15. See Mary B. Campbell, *Wonder & Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), esp. chaps. 4, 5, and 6.

16. Erwin Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1930; rpt. Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1997), vii-viii. I cite Miller's translation, slightly modified, in *Peiresc's Europe*, 15.

17. See Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1928); I cite the English version, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1977), 149–50.

18. See Roland Barthes, "La mort de l'auteur," in *Le bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), 71–80, and "De l'œuvre au texte," ibid., 81–85; and Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

19. See Berger, *Fictions of the Pose*, 53–58.

20. Mieke Bal, *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 60.

21. See Bal, *Reading Rembrandt*, chap. 2.

22. See Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984), 50–60. For his critique of Barker's reading, see Harry Berger Jr., "The Pepys Show: Ghost-Writing and Documentary Desire in *The Diary*," *English Literary History* 65 (1998): 557–91; for "snippetotomy," ibid., 563.

23. See Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961; 2nd ed., Paris: Gallimard, 1972), chap. 2, "le grand renfermement." For his critique of Foucault, see Jacques Derrida, "Cogito et histoire de la folie," in *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967; Points paper ed.), 51–97.

24. Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 182.

25. Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985). See esp. the intro., "Language and Explanation," and chap. 4, "Truth and Other Cultures: Piero Della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ*," where the kind of "tact" argued for in the introduction is brought to bear on a particularly puzzling Renaissance painting.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Beyond Comparison Shopping

This Is Not Your Father's Comp. Lit.

FEDWA MALTI-DOUGLAS

It is only as I penned the subtitle to my contribution that I realized that I had been educated while an undergraduate at Cornell University and then as a graduate student, first at the University of Pennsylvania and then at UCLA, only by male professors. So when I note that this is not my father's Comp. Lit., the phrase has multiple meanings for me. As a graduate student, I was trained both in America and in France. French criticism in the 1970s was a great liberating movement for me, pulling me beyond my American educational experience toward names I had never heard before. And that is perhaps why I am constantly searching for great beyonds—beyonds that will permit the application of different theoretical models (be they semiotically-inspired, gender-inspired, sexuality-inspired, and so on) beyond any disciplinary confines. Two beyonds strike me as particularly significant in the context of a self-examination by comparatists at the dawning of a new century: beyond the verbal word into a visual universe; and the application of critical theory beyond what we normally define as literature into a wider variety of texts, understood in the largest possible context, and encompassing the rich areas of law, medicine, and science.

Only upon arriving at my first tenure track job at the University of Virginia in 1977 did I learn that not only had the university very recently become co-ed but that we female professors were a new oddity. It was in that context that I began my involvement as a faculty member in programs of comparative literature. As I watched my own career and, more importantly, the careers of my graduate students develop, I began to hear the suave and cosmopolitan voice of Ricardo Montalban telling me not only that this was not my father's Oldsmobile but that this was not my father's Comp. Lit.

Hearing a voice and acting on what that voice is transmitting are two different things. As director of the Program in Comparative Literature at the University of Texas, a program that only awarded Ph.D.s, I watched the interests of graduate stu-

dents evolve. My own pursuits were morphing at the same time. I found myself drawn to different intellectual worlds far beyond those I had inhabited thus far. I had by this time assimilated feminism fully into my own research, and gender became a lens through which I viewed every word I consumed.

But the lures of the beyonds were only beginning. The first siren's call came from the world of the visual, the world of film, political cartoons, and comic strips. Having a partner who is a cultural historian meant that when our intellectual interests collided, there was a synergy that benefited each of us. Our research on cinema was exciting, but I personally was drawn much more to the universe of comic strips. When we embarked on our collaboration in this area, it was French criticism that sustained us. The work of giants like Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle, Gérard Genette, Roland Barthes, and many others convinced us that the study of verbal production, those narratives that had provided our nourishment for many years, could be made even better if we added the visual component to the verbal one. It is as if, after realizing that we had supped only on American food, we had suddenly discovered the riches of French cuisine.

My answering the call of the siren surprised many of my more closed-minded colleagues. I was called the enfant terrible of the profession for delving into the analytical world of comics. This new wilderness that my coauthor, Allen Douglas, and I had just entered was full of thorns and discouraging spirits. But decades later, Americans discovered what the French already knew: the pleasures of the comics medium. It was partly, of course, that Art Spiegelman had produced his Pulitzer Prize–winning *Maus* (1986–1991). But American artists had long preceded Spiegelman. To name but one, Will Eisner, a giant of the genre, has many graphic novels to his name that portray life in Bronx tenements filled with Italian and Jewish immigrants (e.g., *A Life Force*, 1983). Most recently, he has taken to transforming works of literature like *Moby Dick* into comic albums.

France has long been a most congenial atmosphere for comic-strip artists, both those who are French-born and those who adopt the Gallic country as their home. The annual festival at Angoulême draws fans and artists from around the globe. One of the most famous names is that of Jacques Tardi, who has illustrated Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1992), among others. With his inserted illustrations, Tardi creates an altogether different Céline *Voyage*, one that forces its readers to ponder not only the words but the illustrations as well, creating an unusual type of intertextuality. Tardi has long transcended his importance as a comic-strip artist, designing book covers for established French publishers like Gallimard. Talking to Tardi makes one aware that long before Americans had heard of *Maus*, Spiegelman had been working with Tardi and other artists on the journal *Raw*. Italians can pride themselves

on Crépax, whose frames are a tour de force. In Spain, Max is acknowledged as the master of the medium. The comics published by the Slovenian group Stripburger are often nothing short of enthralling. And this is not to speak of the enormous Japanese production of *manga*. Then there are Mexico, India, and numerous other countries around the globe.

I am convinced that part of the reason that the siren's call went unheeded for so long among American intelligentsia derives from our own cultural insecurity. We need the assurance that our Nathaniel Hawthorne can match Gustave Flaubert, or that our Ernest Hemingway can beat Albert Camus. Comics and graphic novels were for much too long viewed as a production for marginal readers, for the enfants terribles of their field, if you wish.

Can any of us imagine the likelihood of having a book like *Tintin est-il de droite ou de gauche?* [Is Tintin on the Right or the Left?] (2002) produced on this side of the Atlantic? This delightful volume consists of commentaries by members of the French National Assembly (the equivalent of our Congress) on the intrepid reporter and famous comic book character created by Hergé. The participants acknowledged one another as "Tintinologues" (Tintinologists), each arguing that the famous series of albums belonged to his or her political family. Can any of us conceive of members of the U.S. Congress undertaking such a project, say, with Mickey Mouse, who has just celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday? If only!

Fortunately there have been courageous, generous, and inspiring spirits like John Lent, who has tirelessly spent his career on comics, most recently founding and editing *The International Journal of Comic Art*. Every issue is an eye opener, much like the older and equally interesting *Comics Journal*, whose contents complement the more scholarly output of John Lent. Obviously, Lent heeded that first siren's call and courageously served as a model for all of us.

But aside from that, let us be fair and admit that we had grown accustomed to taking our intellectual cues from the Frankfurt School and from Continental figures like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Tzvetan Todorov, and many others. Perhaps part of it is still our viewing ourselves as a cultural offshoot of Mother Britain and her cousins across the channel. Although it would be wrong to ignore the fact that American queer theory, with the ground-breaking research of Judith Butler, to name but one, has perhaps set the standard in that area.

These critical movements are only beginning to affect the study of comics. The International Comics and Animation Festival (ICAF), in conjunction with the Small Press Expo, is a haven for those of us who derive our intellectual sustenance from comics. And when the ICAF meets with the Small Press Expo, the interweaving of critics, artists, and publishers creates nothing short of a heaven populated by com-

ics enthusiasts. No one speaks anything but comics. The energy that emanates from those meetings can be utterly intoxicating.

It is there that one discovers that comics are not only a man's world. The male superheroes have their counterparts in female superheroes. Dick Tracy was matched by Ms. Tree, a female detective (Mystery, get it?).

In today's rough and tumble world, where AIDS can be tackled by Judd Winick in a graphic novel (*Pedro and Me*, 2000), Phoebe Glockner is not ashamed to pen comics that address child abuse (*A Child's Life and Other Stories*, 1998). If Willem in his *Anal Symphonies* (1996) can show his viewer X-rated materials with erect penises, the Canadian Julie Doucet is willing to match him without so much as a flinch (*Lève ta jambe, mon poisson est mort*, 1993).

In fact, the graphic novel, a longer and more complicated form that permits greater character development and plot twists, has been a liberating medium, I would argue, for female comic-strip artists. They do not shy away from dealing with critical and taboo subjects like mental illness, as Madison Clell does in her moving graphic novel, *Cuckoo: One Woman's True Stories of Living with Multiple Personality Disorder* (2002). More adventurous and witty comics and graphic novels have targeted the law (e.g., those of Batton Lash) and the world of disability (e.g., David B., *L'ascension du haut mal*, 1996).

Comics production is a global phenomenon and provides a rich area for the comparatist. Romance? Violence? Religion? Fantasy? Politics? It's all there for those unafraid to probe the great beyond, the beyond that is not part of our father's comparative literature. I would even argue that there is no one in a better position than comparatists like ourselves, equipped with the necessary linguistic gear, to tackle the heights of stripology. This universe holds many treasures that have only begun to be mined by cultural critics.

The analysis of works that are purely graphic in nature differs from more ambitious projects that could explore multileveled assemblage of creations. Let us take one example. One can easily create comparative topics that span the purely verbal and the combined verbal-visual. How about a study of the graphic novel in English by Peter Kuper (2003) that tackles Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, written originally in German? Obviously a critic would need to be at home not only in the German language but also in the critical languages that would permit the analysis of both artistic creations. What changes were made in the recasting of the book from a purely verbal product to one utilizing both the verbal and visual? The juxtaposition of the graphic novel with the original German (and English translation) creates a textual cross-fertilization whose insights would undoubtedly redefine both the high literature that is Kafka and its up-to-now illegitimate cousin, the more popular graphic novel.

If one examines the history of literature, even high literature, alongside the history of art, it will swiftly become apparent that there are numerous literary texts that have been translated into visual forms. Some of these have, in their latest incarnations, become both visual and verbal at once—that is, comic strips. The possibilities for the comparison of the products of visual and verbal languages are almost infinite.

But this is only the first beyond. There is another insistent siren whose call is much more challenging than that of her earlier colleague. This is the siren of law, medicine, and science.

I am proud to bear the title of the enfant terrible of any profession—if by enfant terrible, we mean what the first academic meant when he called me that. That I was going beyond what the field could tolerate. I could not at that time ignore that siren's song, just as I am now unable to close my ears to the siren luring me to the areas of law, medicine, and science.

Law and literature are by no means strangers to one another. The prolific federal judge for the Seventh Circuit, Richard Posner, has even penned a book entitled *Law and Literature* (1988). But for anyone at home in theory, Posner's volume is at best a frustrating read. Much more provocative is the analysis by Peter Brooks of guilt in law and literature, *Troubling Confessions* (2000).

Yet there is something in the law that remains a mystery. As someone who teaches seminars in a law school, I know the importance of that field for all of us. At the same time, law is an area ripe for comparatists. If one reads transcripts of trials as literary narratives, the results can be eye-opening. Then add to that the live videos of actual court cases (I am not talking here about *Judge Judy*, *The People's Court*, and other such television shows), and I would challenge anyone to resist these accounts. When I teach the transcripts from the Lorena Bobbitt case, for example, I add the video of the trial. It is no different from analyzing a cinematic production, except that this is not fiction but a process in which an individual's life is in question. Lorena is in the audience, dressed primly in a dark blue suit. When she steps into the witness box, she has shed her jacket—provocative hints of disrobing—and appears in a white shirt like an angel who has just descended from heaven.

The quip by Otto von Bismarck is oft repeated: that there are two things that you do not want to see being made: law and sausages. But how many ever take the time to read a legal statute all the way through from beginning to end? Even law students rarely undertake this exercise. Their education is based chiefly on summaries of statutes and judgments. The experience for anyone with literary-critical, not to speak of comparatist, background is extraordinary. Even a legal document that was mockingly compared to high literature, *The Starr Report* (1998), was rarely read through, I discovered, even by those who chose to write about it. Legal texts are also frequently

political texts, and they are among the most revealing objects in our culture. To carefully examine the Americans with Disabilities Act is nothing short of eye-opening, as we watch our own social preoccupations and phantasms, from the cultural to the sexual, mirrored in a legal document.

What I am suggesting is miles away from the approach of Posner or others who teach law and literature. They are mostly concerned with legal issues in high literature. I am looking at the underbelly of the law to see what it can tell us about ourselves.

I can already hear some voices raised in objection. How is this comparative literature? My response? This is an area where comparatists, with their rich cultural and literary background, can make a difference and set a new agenda. It is the borrowing of theoretical methodologies from one discipline and transporting them for application to another, completely different area. If there is one thing that Michel Foucault taught us, it is that our mental structures are the product of numerous layers of our culture and society. And to understand ourselves, it behooves us not to ignore any of these layers.

To view a legal statute with the eyes of a comparatist can be a unique experience. The subtexts of statutes and legal decisions force us to examine a critical element of those mental structures. Even some finely crafted closing arguments with their rich intertextual universe can provide insights for the most jaded critic.

The law, of course, is more than a verbal product in our society. It is also an institution and an inspiration for fiction. Read a novel like John Grisham's *Pelican Brief* (1992) and then view the film by the same name (1993). The cinematic alterations will astound you. Denzel Washington, a magnificent actor and an African-American, plays the role of the reporter. In the novel, this role is left racially undefined, so the romantic ending with the law student can gratify a reader. In the film, that romantic element is abandoned, as Julia Roberts at the end of the adventure sits on a beach sipping a drink by herself. Gender, racial, legal, and political issues take on multiple lives as they cross the novelistic universe to enter the cinematic, all under the umbrella of the law.

If the law can be a subject of study for comparatists, why not medicine and science? (I am aware of the journal *Medicine and Literature*, but that is another venture altogether.) The challenges here can be very fruitful. A study like that of Kathryn Montgomery Hunter (*Doctors' Stories: The Narrative Structure of Medical Knowledge*, 1991) in which she analyzes case studies, among other genres, can teach a great deal to those of us who examine medical fiction or narratives penned by physicians. Medical practice, too, has its mysteries and topoi, and these are revealing of professional and cultural values as well. The short medical tales by Richard Selzer, Oliver Sacks, and

Irvin Yalom, to name but three, can certainly be placed alongside the medical short stories of Egyptian physician-writers like Nawal El Saadawi and Yusuf Idris.

Perhaps what makes the world of medicine and science potentially richest for comparatists is that physicians, biologists, and other scientists are presently grappling with problems that previously were thought to be the purview of traditional humanities disciplines. What is the meaning of life? Of death? What makes a human *human*? What is the meaning of consciousness? Of intelligence? Then, of course, there are the ethical questions that flow from our emerging mastery over the building blocks of life. Some questions link the medical with the legal. In the newly patented chimeras (yes, that is what they are called), how much human DNA does it take to create a legal person? This issue, for example, has been explored by Yvonne Cripps in her study on genetic modification (2004). It's a Brave New World out there (wordplay intended).

Among the more provocative narratives that can enrich our comparative world are the memoirs emanating from the world of science and medicine, each arguing for progress in the areas of social changes, medical advances, scientific breakthroughs, be it through stem-cell research or other issues: those of the disabled, of the transsexuals, of the ill, and so on. If we close our eyes to the enormous American production in these areas, we may still be able to see that the French, to take but one example, have also created a significant corpus on disability, transsexuality, illness, and so on. Imagine, for a moment, a disease that does not discriminate on any basis, breast cancer, and you will come to the realization that the comparative field widens enormously to include other countries and other languages.

As one crosses linguistic borders, this area of the science of the body can be particularly gratifying. When the legendary American Helen Keller met the Arab world's leading modernizer, Taha Husayn, they spoke a corporal language that was absolutely their own. He was blind, whereas she has become the American icon for the physically challenged. Their meeting was immortalized in a photograph that tells its own story through the body language of the participants.

Cross from America to Mexico, and how can you forget the powerful paintings of Frida Kahlo, imbued not only with her political ideas but with her medical problems as well? Then cross the Atlantic, where you will find a life of Frida redefined in Italian by Marco Corona (1998) through the comic strip medium. And this is not to speak of the film *Frida* (2002), yet another comparatist's dream.

Art can force medicine to intersect with the body, as in Kahlo's painting *The Broken Column* (1944), reminding us that the visual, with which we began through the world of comics, should be constantly present on our critical radar. (In fact, many of Kahlo's paintings pit the corporal against the medical in a very in-your-face manner.) If Tracy Chevalier's novel, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2001), brings a famous seven-

teenth-century painting by Vermeer to life, it also intertextually weaves the universe of art into that of words and from there into film (2004).

For me comparative literature must be a world without limits, assuming that one can navigate several languages. It is almost a domain of fantasy, in which high art can be analyzed alongside the cinema, which can be analyzed alongside the comic strip, which can be analyzed alongside a verbal world. It is like a wonderful kaleidoscope that allows comparatists a multifaceted view into the world that we intellectually inhabit. Certainly, many a nay-sayer will not be quite ready yet to take the plunge into these rapids, carrying on his or her shoulder the aging body of the old comparative literature. But so be it. It is precisely *because* it is not our father's Comp. Lit. that we can infuse fresh life into the field.

PART II

RESPONSES