People can be bored by their work or by the discourse to which they are listening, but doing nothing makes them restless rather than bored.

The reformist rhetoric of *Reflections*, says Mallory, suppresses "disaffection and restlessness," which "reemerge in the form of textual theatricalities" (226). That means disaffection and restlessness are not visible in *Reflections* but are at work under cover every time Burke gets theatrical. The argument is easy enough to refute. One has only to say, "No, they aren't."

Mallory asserts that Burke defends "a 'system of manners' as the best and most characteristically English antidote to boredom and restlessness" (230). The sentence from Burke actually says nothing about boredom or antidotes thereto: "There ought to be a system of manners in every nation which a well-formed mind would be disposed to relish" (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien [1790; London: Penguin, 1986] 172).

Mallory quotes the following to show that Burke makes excitement the cure for boredom: "A cheap, bloodless reformation, a guiltless liberty, appear flat and vapid to their taste. There must be a great change of scene; there must be a magnificent stage effect; there must be a grand spectacle to rouze the imagination, grown torpid with the lazy enjoyment of sixty years security, and the still unanimating repose of public prosperity" (qtd. in Mallory 226). The passage does convey excitement: "magnificent stage effect" and "grand spectacle." But no boredom. "Torpid" means "inactive, apathetic; slow, sluggish; dull"—but not "weary," which is the word Mallory needs. Besides, "torpid" and "unanimating repose" are sarcasms rather than literal descriptions, and the passage contains no revolutionary acts that could be thought exciting. Had Mallory started her quote one sentence earlier, she would have found three—though none to her liking. "Plots, massacres, assassinations, seem to some people a trivial price for obtaining a revolution" (Burke 156). These are the kind of acts her thesis calls for to cure boredom. Finally, this passage shows that Burke does not entirely believe England has to be changed through revolution or reform. Sixty years of continuous security and prosperity are pretty good arguments for maintaining the status quo.

Burke says that the English "conceive the undisturbed succession of the crown to be a pledge of the stability and perpetuity of all the other members [House of Lords and House of Commons] of our constitution" (111). Mallory says this passage shows that the English "handle tedium" better than the French (231). No, it doesn't.

Mallory says, "The English resist the trend toward disaffection, whereby '[n]othing [will be] left which engages the affections on the part of the commonwealth. On the principles of this mechanic philosophy, our institutions can never be embodied . . . in persons; so as to create in us love, veneration, admiration, or attachment' " (231). In contrast, Burke says, "In the groves of *their* academy, at the end of every visto, you see nothing but the gallows. Nothing is left which engages the affections on the part of the commonwealth. On the principles of this mechanic philosophy, our institutions can never . . ." (171–72).

Burke's subject is the French; Mallory makes it the English. Burke says nothing about a trend toward disaffection. In Mallory's version, disaffection is the "mechanic philosophy"; in Burke the "vistos" are. A visto is a view seen from one end of a tunnel. Each visto is a principle of the "mechanic philosophy" that the French Academy has developed to support revolution. Burke says this philosophy supports actions that are treasonable and punishable by death, and there is nothing in it that can create a government the English can love, venerate, and so forth.

Failure to establish boredom as Burke's guiding principle and the frequent misreadings that result seriously challenge Mallory's thesis. Still, I found the essay interesting in itself, perhaps because it bears the same relation to *Reflections* as *Wide Sargasso Sea* bears to *Jane Eyre*.

George Bellis
Saint Paul, MN

Reply:

I appreciate George Bellis's interest in my essay. Clearly we disagree about both boredom and Burke. That said, his paraphrase of my position is misleading. My essay does not claim that Burke "favored revolution over reform" but rather locates traces of boredom and disaffection within his counterrevolutionary argument.

I set out not to summarize Burke's overt arguments but to analyze passages that struck me as his-

https://doi.org/10.1632/S0030812900167537 Published online by Cambridge University Press

trionic or overplayed. Certainly one could take other approaches. But at no point do I urge readers to "forget the ideas and watch Burke's performance." My interest lies in the complex interrelation of his explicit aims and his performance.

Anne Mallory
University of Georgia

Moving beyond Eurocentric Theory

To the Editor:

As a member of the MLA for more than fifteen years, and having lived and worked in India most of my life, I read Shu-mei Shih's "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition" (119 [2004]: 16–30) with interest. I find the essay relevant to my work as a teacher of several Indian languages and literatures. But what I find puzzling is that Shih, in theorizing perspectives of global literature, succumbs to some sweeping generalizations that suit the Western academy, through a process much dependent on Western postmodernist writing—such as Michel Foucault's concept of technology (although Shih, taking a cue from Teresa de Lauretis, wrests it to suit herself) and the postdifference ethics of the French philosopher Alain Badiou. This reliance on Western thinkers gives one the feeling that theorization, at least now, is the prerogative of the West and that the non-West has to follow, comfortably forgetting the Buddhist and other non-Western philosophers who could surely supply much-needed alternative conceptual bases for theory.

This reminds me of the neglect of native and regional languages in favor of English in countries like India—baffling, considering the number of people for whom these regional languages are vehicles of thought and feeling. I note, too, that the production centers of these kinds of postcolonial theory are not Third World universities but universities and publication departments of the West. Shih's mention of Gao Xingjian (who holds a degree in French and lives in Paris while he writes to his diasporic audience) and Mahaswata Devi (who has been introduced to the West by Gayatri Spivak, a postcolonial theorist familiar in the West and the translator of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*) may not be not enough to shift the familiar paradigm of discourse that is produced by the West, for the West. In Shih's group of writers the only exception is Aijaz Ahmad, an Urdu writer with ample knowledge of Indian literature who seems to have moved back to India from the West and writes less now about the problems for which Western writers often quote him.

I am not recommending a binary opposition of West versus East in theory. I am noting the politics of readership of these theories and observing the emergence of an overall picture of how dissent should be manufactured—or should we say "the technology of dissent"? Whether the globalization mechanism is recognition or re-cognition, the products of such theories are the products of a game based in the West, designed according to the market rules of the Western society and its academy.

Moretti's point that the modern novel rose between 1750 and 1950 is attractive, I think, to any student of literature in Indian languages, which count more than eighteen. But in all these languages, without exception, the genre arose roughly between 1850 and 1950, if you include all kinds of experiments in the form. If Shih's theory of technology is relevant, it is only through a comparison of these native novels with their counterparts in England. But this kind of comparative postcolonial study is a rarity, since many scholars who work in Western English departments have neither knowledge of nor interest in what really happened in these native languages during the colonial era, when the genre of the novel put down roots. I believe that even if Moretti's characterization of the Third World novel as Western plot with local characters and local narrative voice is sweeping, his observation can be useful in understanding the complex mechanism of the Indian novel's global identity and difference and in charting all the shades of multifarious meanings that run through the West-East correspondences of this short period.

Sabarimuthu Carlos
Warsaw University

Reply:

I read Sabarimuthu Carlos's letter with great interest. It appears to make two main points: The first is that my critique of Western theory ends up reaffirming the importance of Western theory by neglecting alternative theoretical paradigms from the

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