probably will continue. Our main challenge today, however, is a different one: how can readers be persuaded to take up and read, with the enthusiasm and open-mindedness of Europeans two centuries ago?

Other Allocentrism

Alexander Becoft

Europe came late to its own Eurocentrism, as Erhard Schüttpelz elegantly demonstrates – caught up as it was in its extra-European faith, in a Christianity derived from Judaism and therefore bound to a notion of history and salvation for which Europe was inescapably a periphery rather than the core. He goes as far as to suggest that this belated ethnocentrism (civilisation-centrism?) is a distinctively European phenomenon, perhaps even *the* distinctively European phenomenon.

Certainly, the project of historicising Eurocentrism is vitally important, and essential to the understanding of the contemporary phenomenon. But we should not rush to assume that this ›centring-elsewhere‹ is uniquely European without first examining other cases. In fact, other centrisms have their own histories, their own inconvenient and unexpected eccentricities. Perhaps the most familiar of the non-European ethnocentrism, and one especially salient in our time, is Sinocentrism. Famously, the indigenous name for China is *Zhongguo*, often translated as ›the Middle Kingdom‹. An odd translation, actually: China is not

a kingdom in our time, nor was it, strictly speaking, a kingdom at any time in the recent past, but rather an empire, whose power always covered a multiplicity of language families, of faiths, of cultures however defined. *Zhongguo* very deliberately names a space and not the people who live within it, whose name(s) have been as fraught historically as those of their land. In its origins, in fact, the *guo* of *Zhongguo* is neither kingdom nor state, nor yet empire, but sometimes ›walled city‹, sometimes ›territory of a local ruler‹. The *Zhongguo*, then, as Peter Bol and Victor Mair have reminded us, were the central states of what Mair refers to as the ›East Asian Heartland‹, that is, the valley of the Yellow River, particularly in the so-called era of the Warring States (475–221 BC). Plural rather than singular, the term identified neither an ethnicity nor a specific polity, nor even the complete set of polities linked by kinship ties among their rulers and by shared ritual practices. When imperial dynasties begin to exert power over large territories, those territories were referred to by the names of their ruling houses: the Qin, Han,

Tang, Song, Ming, and so on, with the first of these, the Qin, providing via Sanskrit the source of our European ›China‹, while the Han lent their dynastic name as one of the most common autonyms for the people we might, in European languages, refer to imprecisely as ›ethnically Chinese‹, as distinct from the minority peoples such as the Tibetans, Uighurs, Mongols and so on. Similarly, of course, one speaks before 1867 of the ›Habsburg Empire‹, rather than of Austria-Hungary, naming the territory after its most significant unifying feature, yet no one would make the mistake of imagining the Habsburgians as a people or a nation.

Lydia Liu has shown that *Zhongguo* only emerges as the name for something like a nation-state through the translanguing practices necessitated by treaties with European powers, beginning with the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1683, and that the term was embraced by nascent nationalists in the late 19th century, painfully aware that their language lacked an agreed-upon name that could withstand changes of ruler or system of rule, as ›France‹ continued to signify something recognizable after 1789, and even after 1815, 1830, 1848... ›China‹ thus only becomes *Zhongguo*, the ›Middle Kingdom‹ through a process mediated by Eurocentric and indeed European actors, and to use terms such as ›China‹ or ›*Zhongguo*‹ to refer to earlier periods is an ideological act designed to assimilate that past to the present.

This etymological excursus does not, of course, mean that there was nothing like Chinese cultural exceptionalism prior to 20th-century nationalism, even if we might better describe that exceptionalism as ›Ming-centric‹ or ›Tang-centric‹ as appropriate. But a good history of the family of Sinocentrisms, and their complex relationships to one another, remains to be written, just as the full and rich history of Eurocentrism described by Schüttpelz still eludes us. Full account would need to be taken of the complex role played by Buddhism as an allocentric faith reshaping

the geographical imaginary of the central states. As just one example of the complexities inherent to this project, Victor Mair notes that Chinese translations of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit and Pali will translate the *Madhyadesa*, the upper Gangetic Plain, with the near-exact calque of *zhongguo*. The pilgrim Faxian, to whom we will return, similarly refers to *Madhyadesa* as *Zhongguo*. We would want to think, too, about the relationship of the East Asian periphery (Japan, Korea, Vietnam, the more fleeting empires of the steppes) to the central states, whose written language they adopted and whose cultural practices they often emulated. Buddhism is again important here: Wiebke Denecke has shown, for example, that Japanese intellectuals, self-conscious of their belated acquisition of central-states culture, sometimes found in Buddhism a way of de-centring China, through recourse to the true origins of the faith, on the other side of the Himalayas. *That* land, in turn, known to Europeans by the name of the Indus river, which flows mostly through another nation (Pakistan), and indigenously as *Bharat*, a name derived from ancient myth, has of course its own subtleties of onomastics and of sacred geography, which I will leave to those with the necessary specialist knowledge.

This trans-Himalayan circuit of Buddhism provides, of course, important early examples of allocentric travel writing, as Chinese pilgrims made that perilous journey in search of the texts that they would translate on their return. Michael Harbsmeier's observations on the allocentrism of European travel writing, particularly that by pilgrims to the Holy Land, uncovers an important aspect of that travel writing, and nicely complements Schüttpelz's historicising observations on Eurocentrism in world literature. Once one begins to look for it, though, one finds allocentrism in all sorts of places, and not in Europe alone. Consider, for example, the famous account by the monk Faxian (AD 337–422) of his journey to India in search of Buddhist manuscripts to copy and ultimately to

translate. Not only does Faxian identify the Gangetic plain homelands of Buddhism as *Zhongguo*, he takes the important additional step of self-othering. Xiaofei Tian, in her *Visionary Journeys. Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China* (2012: 97–99), discusses a passage in Faxian's work in which the monk visited the Jatavana monastery, whose inhabitants marvelled that there could be monks from the borderland who had obtained holy orders and now sought Dharmic law at its source. In his own self-reflections in the same episode, Faxian similarly identifies himself as born in a borderland (*bianguo*), and feels awe that as such he has been able to visit a place where the Buddha himself lived. Faxian's companion, the monk Daozheng, goes a step further and vows never again to set foot in, or be reborn in, a borderland, opting to remain in India for the rest of his life. Tian pointedly compares Faxian's self-othering here to that of the Christian pilgrim Egeria, whose journey to the lands inhabited by Jesus likely took place about fifteen years before Faxian's own journey.

If Buddhist pilgrims at times adopted an allocentrism strikingly similar to that of Christian pilgrims, other kinds of Chinese travel writings explored even more complex forms of insideness and outsideness. Particularly interesting in this regard is the travel writing of Fan Chengda (1126–1193). Fan was a prominent official during the Southern Song dynasty, a continuation of the Northern Song, who had been expelled from their capital in Kaifeng in 1127, at the hands of the Jurchen-speaking Jin dynasty. The Jin controlled most of what we would now call northern China, including the entire territory of the *zhongguo* in the Yellow River basin, where Kaifeng itself was located, and therefore also controlled the Song dynastic family tombs, while the Southern Song were confined to the Yangtze and points south, outside the heartlands of Chinese dynastic history, with their capital at modern Hangzhou. In 1170, Fan Chengda was sent on a diplomatic mission to the Jin capital

of Zhongdu (›Central City‹), better known today as Beijing (›Northern Capital‹), both to allow the Song to regain access to their ancestral temples and to free the Song emperor from the humiliating obligation to remain standing before Jin ambassadors. Fan was unsuccessful at meeting these objectives, in a clear sign of the Southern Song's weakness. He did, however, compile two memorable works of travel writing about his journey from Hangzhou to Beijing via Kaifeng. The first, the *Lanpei Lu*, or ›Account of Holding the Reins‹, is in terse prose, and describes the journey in terms mostly suitable for official dispatches, though omitting any detailed discussion of the substance of the negotiations, and including at times melancholic reflections on the faded glories of the cities he passes through, especially Kaifeng. This work, in other words, emphasises more what Harbsmeier, citing Troubetzkoy, calls the ›dynamic-narrative‹, rather than the ›static-descriptive‹, aspects of the story. The second, a series of 72 poems, has a much more personal tone and is written with much greater emotional intensity – highly static-descriptive. In these poems, Fan reflects on the many tombs and monuments he passes by, expressing both elegiac regret at the passage of time and anger that these *lieux de mémoire* are under alien rule. Fan's poems represent this territory of the old *zhongguo* as still very much the central region, the heartland of his culture and history, but he cannot for a moment forget that that landscape is now under foreign rule, perhaps forever.

By contrast, when Fan arrives at the Jin capital, his poems ignore the monuments there, all built by the Jin themselves – prior to the Jin, the site of Beijing had been a city of regional importance only, but proximity to the roads to both Mongolia and Manchuria ensured its increasing significance in later imperial history – a re-centring, in fact, of ›Chinese‹ power that will also see the lower Yangtze and the Pearl River Delta assume ever-greater economic clout, spreading culture, politics, and wealth much more broadly over

the map of the modern nation, and marginalising the former central lands. For Fan himself, however, the landscape of Zhongdu is without meaning, capital of an alien kingdom, its temples and towers mere imitations of the monuments of the Song and its precursors, the product of cruel *corvée* labour which destroyed ancient tombs (as he describes it in his prose treatise). In the poems, his interest in Zhongdu is mostly in the illiteracy and coarseness of the Jin officials he meets, whom he mocks in hyperliterate terms. Chinese culture for Fan is very much allocentric, rooted in the same territories as ever, but now sundered from the Song.

Some Qualifications

Erhard Schüttpelz

The infrastructure of modern World Literature is a scholarly accomplishment. Both the European competition of a *translatio imperii* and that of a *translatio studii* were accompanied by an expanding philological knowledge of the world, eventually encompassing the research program of documenting and investigating all known and unknown languages and literary corpora. The infrastructure for non-Eurocentric historical scholarship was created in the age of European Imperialism, and, as most historians would say, as part and parcel of that Imperialism. How should we characterize the logic, or dialectic, behind this double expansion of power and knowledge? To answer this question, we need to conduct, on a world-wide scale, further comparative studies of literary cultures and their power relationships, to assess the interplay of ›violence and lack‹ (to paraphrase Haun Saussy's apt summary) in the European way to Eurocentrism. It seems that all those European philological obsessions and globalized aspirations originated in the desire to supplement the knowledge of antiquity and the Bible,

It's not possible, of course, to do justice to the complex history of Sinocentrism in a few words, nor am I capable of telling the whole story by myself – it would take a significant collaborative effort among many scholars to tell the whole tale. I hope, however, to have at least shown that there is a history here to be told, one as complex and as unexpected in its details as that of Eurocentrism, and that, in fact, the two might profitably be studied in close comparison. As I have long argued (2010), it is through such acts of comparison that we are able to understand at last what is most truly distinctive about the cultures we know the best.

of the Orient and the Roman provinces, the desire to add something to the material and verbal heritage of the two ›centres out there‹. It likewise seems that Europeans developed their philological curiosity based on an attitude of self-conscious epigonality, an attitude that motivated the documentation of unknown languages, the writing of meticulous travel reports, which developed into questionnaires and the art of prosaic description; or it was based on missionary zeal only to find sounds and gestures, grammars and mythologies that defied any European model.

Was there any non-European empire that entailed similar tasks and obsessions of translating, documenting, and commenting on foreign languages and their literary corpora? As Alex Beecroft points out, Chinese history, too, is characterized by profound allocentrism that gave rise to translations, editions, and pilgrimage. Thus, there are indeed parallels in other imperial cultures, and lest we forget that the European genres of literature, philology, and philosophy are not European in any simple sense but owe their genesis

to several intercontinental entanglements, especially to Hellenism and its adoption by Arabic and Persian cultures. After all, the Hebrew Bible is not a European text either, and the Christian concept of salvation was (and in certain respects remains) centred on a Jewish community of both the past and the present. Further, modern European philosophy is a consequence of the long phase in which Greek philosophy was reframed into the alien ontology of a world created by God, regarded accordingly as a handmaiden of theology, and molded by a series of Arabic and Latin controversies about what is human and divine, secular and sacred, eternal and fugitive. We may doubt that the modern pairing of ›subject and object‹ and our Romanticisms, Idealisms, Materialisms, Logicisms would exist without these theological controversies in Arabic and Latin.

So, how European are the philosophical preconditions of modern literature? Indeed, as Haun Saussy points out, fighting 2,500 years of European ›Eurocentrism‹ and ›Western metaphysics‹ is futile, especially given the ironical fact that those bogeymen were forged by people like Heidegger in their war with an imaginary ›West‹ (and an imaginary ›Semitic East‹) in order to restore a Graeco-German *axis mundi* (in correspondence to what is very probably the most Eurocentric version of philosophy that ever existed). There never was a European indigenous culture (or closure) in literature or philosophy. And during most of European history, nobody claimed there was, for this claim is distinctly modern – it seems to be raised somewhere between Francis Bacon and Heidegger. Peter Burke pointed out long ago that Europeans only started to claim ›Europe‹ as a common denominator and distinguishing feature in the context of the global imperial competition of the 17th century, that is, through their invasion of non-European territories on the one hand and their fear of Ottoman invasions on the other. Eurocentrism only evolved in that competition, by rationalising internal and external conflict.

Tracing the circum-Mediterranean *longue durée* of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim literacies and their constantly changing controversies about secular and sacred power and expertise, one may regard European literature and philosophy up to that period as re-embedded in a circum-Mediterranean ›ecumene‹, as in Karl Bertau's magisterial reading in *Schrift – Macht – Heiligkeit* (a unique book about European literature from a non-Eurocentric perspective). Bertau's book is full of surprising terminological inventions, not all of which are equally convincing. Reading the comments by my fellow travellers, I begin to understand why. Historians and anthropologists know that the task of articulating differences and similarities leads either to stereotypes or to the multiplication of qualifications. In political terms, for instance, in most empires, exotic substances, people, skills have to travel to courtly centres and to be assembled there, be it in the form of tribute, exotic expertise, or treasure. In this sense most empires are ›-centric‹ and the most important political rituals are performed in the centre – as they were in China. And in this (political) respect, former European would-be empire rulers were not able to operate from their respective centres. To be crowned as Emperors, they had to go on a pilgrimage to Rome (and thereby acknowledge a superior sovereign), and likewise the *mappa mundi* did not show Europe in the centre. In this respect, European rulers may have more closely resembled the local kings of East Asian ›galactic polities‹, where Indian Brahmins served as counsellors of kings or local usurpers and rulers sought to secure their place in the ›galactic‹ system by replicating and personifying a normative cosmic order. The European competition related to *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* may have started from similar ›galactic‹ preconditions. Of course, Stanley Tambiah coined the term ›galactic polities‹ in the South-East Asian context and with explicit reference to mandala cosmograms, but why should we not try to apply such a Eurasian socio-political concept to West Eurasia?

Which goes to show that allocentrism is a strong force, in fact, the strongest, in each culture. For all pilgrims, wherever they are, the centre of the earth is a ›centre out there‹. And pilgrimage, or *peregrinatio*, was and remains a role model before, beyond, and within Eurocentrism. Benedict Anderson even recognized it at the core of non-European nationalism and its ›imagined communities‹ under the guise of the administrator's pilgrimage from the provincial outskirts to the capital. Once the career move to the capital overseas is denied, civil servants and politicians, converts and believers, poets and intellectuals create their own territorial centre or an allocentric heavenly kingdom, thereby, in either case, denying that denial. And allocentrism is bound to the wish to start from scratch, to begin in the centre or to decentre a false order by returning to or erecting the true *axis mundi*. At the moment, we find this wish in the passionate debates about the future of anthropological museums and their colonial past: the urge and the impatience to start from scratch, to undo the injustice of modern imperialism. I do not agree with the simplifications of this movement, nor with the political illusions to which it may lead. But I have to acknowledge the iconoclastic force of this movement, and I wish we had an equally iconoclastic movement in our literary scholarship and especially in our literary ambitions: an urge to transform the archive into a repository for new genres of knowledge available to anyone who wants to know. Harry Liebersohn's question remains our caveat: ›Our main challenge today, however, is a different one: how can readers be persuaded to take up and read, with the enthusiasm and open-mindedness of Europeans two centuries ago?‹ To all faithful workers.

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Korrektur: Auf S. 220 ist es im Druck zu einem Satz-Fehler gekommen, der hier korrigiert wurde.

Correction: We have corrected a mistake in typesetting found in the print version of this issue on p. 220.