theories and methodologies

What Does the Comparative Do for Cosmopolitanism?

CÉSAR DOMÍNGUEZ

A conventional definition of cosmopolitanism stresses

> relationships to a plurality of cultures understood as distinctive entities. (And the more the better; cosmopolitans should ideally be foxes rather than hedgehogs.) But furthermore cosmopolitanism in a stricter sense includes a stance toward diversity itself, toward the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience. . . . It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences. (Hannerz 239)

In the foundation of comparative literature as a distinctive discipline, cosmopolitanism was valued for its "exoticism"—namely, the feeling of being "a citizen 'of every nation,' not to belong to one's 'native country'" (Texte 79), which in (French) literature translated as the openness toward other (northern European) literatures (xi).

Defining cosmopolitanism in relation to national loyalties, multilingualism, and mobility overlooks the fact that the cosmopolitan is much older than the nation and that not all multilingual abilities and mobilities are accepted as cosmopolitan, especially when they lack "sophistication." Since I have partially discussed these issues elsewhere, I will not pursue them here but will restrict myself to Hannah Arendt's future-oriented concept of cosmopolitanism as global citizenship. My aim is to stress the elitism in many theories of cosmopolitanism and to show how comparative literature can challenge this elitism by looking at "hidden traditions." To do so, I will draw on two essays by Arendt—"The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition" and "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?" As for the first essay, I will introduce *Gypsy* next to *Jew*, the latter being Arendt's exclusive interest despite the implications of her use of the concept of the pariah. In the second essay, Arendt discusses acting qua human, the rights granted by membership in a (cosmo)*polis*, and what "citizen of the world" (cosmopolitan?) means in relation to the public space, and she stresses the value of communication, with the living and the dead. Furthermore, Arendt differentiates between cosmopolitan and European. I argue that postwar European integration challenges in unexpected ways Arendt's view both on rights as linked to nationality and on citizenship in a cosmopolitan polity.

CÉSAR DOMÍNGUEZ is associate professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela, in Spain, where he holds a Jean Monnet chair and appointments in the departments of comparative literature and art history. Coeditor of *A Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula* (Benjamins, 2010) and *World Literature: A Reader* (Routledge, 2013), he is completing a book on European literature and the European Union.

© 2013 CÉSAR DOMÍNGUEZ
PMLA 128.3 (2013), published by the Modern Language Association of America

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.3.629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Gypsy as Pariah

As the largest minority in Europe—a status infamously achieved upon the near annihilation of the Jews during the Holocaust—the Gypsies represent a radical challenge to the idea of cosmopolitanism, "ein blinder Fleck im europaïschen Bewusstsein" ("a blind spot in the consciousness of Europe"), as Günter Grass has called it (25). Despite some nationalist movements, the Gypsies are a stateless people who have no country to return to—in contrast to the Jews—but are on *o lungo drom* ("the long road"), exploring the "limits of patriotism," to use Kok-Chor Tan's felicitous phrase (135–62), and moral obligations. By testing cosmopolitanism in this way, Gypsy literature confronts comparative literature, with its cosmopolitan foundations and its object of study—world literature as what Karl Jaspers calls "grenzenlose Kommunikation" ("limitless communication" [qtd. in Arendt, "Karl Jaspers" 85]).

Of the four figures Arendt discusses in "The Jew as Pariah," three are Jews—Heinrich Heine, Bernard Lazare, and Franz Kafka—whereas the fourth, Charlie Chaplin, who "declared that he is of Irish and Gypsy descent . . . has been selected . . . because . . . he has epitomized in an artistic form a character born of the Jewish pariah mentality" (320n4). Yet when one considers Arendt's definition of *pariah* as "social outcast," it is no wonder that this status should be considered befitting to both Jews and Gypsies (70). In fact, regarding the (in)equality of this attribution, if one traces the Weberian lineage of Arendt's argument one has to conclude that Gypsies are *Pariavolk* ("pariah people") par excellence, for *Pariavolk*, writes Max Weber, "denotes a distinct hereditary social group lacking autonomous political organization and characterized by internal prohibitions against commensality and intermarriage originally founded upon magical, tabooistic, and ritual injunctions" (qtd. in Swedberg 193). Interestingly, besides Jews, some of the castes in India, the geographic origin suggested for Gypsies, have been considered among the best examples of pariah people.

When it comes to confronting the aforementioned elitism of cosmopolitanism, the figure of the Gypsy is crucial, for "sophistication" and "intellectualism"—often invoked in relation to cosmopolitan people—are not attributed to Gypsies, despite their experience of multilingualism, displacement, and cultural mobility. Elitism of this sort is not alien to comparative literature.[1] This social-literary elitism may be grasped in the "reckless magnanimity" that Arendt concedes to the Jewish people by accepting a "Jewish descent" she claims for a "long list of European worthies" ("Jew" 69). Needless to say, a "Gypsy descent" has never been claimed in the field of European arts and literature, except in the orientalist (mis)representations of the bohemian.

The Gypsy Bernardo

"Gypsy literature" is a problematic phrase, for besides having essentialist, ethnic overtones it introduces Eurocentric categories into the production of a people who have been stereotyped as primitive, illiterate, and therefore subservient to "civilized" and "modern" literary expressions. Drawing on the Serbian Gypsy writer Rajko Djurić's definition of Gypsy literature as a "literature in arms, a poetry hardly sketched" (qtd. in Toninato 133), I consider it to be a diasporic crucible, where hybridization makes of literary expression a stateless *Heimat* ("homeland"), in contrast to Isabel Fonseca, who argues that the Gypsy (written) language is "the cornerstone of modern Gypsy identity and emancipation" (11).

It should therefore not come as a surprise that gitanos (Spanish Gypsies) have appropriated medieval Castilian epic poems since their arrival in the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century. Interestingly, the heroes of these poems are Castilians who became sym-

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.3.629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

bols of the Spanish identity—such as El Cid or Bernardo del Carpio—and yet these texts have almost been forgotten by *payos* (as non-Gypsies are called in caló), whereas they remain very much alive in Gypsy oral traditions.

To investigate the Gypsies' attraction to this genre, let us take the legendary hero Bernardo del Carpio as an example. Medieval ballads present Bernardo as the nephew of King Alfonso II of Asturias. His bravest deeds are his role in the fight against Roland at Roncevaux and his struggle to make the king release his father from prison. One of the most famous ballads on the latter topic in the Gypsy tradition is "Bañando está las prisiones" ("Weeping Silent Tears in the Prison"), quoted here in its entirety:

Salió Bernardo a cazar una nochecita escura,
de perritos y lebreles lleva cercadita la mula.
S'ha alevantado un vientecito y una agüita muy menuda,
fue a ampararse en una torre pa no mojarse la pluma.
Adentro de la torre suena, aquel de las fuerzas muchas
está cantando un romance, que Bernardo muy bien lo escucha:
"Dicen que yo tengo un hijo y que Bernardo le llaman,
y toíto el que a mí me viene a ver me cuenta de sus hazañas.
Si no las tiene pa tu padre, ¡mi Dios!, ¿para quién las guarda?"
Monta Bernardo a caballo y pa'l Carpio va, que volaba.
"Buen rey, déme usted a mi padre, si mis obras se lo merece,
con el puño de mi espada, y mi manita prudente."

Bernardo went out to hunt during a dark night,
his mule surrounded by little dogs and sight hounds.
Wind started to blow with a fine rain,
and he found shelter next to a tower so his feather didn't get wet.
Inside the tower, the one with great strength
was singing a ballad, which Bernardo could listen to very well:
"People say I have a son, who is named Bernardo,
and everybody tells me about his great deeds.
If he doesn't do them for his father, oh God! for whom are they done?"
Bernardo mounted his horse and rapidly went to El Carpio.
"Good King, give my father back to me, if my deeds are worthy,
with the grip of my sword and my prudent little hand."[2]

This version of the ballad was recited by the Andalusian Gypsy Juan José Niño and recorded in 1916 by Manuel Manrique de Lara. According to Javier Asensio García, many gitanos today use two verses of this ballad as a kind of communal catchphrase:

Solo tengo un Bernardito que me cuentan sus hazañas
si para mí no las tiene dime para quién las guardas. (Asensio García 320)

I only have a little Bernardo of whose deeds I am told;
if they are not for me, for whom does he keep them.

Tellingly, Asensio García has noted during his fieldwork with northern Spanish Gypsies that his informants did not know whether Bernardo was a Gypsy hero or a *payo* hero. In his search for Gypsy tales built on medieval narrative ballads, Asensio García has stressed how prose and verse alternate in the Bernardo tales, in which the two verses quoted above play a prominent role. Yet this does not explain why gitanos have appropriated Bernardo as a hero.

I argue that the "ethnic group" and "nationality" of the hero are unimportant and that—crucial to understanding the appropriation—the two verses that remain alive in the Gypsy imaginary as a catchphrase deal with what a father expects from his son. Important

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.3.629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as the fight against Charlemagne's army may be, more relevant for the gitanos was the fact that these ballads celebrate family bonds and filial piety. This explains why some pieces of the Bernardo cycle are sung during wedding rituals. Small wonder, therefore, that Bernardo ballads have been used for naming Gypsy children or that Gypsies reproached the flamenco singer Antonio Mairena for recording these ballads, which were considered an exclusive heritage not to be shared with *payos*. Furthermore, ballads on Bernardo del Carpio and El Cid tell how an innocent is unjustly treated and exiled from the community after rebelling against the arbitrary behavior of the authority—an experience that Gypsies cannot avoid thinking of as their own, and the reason for their minorization.

"Wir Haben den Feind im Lande" ("The Enemy Is in Our Midst")

Arendt stated that the Jewish middle class was not cosmopolitan but European, in a way "that could be said of no other group" ("Rosa Luxemburg" 42). Arendt was drawing on Rosa Luxemburg's thinking—that privileging "European" over "cosmopolitan" was a way of escaping from Jewishness and performing the Nietzschean role of "good Europeans" (Nietzsche 4), which Arendt links to a European affiliation and to the condition of multilingualism. Arendt's refusal of cosmopolitanism resonates with the accusation of a Jewish lack of patriotism—namely, the "rootless cosmopolitan" of Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign. It is in this vein that Thomas Mann explicitly equates "cosmopolitan" to "European." When asked in 1925 to what extent his works were cosmopolitan, Mann bemoaned his monolingual condition: "Mein Englisch, Französisch, und Italienisch ist schlechthin kümmerlich" ("My English, French, and Italian are absolutely pathetic" [9]). Yet his works were German-cosmopolitan-European, for "[w]ir haben den Feind im Lande. Goethe, Lichtenberg, Schopenhauer: es hilft nichts, das ist bereits europäische Prosa, direkt, aus erster Hand" ("the enemy is in our midst. Goethe, Lichtenberg, Schopenhauer: it is no use. Theirs is already European prose, direct, firsthand" [23–24]). It should be stressed that Arendt does not argue that Jews were seen simply as Jews and not Europeans, nor does Mann argue that works from "major literatures"—and not from minorities or "minor literatures"—were those translated into "das unser bildsames Deutsch" ("our ductile German"). Like Jews, Gypsies were not seen as Europeans, nor was their literature viewed as "major"; they were—and still are—considered enemies in our midst.

"Mankind, which for all preceding generations was no more than a concept or an ideal," argues Arendt, "has become something of an urgent reality." It is not the "dreams of the humanists nor . . . the reasoning of the philosophers" that has made mankind real but technology, whereby human beings share a "common present"—a fragile present that is not based on a "common past" and can be globally destroyed ("Karl Jaspers" 82). Arendt's common present resonates with Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, which springs from a "durchaus erleichterte Kommunikation" ("vastly facilitated communication") in the "gegenwärtige, höchst bewegte Epoche" ("contemporary, highly turbulent epoch" [Birus 3]). Yet Goethe and Arendt give different kinds of solidity to the "pastless" common present. For Goethe the lacuna may be universally filled with the hierarchy of classical antiquity; for Arendt the lacuna should be defined by Jaspers's "grenzenlose Kommunikation" ("limitless communication").

Limitless communication is also a condition for loyalty and moral commitment to humanity at large, which is another way of understanding cosmopolitanism. Though this form of cosmopolitanism does not exclude national citizens, Arendt is skeptical about the possibility of a "world state," for it "would be

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.3.629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the end of all citizenship" ("Karl Jaspers" 81, 82). In her conception, citizenship is nation-bounded: "A citizen is by definition a citizen among citizens of a country among countries" (81). At this point, as I announced at the start, neither a "world state" nor a world empire but a cosmopolitan, neomedieval empire—the European Union (EU [Zielonka; Colomer]), as it emerged since postwar integration—challenges Arendt's idea of citizenship. In fact, Patrick Hayden has referred to the concept of "cosmopolitan realism" to overcome Arendt's critique of the idealistic weakness of cosmopolitan theory and to face the "shared experience of extreme evil" and, hence, its juridification (10). Whereas Hayden limits himself to one of the meanings of cosmopolitan realism in Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande's lexicon—namely, the acknowledgment that "the classical limits between the national and international have been erased, obscured or transformed" (Hayden 23)—I will draw on Beck and Grande's ternary typology of cosmopolitanism as Europeanization (Beck and Grande 18–19). In the context of the enigmatic EU, "institutionalized cosmopolitanism" refers to the supranational institutions to which sovereignty has been transferred the way sovereignty, according to Jaspers, has been renounced "for the sake of a world-wide federated political structure" (Arendt, "Karl Jaspers" 84). But the renunciation is free neither of trauma nor of national bias; hence the democratic deficit or "deformed cosmopolitanism" of the EU. For Beck and Grande the way to overcome such a deformed cosmopolitanism is "cosmopolitan realism"—that is, the acknowledgment that "the states of the EC/EU did not renounce power for idealistic reasons but for reasons of their own national interests" (Beck and Grande 20). The meaningfulness of the EU's "negative solidarity," in Arendt's terms, lies in a concomitant political responsibility ("Karl Jaspers" 83). In reality, national goals will not always coincide with European goals. But mutual understanding requires "the renunciation, not of one's own tradition and national past, but of the binding authority and universal validity which tradition and past have always claimed" (84).

For a Cosmopolitan Break with the Authority of Tradition

It is well known that comparative literature twice emerged in Europe as an idealistic, cosmopolitan enterprise of mutual understanding: after the Napoleonic Wars and after World War II. Its universalist and Eurocentric foundations have been constructively challenged by East-West studies and postcolonial studies. Whether the same will be the case for the world-literature paradigm remains to be seen. Fruitful as this provincialization has been, it is not without problematic results. "With India, China and Japan being held as representative of Asia," Rey Chow persuasively argues, "cultures of lesser prominence in Western reception such as Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Tibet and others simply fall by the wayside—as marginalized 'others' to the 'other' that is great Asian civilizations" ("In the Name" 109). Though I agree with Chow, I wonder how productive her "post-European perspective" may be when one acknowledges neither the outwardness nor the inwardness of the marginalization. To put it bluntly, what about the literatures in Europe that are the marginalized others to "major" European literatures and the "great" European civilization? In what Chow calls the "predominant, hierarchizing frame of comparison" ("Old/New Question" 80), the literariness of these marginalized others has been immobilized by ethnic boundaries (the case of literature by Gypsies) and what I call the "principle of insufficient difference"—namely, Hugo Meltzl's foundational tool of polyglotism, which implies the erasure of "minor" literatures (provided they are not the works of "sophisticated pariahs") and "small" literatures from the European map.[3]

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.3.629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This is the hidden cosmopolitanism for comparative *European* literature, the emphasis denoting not the "return of the native" but an internal orientation toward the cosmopolitan Europe of difference, wherein new loyalties forge inclusive dualities.[4] The lessons of the Gypsies as aterritorial, pariah people are many in the context of a realistic-cosmopolitan Europe. "In the present times of an emerging pan-European Rule of Law," says the Gypsy-rights activist Nicolae Gheorghe, "Roma, an European people without a kin-state of their own, are choosing the Rule of Law and Democracy as our main civic identifications and as our 'motherland'" (18). Although national interests may delay the arrival of mankind until a "far-distant future" (Arendt, "Karl Jaspers" 94), Georghe nonetheless importunes his reader to "die as a Human person" (18). If one is to die as a human, a limitless communication with the living and the dead, in the form of a philosophy of mankind or a philology of world literature, is a "matter of innermost urgency" when "[t]he 'dark times' Arendt discerned at mid-twentieth century have metamorphosed, or more accurately have metastasized, on a global scale" (Kadir 164). That the Gypsy word *drabarav* ("I read") was coined on the verb for telling fortunes from the palm of the hand is just one of the enlightening lessons hidden cosmopolitanism has for comparative literature.

Notes

This essay is part of the research project "Europe, in Comparison: European Union, Identity and the Idea of European Literature," funded by the Spanish government. I am grateful to Arturo Casas and Djelal Kadir for their insightful comments on this paper. My thanks go to Andrei Terian for providing me with valuable material.

1. One aspect of the elitism in some versions of cosmopolitanism is the heroic glorification of one individual. Anderson points out another aspect: "Cosmopolitanism embraces rather than scrutinizes its fascination with otherness, resisting the idea that it is tainted by aestheticist or erotic elements" (285).

2. This and all other unattributed translations are mine.

3. Kafka's term "kleine Literaturen" has been unequivocally understood as "minor literatures," following Deleuze and Guattari, for whom a minor literature "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (16). Their definition differs from Kafka's original sense of the term, which I translate as "small literature." Deleuze and Guattari's image for linguistic deterritorialization—"gypsies who have stolen a German child from its crib" (17)—goes against the grain of my argument. In both senses of "kleine Literaturen," what I call the "principle of insufficient difference"—that minor or small literatures are not different enough to enter the spectrum of comparison—is a challenge for comparative literature that, as far as I know, has yet to be addressed.

4. By "return of the native," I refer to a curious phenomenon in the American-European academy: a renewed, acritical enthusiasm for the great tradition—under the guise of "world literature," "classics," and "European canon"—as if the last four decades of critical theory were nonexistent. I will deal with this issue in the near future.

Works Cited

Anderson, Amanda. "Cosmopolitanism, Universalism, and the Divided Legacies of Modernity." *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. Ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998. 265–89. Print.

Arendt, Hannah. "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition." *Reflections on Literature and Culture*. Ed. Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007. 69–90. Print.

———. "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?" *Men in Dark Times*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1995. 81–94. Print.

———. "Rosa Luxemburg: 1871–1919." *Men in Dark Times*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1995. 33–56. Print.

Asensio García, Javier. "Bernardo del Carpio, un héroe de la épica medieval en la tradición de los gitanos del norte peninsular." *Kalakorikos* 15 (2010): 313–37. Print.

"Bañando está las prisiones." *El romancero vulgar y nuevo*. Ed. Flor Salazar. Madrid: Fundación Ramón Menéndez Pidal; U Complutense de Madrid, 1999. 9. Print.

Beck, Ulrich, and Edgar Grande. *Cosmopolitan Europe*. Trans. Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: Polity, 2007. Print.

Birus, Hendrik. "The Goethean Concept of World Literature and Comparative Literature." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 2.4 (2000): n. pag. Web. 7 Jan. 2013.

Chow, Rey. "In the Name of Comparative Literature." *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*. Ed. Charles Bernheimer. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. 107–16. Print.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.3.629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

———. "The Old/New Question of Comparison in Literary Studies: A Post-European Perspective." *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. 71–115. Print.

Colomer, Josep M. *Great Empires, Small Nations: The Uncertain Future of the Sovereign State*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986. Print.

Domínguez, César. "World Literature and Cosmopolitanism." *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*. Ed. Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir. London: Routledge, 2012. 242–52. Print.

Fonseca, Isabel. *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey*. New York: Vintage, 1996. Print.

Gheorghe, Nicolae. "Key-Note Speech." *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*. OSCE, 2013. Web. 7 Jan 2013.

Grass, Günter. "A Blind Spot in the Consciousness of Europe: Interview with Günter Grass." Interview by Hannes Swoboda and Jan Marinus Wiersma. *Roma: A European Minority: The Challenge of Diversity*. Ed. Monika Flašiková-Beňová, Swoboda, and Wiersma. [Brussels]: European Parliament, 2001. 25–31. Print.

Hannerz, Ulf. "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture." *Theory, Culture and Society* 7.2–3 (1990): 237–51. Print.

Hayden, Patrick. *Political Evil in a Global Age: Hannah Arendt and International Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Kadir, Djelal. *Memos from the Besieged City: Lifelines for Cultural Sustainability*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011. Print.

Mann, Thomas. *Kosmopolitismus*. Tübingen: Fischer, n.d. Digital file.

Meltzl, Hugo. "Present Tasks of Comparative Literature (1877)." *The Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature: From the European Enlightenment to the Global Present*. Ed. David Damrosch, Natalie Melas, and Mbongiseni Buthelezi. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009. 41–49. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Marion Faber. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.

Swedberg, Richard. *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.

Tan, Kok-Chor. *Justice without Borders: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Patriotism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

Texte, Joseph. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature*. Trans. J. W. Matthews. London: Duckworth, 1899. Print.

Toninato, Paola. "The Rise of Written Literature among the Roma: A Study of the Role of Writing in the Current Redefinition of Romani Identity with Specific Reference to the Italian Case." Diss. U of Warwick, 2004. Print.

Zielonka, Jan. *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.3.629 Published online by Cambridge University Press