AGAINST WORLD LITERATURE

ON THE POLITICS OF UNTRANSLATABILITY

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III

Keywords 3: "Fado" and "Saudade"

Samuel Weber, in focusing on how the suffix *barkeit*—which he translates into English as "abilities"—operates in Walter Benjamin's pivotal concepts of *uberseţz-barkeit* (translatability), *reproduţier-barkeit* (reproducibility), and *kritisier-barkeit* (criticizability), provides a crucial framework for thinking about untranslatability. In the spirit of the *barkeit* series, I would add *unübersetţ-barkeit* to refer to that which impedes translational fluency yet enables critical faculties nonetheless. One of the interesting functions such a notion can perform is to illuminate how a nationally marked Untranslatable (a philosophical mythology, in Barthes' sense; as in France, the mythology of liberty; in the United States, the mythology of happiness; and in Germany, the mythology of *sehnsucht*) operates as a bête noire: a philosophical fetish that serves as a rallying point of national pride or slips into becoming a cultural marketing device or touristic cliché. Two Portuguese Untranslatables, *fado* (melancholia, pleasure, ecstasy) and *saudade* (nostalgia, moral ambiguity), serve as cases because they exemplify the double function of mythmaking and critical distancing that distinguishes the Untranslatable's abilities. Also, by representing a Portuguese contribution to the history of philosophy, they interrupt the storyline in a history of philosophy that leads from Greece, to France, to Germany to Great Britain. Saudade and fado may thus be seen to challenge *Eurocentrism within Europe*, a Eurocentrism that discriminates against smaller nations by favoring critical lexicons that hail from dominant ones. If there is now general recognition that we need to redress the lack of non-European philosophy in the history of philosophy, less attention has

been paid to including philosophical lexicons hailing from smaller European cultures and languages. So, consider this chapter an argument for making fado and saudade "-abled" terms of comparative philosophy and literary criticism. Finally, both terms demonstrate the complexity of national tropes in the context of new regionalisms that seek to strategically position a country like Portugal as a global player. In this case, fado and saudade lend symbolic capital to an oceanic regionalism drawing on myths of Atlantism and the Mediterranean, and nourish the construct of a greater transcontinental Lusofonia that binds the populations of Lusophone, Africa, and South America—subjects of colonialism, diaspora, and immigration—to a common Portugueseness. Bela Felman-Bianco has tracked the revival of saudade, first in the wake of the Socialist Revolution of 1974, next in the 1990s. Saudade, she maintains, shores up a "community of feelings" that "represents the new face of the Portuguese empire in times of economic globalization" and consolidates "a conciliatory nationalist ideology, defended by President Mario Soares and segments of the Socialist Party, laying stress on the incorporation of the former Atlantic project into the new European nation project." Consquently, the recreation of Portuguese national culture has rested on imperialism. The politics of high culture thus aligned with the politics of global investment foments in her view a "revived Atlantic universal vocation" that deflects attention to the politics of anti-immigration and racial/cultural division.[1] These globalist "-abilities" are, in a sense the political *liabilities* of fado and saudade's untranslatable aesthetic and philosophical properties.

Gregory Rabassa, a veteran translator of Spanish and Portuguese literature into English, illuminates the untranslatability of fado and saudade in *Fado Alexandrino*, a novel written in notoriously difficult prose by the Portuguese author António Lobo Antunes:

1 Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's –abilities*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008; Bela Feldman-Bianco, "Empire, Postcoloniality and Diasporas: The Portuguese Case," Papers: Revista de sociologia 85, June 2007, 44; Feldman-Bianco, "The State, Saudade and the Dialectics of Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization" Coimbra, Portugal: CES Office, 1995, 49, 51; "revived Atlantic universal vocation": ibid., 52, 54.

> The *fado* is the great popular song of Portugal. The word is said to come from the same root as fate and the songs, most especially when sung by the great Amália Rodrigues, inevitably invoke that longing or nostalgia or whatever that the Portuguese and Brazilians call *saudade* ... I am still puzzled by the *alexandrino*. I can't see where the iambic pentameter fits in, nor can I see any connection with Lawrence Durrell's work. My best thought is that António is taking the *fado*, the raw material of his tale, and making it classical in the mode of French alexandrines.

Fado and saudade emerge as semantic national monuments; heritage markers of Portuguese's belatedness as a national language, baroque periodicity, intellectual mannerism, and splenetic affect. In an article on Portuguese in the *Vocabulaire*, Fernando Santoro treats fado as a name for human finitude, a measure of the maximal serving of possibilities allotted people during their time on earth. Fado, in Santoro's view, refers to the traumatized state of the Portuguese language after it was hived off into multiple idiomatic forms and dispersed across five continents. He defers to Fernando Pessoa's characterization of fado as an "intervallic episode"; a state of spiritual unmooring in the wake of God's abandonment of the Portuguese people and in advance of their return to faith.[2]

This intervallic spacing is worked into the narrative fabric of *Fado Alexandrino* through historical crosscutting, the sliding of personal pronouns between "I" and "he," and the staging of psychic disorientation. Consider, for example, the scene in which the lieutenant colonel visits his ailing wife in the hospital only to discover that her dead body has been mysteriously whisked away and replaced by that of another sick person. He thought,

> There's got to be some mistake, no office ever functions properly in Portugal, they mix up names, they mix up dates, they mix up lives, they mix up children in maternity wards, what else can I say? What's the ward? [he asked.] There isn't any ward, the diabetic answered listlessly, a patient came in today and took the deceased's place.[3]

2 Gregory Rabassa, *If This Be Treason*, New York: New Directions, 2005, 143; Fernando Santoro, "Portuguais," in *Vocabulaire*, 969.

3 English translation: António Lobos Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, trans. Gregory Rabassa, New York: Grove Press, 1990, 21. (Original Portuguese text: "Lamento informá-lo, meu caro amigo, mas a sua esposa faleceu e o corpo abandonou já o Instituto, a família removeu-o logo após a autópsia, conforme anotação aqui anexa. Pensou Deve ser engano de certeza, nunca nenhuma secretaria funcionou bem em Portugal, trocam os nomes, trocam as datas, trocam as vidas, trocam os filhos nas maternidades, quanto mais. Qual é o serviço?, perguntou ele. Não há serviço nenhum, respondeu preguiçosamente o diabético, entrou hoje uma doente para o lugar da finada." António Lobo Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, Lisbon: Publicações dom Quixote, 1983, 38.

The cliché of bureaucratic resignation—"no office ever functions properly in Portugal"—situates fado in relation to existential incomprehension: How do the living go missing? What is the ward?

In yet another passage, fado may be identified with post-traumatic stress disorder. After the lieutenant returns from Africa, he finds that, like a stroke victim, he must recover language and memory:

> Syllable by syllable, the forgotten vocabulary that they already know: that picture, that knickknack, that painting, that door over there, as if the things lacked at the same time possessed a past, painfully reconstructed in a kind of difficult archeology of the emotions.[4]

Similarly, the Marxist communications officer, picked up and tortured for revolutionary activity, suffers from amnesiac holes in his visual field: "Like a group without faces, or an unfinished drawing, or those games with numbered dots that you have to connect in order to make a figure, a profile, a landscape."[5] The traumatic interval, marked as memory loss and information deficit in these barely cognized portraits and landscapes, is also acoustically registered. As the Estado Novo starts to collapse and the radio announcer blares out "government, democracy, freedom," a panicked old-timer, intuiting that "everything had taken the shape of a strange nightmare for him, a great big lie, the world against him all of a sudden, a flood, a

4 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 38. (Original Portuguese text: "Sílaba a sílaba o esquecido vocabulário que já sabem; este quadro, este bibelot, esta pintura, aquela porta, como se as coisas carecessem e possuíssem ao mesmo tempo um passado, penosamente reconstituído numa espécie de arqueologia difícil das emoções." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 60.)

5 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 123. (Original Portuguese text: "Como um retrato de grupo sem caras, ou um desenho incompleto, ou aqueles jogos de pontinhos numerados que é necessário unir para formar um boneco, um perfil, uma paisagem." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 181.)

shipwreck, a disaster, a tremendous threat," digs his asthma spray tube into his gums to make the sound *pfffft, pfffft, pfffft*.[6] An acoustic Untranslatable, pfffft sounds out the fado of the self-estranged colonial subject. The same idea is transmitted when speech is distorted by technology as the army delivers orders over the telephone to a rebel lieutenant colonel. "Silence and then squealing again, a kind of cooing, the mechanical coughing of a while back, the wires crackling, the nuts and bolts dissolving in a prolix mush of sounds."[7] After listening to the general tell him about the power of the navy, its guns aimed at Lisbon, the lieutenant replies: "It isn't worth wasting your Latin lesson on me, I'm not going to obey any of the orders you've given me."[8] Here, Latin, as the dead language par excellence, becomes the simile of choice for describing the babble of government military commands at the onset of the revolution.

Fado Alexandrino is a work about fado—defined thematically with reference to postcolonial trauma and dislocation and aesthetically by what we have called, following Pessoa, intervallic technique, by which we refer to eruptions of untranslatability registered as unintelligible sounds, evacuated words, emptied images and incomprehensible interpellations. In Lobo Antunes's *The Return of the Caravels*, we could say that it is the related concept of saudade that works as a nodal system, opening up critical approaches for literary theory and philosophy alike.

Antunes's titles are places where the limits of translation are especially manifest. In *The Return of the Caravels—As Naus* in Portuguese—what we find is the insertion of "caravel" where there

6 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 121. (Original Portuguese text: "Porque tudo se lhe afigurava um pesadelo esquisito, uma mentira formidável, o mundo de repente ao contrario, um dilúvio, um naufrágio, um cataclismo..." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 220–1.)

7 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 169. (Original Portuguese text: "Um silêncio e depois de novo guinchos, uma espécie de arrulhos, a tosse mecânica de á pouco, os fios a crepitarem, chapas e parafusos dissolvidos numa papa prolixa de sons." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 246.)

8 Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (English translation), 170. (Original Portuguese text: "Não merece a pena gastar o seu latim comigo, não vou cumprir nenhuma das ordens que me deu." Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*, 247.)

was no such reference in the original title. Rabassa possibly derived the English title from the phrase *le retour des caravelles* chosen for the French translation. "Caravel," carries specific associations with Portugal's maritime prowess and refers to a small, flexible vessel invented around the time that Portuguese maritime exploits in West Africa and the Atlantic Ocean took off in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Distinguished by its lateen sails, which added speed, the caravel became the prototype for the larger-scaled *caravela redonda*, which were fighting ships known as *Portuguese Man o'War* deployed to patrol Portugal's trade corridors to Brazil and the East Indies. The caravel represented the mariner's navigational skill matched to advanced technologies of ship building. The galleon *São João Baptista* nicknamed "Botafogo"—whose 1552 shipwreck was commemorated in Luís Vaz de Camões's account of Vasco da Gama's voyage to India in the epic *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusíads*)—was just this kind of model warcraft machine. As Margaret Cohen notes in *The Novel and the Sea*, such ships and their mariners inspired the genre of the "craft romance." "Long after craft disappeared," she writes, "the icons of maritime modernity would return to figure practices at the frontier of capitalist risk."

In Antunes's novel, the caravel is no longer just the proto-capitalist transporter of slaves and *fétissos* nor is it the contemporary mover of diamonds and petroleum. It emerges as a figure of haunted postcolonial modernity typified by the *retornados*, those legions of settler-colonials dispatched by FRELIMO, UNITA, and a host of other insurrectional groups that ensured the belated end of Portugal's African empire. Helena Carvalhão Buescu (commenting on Lobos Antunes's reworking of *The Lusíads*) emphasizes the *retornado*'s territorial dislocation: "A strange condition, in which a territory only seems possible if viewed from *another* territory, which is also the territory of the other."[9] Like the *retornado* who becomes a shadow of his former self when relocated to Portugal, the caravel stands as a hollowed-out specter of former imperial glory:

9 Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010, 15–16, 66; Helena Carvalhão Buescu, "Time Displaced: Post-Colonial Experience in António Lobo Antunes," *European Review* 13: 2, April/May 2005, 262.

"In Africa, strewn with stone markers, the remains of caravels, and the armor of dead conquerors, screech owls plant themselves in the middle of clearings and let the cars run over them ..."[10] Then, we have Diogo Cão, the water company inspector, who spends his days tracking the Tagus nymphs and fantasizing in his alcoholic haze that he is Henry the Navigator. In one scene, he is transmogrified into a caravel: each part of the ship's technology becomes an extension of his own heaving anatomy as he achieves sexual climax with his prostitute-caretaker. Most often, the caravel's association with the backward, longing gaze of the *retornado* makes it a trigger of saudade:

> The poet pictured a horde of consumptives in hospital uniforms, crouching in the midst of dunes, waiting for a laughable monarch who would rise up out of the waters accompanied by his defeated army. Ever since he'd returned from Africa, even the flow of time had seemed absurd to him, and he still hadn't got used to the slow quince-jelly summer sunsets or the lack of grass with its avid insect rustle, and he would move about the city as if on a planet created by the mechanics of imagination, keeping informed through items in the newspapers that were as enigmatic as the singing of whales.[11]

Seaborne hallucinations bind this vision of historical anachronism and psychic disorientation to the condition commonly called fugue, *wandertrieb*, or traveler's disease. The philosopher Ian Hacking describes it nosologically, linking it to multiple personality disorder in his *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (1995) and *Mad Travellers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illness* (1998). Hacking offers the Anglo-analytic correlative (grounded in the philosophy of mind and cognitive psychology) to the continental philosophy of saudade, whose kindred terms in other European languages include: *ἀκηδία* (negligence) in Greek; *acidĭa* (listlessness, torpor, depression) and *desiderium* (yearning) in Latin; *nostalgie* (nostalgia) in French; *sehnsucht* (longing) in German; *soledad* (loneliness) in Spanish; *anyoransa* (to find less) in Catalan; *kaiho* (involuntary solitude) in Finnish; *hiraeth* (homesickness tinged with grief) in Welsh; *mall* (sadness mixed with laughter) in Albanian; *weltschmerz* (sorrow of the world) in German; spleen (in the Baudelairean sense of ennui) in English; and *melancholia* (in the Freudian sense of a pathological incorporation of the object of mourning) in Greek.

In his entry on "saudade" for the *Vocabulaire*, Santoro gives it the run of languages, disciplines and modalities of existence:

> The object that produces *saudade* determines in each case an existential, cultural, aesthetic, religious, metaphysical position (the *saudades* for a lover, a country, a time, this or that idea ...); inversely, everything, from literature to religion and politics, is capable of an interpretation modulated by *saudade*. This is the case for the diverse philosophies, in their differences of period and language: from Plato's theory of the desire for the Beautiful through reminiscence of its idea to the transcendence of metaphysics by a return to the pre-Socratic origins of thought, the whole history of philosophy can be woven and deconstructed in the shadow of this delectable melancholic passion.[12]

While saudade here risks becoming overly capacious, it recuperates specificity in cross-literary contexts. Arthur Rimbaud's "The Drunken Boat" (1871) affords an early case of French saudade, with all the crucial elements: a sea voyage, traveler's disease, and a concatenation of feelings ranging from erotic bliss, to blues, to mortal bitterness. In Louise Varèse translation (1952):

10 António Lobo Antunes, *The Return of the Caravels*, trans. Gregory Rabassa, New York: Grove Press, 2002, 16...(Original Portuguese text: "Em Africa, semeada de padrões, de destroços de caravela e de armaduras de conquistadores finados, os mochos plantavam-se no centro das picadas e deixavam que os carros os astropelassem." António Lobo Antunes, *As naus*, Lisboa: Publicações dom Quixote/Círculo de Leitores, 1988, 28.)

11 Ibid., 203. (Original Portuguese text: "O poeta imaginou uma horda de tísicos em uniforme hospitalar, acocorados na neblina das dunas, à espera de um monarca risível que se elevaria das águas na companhia do seu exército vencido. Desde que regressara de Africa que até o fluir do tempo se lhe afigurava absurdo, e não se conformara ainda com os demorados crepúsculos de calda de marmelo do verão, a ausência de capim e o seu restolhar ávido de insectos, e movia-se na cidade como num planeta criado pelo mecanismo da imaginação, informado por notícias de jornal tão enigmáticas como arrulhos de baleia." Antunes, *As naus*, 240.)

12 Fernando Santoro, "Saudade," in *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, trans. Steven Rendall, 1117.

And since then I've been bathing in the Poem
Of star-infused and milky Sea,
Devouring the azure greens, where, flotsam pale,
A brooding corpse as times drifts by;

Where, dyeing suddenly the blue,
Rhythms delirious and slow in the *blaze of day*,
Stronger than alcohol, vaster than your lyres,
Ferment the bitter reds of love![13]

In Samuel Beckett translation (mid-1930s):

Thenceforward, fused in the poem, milk of stars,
Of the sea, I coiled through deeps of cloudless green,
Where, dimly, they come swaying down,
Rapt and sad, singly, the drowned;

Where, under *sky's haemorrhage,* slowly tossing
In thuds of fever, *arch-alcohol* of song,
Pumping over the blues in sudden stains,
The bitter redness of love ferment.[14]
[My italics.]

Samuel Beckett translated the poem at an early stage in his career (though it was only published years later in 1976). His choice of "sky's haemorrhage" for "rutilements du jour" (rendered in Louise Varèse's version as "blaze of day") and his curious bricolaged term "arch-alcohol" for "plus fortes que l'alcool" (stronger than alcohol) have been sharply criticized as examples of aberrant translation. But we could say that Beckett was alive to the *saudade-effect* and wanted to communicate its Rimbaldian deregulation of the senses through

13 Louise Varèse, "The Drunken Boat," in *A Season in Hell and The Drunken Boat*, 95. (Original French text: "Et, dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le poème / De la Mer infusé d'astres et lactescent / Dévorant les azurs verts où, flottaison blême / Et ravie, un noyé pensif, parfois, descend; / Où, teignant tout à coup les bleuités, délires / Et rythmes lents sous les rutilements du jour, / Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que vos lyres." Arthur Rimbaud, "Le bateau ivre," in *A Season in Hell and The Drunken Boat*, trans. Louise Varèse, New York: New Directions, 1961, 9).

14 Samuel Beckett, *Drunken Boat*, Reading, UK: Whiteknights, 1976, 27.

the practice of *translating untranslatably*; by which I mean using a kind of over-translation that embraces wild infidelity to the original and pushes the envelope of translatability.

Identifying saudade with the full "-abilities" of untranslatability, instead of reserving it for restricted use as the name of a Portuguese Untranslatable, assigns the term a special critical function in comparative literature. It becomes a term for translation-wobble—the difficulty encountered by both writers and their translators in rendering passages that express complexes of emotion. Consider, for example, a famous passage in *Madame Bovary* in which Flaubert grappled with the literary pitfalls of verbalizing longing, or German romantic *Sehnsucht*. Rodolphe, growing tired of Emma, hears her wild declarations of passion as clichés uttered countless times before by his ex-mistresses:

On en devait rabattre, pensait-il, les discours exagérés cachant les affections médiocres: comme si la plénitude de l'âme ne débordait pas quelquefois par les métaphores les plus vides, puisque personne, jamais, ne peut donner l'exact mesure de ses besoins, ni de ses conceptions ni de ses douleurs, et que la parole humaine est comme un chaudron fêlé où nous battons des mélodies à faire danser les ours, quand on voudrait attendrir les étoiles.

In Lydia Davis's translation:

One had to discount, he thought, exaggerated speeches that concealed mediocre affections; as if the fullness of the soul did not sometimes overflow in the emptiest of metaphors, since none of us can ever express the exact measure of our needs, or our ideas, or our sorrows, and human speech is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, when we long to move the stars to pity.

The cracked kettle (*chaudron fêlé*) resembles the "cracked bell" (*la cloche fêlée*) of Baudelaire's spleen-poem, which contains the saudade-steeped line: "Moi, mon âme est fêlée, et lorsqu'en ses ennuis ..." (adroitly rendered in English by Edna St. Vincent Millay as "My soul is cracked across by care"). The allusion to crack-up

stands out against the treacly finale in the Flaubert extract: "When we long to move the stars to pity." This sentimental phrase might have been less cloying if the translator had opted for a Beckett-style aberrant translation: "As when one tenderizes the stars," thereby producing the fancifully strong metaphor: "My soul is tenderized meat!" Such a translation, monstrous though it may be, seems in keeping with the text if one follows Rivka Galchen's remarks on Lydia Davis's new translation of *Madame Bovary*. She argues that Flaubert was confronting the

> problem of trying to find a noncanned way to talk about the fullness of the human soul that might be expressed *even* in canned speech and by the plight of Davis, who, in order to be true to the even-more-impossible-than-usual-to-translate-faithfully passage, has to similarly make her way through expressions received and not, and a language that needs to find something lyrical through use of its clunkier words."[15]

Galchen articulates what might be thought of as the *saudade-syndrome*, whereby one struggles, at one and the same time, to signify the fullness of the human soul *and* preserve critical distance from its hackneyed expression.

The saudade-syndrome in comparative literature has a lot of travel in it despite being a local national genre. Antonio Tabucchi, well-known as a writer who channels Fernando Pessoa, is one who has explicitly "saudadized" Italian literature. Stories like "The Backwards Game" (a gloss of Pessoa's poem "The Tobacco Shop"), "The Last Three Days of Fernando Pessoa," and "Dream of Fernando Pessoa, Poet and Pretender" are steeped in Pessoan irreality, fleetingness, disorientation and ironic metaphysics.[16] *Requiem: A Hallucination* (1991), Tabucchi's only novel written in Portuguese, stages a meeting with a Pessoa-like character referred

15 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1986, 259; Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Lydia Davis, New York: Viking, 2010, 167; "When we long to move the stars to pity." ("Quand on voudrait attendrir les étoiles."); Rivka Galchen, "*Madame Bovary*, c'est toi!" *Bookforum* 17: 5, February/March 2011, 23.

16 In "The Tobacco Shop," Pessoa speaks of "A liberation from all speculation/And an awareness that metaphysics is a consquence of not feeling very well."

to as "the Guest."[17] It is set up as both a homage to and parody of Pessoan "disquiet" as well as an exercise in what he calls the "re-elaboration of mourning" based on the translation of saudade into a narrative form of spectral recall. The spectral extends to the way in which Italian haunts Tabucchi's Portuguese. "Eu," the novel's narrator, is an Italian who speaks Portuguese fluently but preserves traces of his status as a non-native speaker (he overuses, for example, the Portuguese conditional rather than the more-common imperfect tense). By contrast, when the Portuguese characters speak, they drop this tic and show off the author's mastery of Portuguese by brandishing idioms and insider phrases. The contrast between "Portugueses" creates a slightly seasick style reinforcing saudade as a trope of maritime linguistic dislocation.

Tracking saudade as a literary Untranslatable, one soon encounters its Turkish correlative *hüzün*, associated by Orhan Pamuk with a sense of "worldly failure, listlessness, and spiritual suffering," with the postcolonial melancholia of Istanbul after the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, and with a cluster of feelings that, in Pamuk's writing, approximate something Proustian: "Offering no clarity, veiling reality instead, hüzün brings us comfort, softening the view like the condensation on a window when a teakettle has been spouting steam on a winter's day." Given their shared semantic territory, it is likely that saudade originally derived from hüzün, which passed through the Portuguese-Arabic inheritance. Hüzün, writes Pamuk,

> has an Arabic root; when it appears in the Koran (as *huzn* in two verses and *hazen* in three others) it means much the same thing as the contemporary Turkish word. The Prophet Muhammad referred to the year in which he lost both his wife Hatice and his uncle, Ebu Talip, as *Senettul huzn, the year of melancholy*; this confirms that the word is meant to convey a feeling of deep spiritual loss.[18]

17 Antonio Tabucchi, *Requiem: A Hallucination*, trans. Margaret Jull Costa, New York: New Directions, 2002.

18 Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, 90.

For Pamuk, *hüzün*'s abilities as a literary Untranslatable are only enhanced in philosophy:

> But if *hüzün* begins its life as a word for loss and the spiritual agony and grief attending it, my own readings indicate a small philosophical fault line developing over the next few centuries of Islamic history. With time, we see the emergence of two very different *hüzüns*, each evoking a distinct philosophical tradition.

The first refers to when "we have invested too much in worldly pleasures and material gain." The second meaning arises out of Sufi mysticism, "the spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close enough to Allah, because we cannot do enough for Allah in this world." Saudade is similarly drawn into philosophical orbit by Santoro, who maintains that it

> became, for philosophical speculation, an experience of the human condition that was particularly suitable for expressing its relationship to temporality, finitude, and the infinite ... Pleasure and anxiety: the result is a displaced melancholic state that aspires to move beyond the finitude of the moment and the errancy of distance.

The identification of saudade as a philosophy of transfinitude gains further traction when its etymology is fully mined. According to John T. Hamilton's expert digest:

> The Latin noun *solitas,* the state of being alone or set apart, is understood as imposing distance from what is longed for and therefore the desire to overcome that distance. Latin vocabulary provides many examples that emphasize the basic senses of apartness and detachment implicit in the prefix *sē-* and the adjective *solus*, for example: *secessio* "withdrawal, separation" (< *se* + *cedo*, "go, move"); *secretus* "that which has been set aside or put away" (< *se* + *cerno*, "distinguish, mark off"); *seductio* "a leading or drawing aside" (< *se* + *duco*, "lead"); and *separatio* "a setting apart" (< *se* + *paro*, "prepare, arrange, order"). To be *sober* means to be removed from wine (< *se* + *ebrius*, "sated with drink, drunk"); and to be sluggish (*socors*) is to be without spirit (< *se* + *cor*, "heart"). In the grammatical economy of the prepositional phrase, we could say that the ablative object

governed by *se* has been removed, taken from one mental or physical place and put somewhere else.

Analogous to the prefix *se* is the preposition *sine* (without), which also governs the ablative. The earlier adverbial sense of *sine* reaches back to the Indo-European root **s(u) (d/n)* "by itself, without," which inscribes the Latin *sine* morpheme into an entire group of Indo-European terms denoting "severance" or "removal," including Old Indic *sanutár* "far away, off to the side," Greek *aneu* "without," and even expressions for the number *nine*, which in the Indo-European decimal system signifies "one taken away." The link to the ablative already introduces a removal or withdrawal *from*, insofar as the primary force of the ablative case is one of separation (*ablativus* < *ablatus* "taken from"), which is generally used to express syntactic relations of privation, source, cause, agency or comparison. (The syntagma *sine cura* recalls *secura*, which vividly conjures a scene in which *care* (*cura*) has been taken away.) In addition to *sine*, this family of words gives us the Latin *vanus* ("empty"), which is cognate not only with the German *ohne* "without" but also with the noun *Wahn*—the term that denotes a mental "delusion," but alludes more precisely to being "empty in mind," to suffering a mental condition in which reason has been "taken away" or "removed." Moreover, in German, the suffix *–fried* may denote "removal or *freedom* from" as in the name Richard Wagner selected for his residence in Bayreuth: *Wahnfried*, a kaleidoscopic terminus that not only pays homage to the German author of the Tristan legend (Gottfried von Strassburg), but also evokes "freedom or peaceful protection from delusion [*Wahn*]," or, given the analysis above: a dizzying "removal from removal."

Finally, the Gothic *sundro* "alone" yields the German *sondern*—both the conjunction ("but rather") and the verb ("to separate")—as well as the old preposition *sonder* ("without"), which today is still heard in some particular expressions like *sonder Zahl* (for *ƺahllos* "countless") and *sondergleichen* ("unparalleled"). In English, we have the adverb *asunder* as well as the adjective *sundry*, which stems directly from the Old English *syndrig* ("private, separate").[19]

19 Ibid., 90; ibid., 90; ibid., 90; Santoro, "Saudade," 1115; "the Latin noun *solitas* ...": John T. Hamilton, email to me, February 14, 2011.

Philology provides material support for interpreting saudade as a philosophy of transfinitude: that is to say, as a theory of spacing and separation (the interstices between life and death); of severance from this world; of the relinquishment of metaphysical security; of an emptying out of the present; of preparation for transportation to an unknown elsewhere; and of altered mental states. "Trans" and "trance" share the same root: the Latin *transīre—trans* (across, over) plus *ire* (to go)—which carries the meanings of to cross and to transit and transition but also to die, in the sense of to go over to the other side of life, or to pass away, to cease. The French *transe*, meaning to fright, to swoon, and *transir*, meaning to shiver or experience chill, to carry the mortal freeze of the death drive into registers of somatic tremor. Transfinitude subsumes, on the one hand, the religious meaning of *translatio* (to be translated, is to ascend to heaven without dying; the Nicene Fathers discuss the translation of bishops from one see to another; and, for the medievals, sacred relics are translated in being moved) and on the other, Freud's theories of thought transference, telepathy, and occultism.[20]

Transfinitude is moreover a key concept in the recent philosophies of speculative materialism and speculative realism, both of which have been characterized by their interest in thought-experiments indifferent to anthropocentric consciousness. Here, we are dealing with a philosophy concerned to tackle the correlationist problem, that of how to uncouple thinking from being. Correlationism argues that we can only access knowledge through correlates of thought and being. What lies beyond this correlation is unknowable, barred access. It was Hermann Cohen, following Salomon Maimon, who argued that the given is produced by infinitesimals of sensation, capable of rationalization. Cognition is thus understood as an imperative directed toward an infinite, with God standing in for the cognitive summa toward which human reason strives. Quentin Meillassoux takes issue with this Kantian, reason-based model of cognitive finitude; he challenges the claim that conceivable possibilities constitute a totality, and contests "the idea according to

20 Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 38.

which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other." Using terms like "ancestrality," or the "arche-fossil," in his 2008 book *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, he poses the question: "How are we to understand the meaning of scientific statements about a manifestation of the world which is supposed to be anterior to any human form of the relation to the world?" Meillassoux contends that there are "properties of time that are indifferent to our existence," and proposes a conception of the ontical that refers to "an entity which is essentially contingent, yet capable of existing in a world devoid of humanity—regardless of whether this entity is a world, a law, or an object." For Meillassoux, the transfinite denotes a "temporality delivered from real necessity"; a "detotalization of number" (the totality of the thinkable); and an absolute outside or elsewhere:

> For it could be that contemporary philosophers have lost the *great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which was not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is, existing in itself regardless of whether we are thinking of it or not; that outside which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory—of being entirely elsewhere.[21]

In a complementary vein, Graham Harman in his book *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (2005) offers a version of the anticorrelationist argument that targets human-centered phenomenology:

> Husserl had already noticed that intentional objects are never directly accessible. But objectless sensuality is also not directly accessible, so that we find ourselves immersed in something midway between the two. Levinas and Merleau-Ponty paid special attention to this ether of qualities without objects in which humans forever bathe. Lingis ... with his discussion of levels, hinted at a certain realist twist to carnal phenomenology; the level is not something permanently

21 Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier, London: Continuum, 2008, 5, 112, 121, 127, 101, 103 and 7.

> fixed between humans and world, but there are varying levels within the world. Human consciousness is not what establishes these levels, as if it alone introduced a sensual medium into the world—instead, it simply navigates the levels like a freelance submarine or zeppelin. In this way, the fleshly medium of loose qualities is placed everywhere in the world. It is allowed to spread between all of the objects of the world rather than being confined to the single tear-jerking rift that separates people from all that is not people.

And, in a subsequent book, *Prince of Networks*, which explicates and builds on the work of Bruno Latour, Harman imagines a continuum in which "all entities are on the same ontological footing: everything is an object, whether it be a mailbox, electromagnetic radiation, curved spacetime, the Commonwealth of Nations, or a propositional attitude; all things, whether physical or fictional, are equally objects." This pan-psychism becomes part of a discipline he calls speculative psychology, dedicated to investigating the "cosmic layers of psyche" and to "ferreting out the specific psychic reality of earthworms, dust, armies, chalk, and stone." Harman's pan-psychic, object-oriented ontology finds its literary complement in Italo Calvino's short fictions in *Le cosmicomiche* (*Cosmicomics*, in William Weaver's English translation). In "The Spiral," for example, we enter the "consciousness" of a mollusk. Qualities and sensual mediums detach from each other and recombine: stripings and forms exist "independently of any relationship to visibility"; thoughts are severed from brains, vibrations find kindred vibrations, and "distinct individualities" become "shared relations ... an indiscriminate abandon, slapdash, a kind of—who's next?—collective ecstasy?"[22] This vitalist fantasia in seawater makes for an interesting contrast with the saudade-infused articulations of trans-finitude prevalent in Pessoa's *Livro do Desassossego* and which tend toward existential phenomenology:

22 Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*, Peru, IL: Carus, 2005, 91; Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, Melbourne: re-press, 2009, 213; Italo Calvino, *Cosmicomics*, trans. William Weaver, London: Harcourt, 1968, 141, 142, and 145, respectively.

> But there's something else ... In these languid and empty hours, a sadness felt by my entire being rises from my soul to my mind—a bitter awareness that everything is a sensation of mine and at the same time something external, something not in my power to change. Ah, how often my own dreams have raised up before me as things, not to replace reality but to declare themselves its equals, in so far as I scorn them and they exist apart from me, like the tram now turning the corner of the end of the street.[23]

At first reading, the emphasis on "my entire being" would seem to affirm a humanist focus that sits at a far remove from Harman's object ontology or Calvino's experiment in thinking as a mollusk. Yet, if we look more closely, Pessoa's parallel reality posits an equalized "relationality" (*seus pares*) among self, dream, and tram that approaches Harman, especially to Harman's appropriation of A. N. Whitehead's process philosophy, in which (as the editors of *The Speculative Turn* put it) "the relation between human and world is merely a special case of any relation at all."[24]

In treating saudade as another name for trans- or postfinitude, I have consciously shifted from its local usage as a term connoting human sentiment, idealism and religious transcendence to an ascription of materialist metaphysics. Saudade is translated, then, in the image of a trans-function that marshals pathetic fallacies in order to think like an object. The concern has been not to erase saudade's rich aesthetic history in comparative literature (where it resonates fully with representations of maritime melancholia, fugue, or the untranslatability of longing into language) but rather to extend its "-abilities" as a philosophical Untranslatable.

23 Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. Richard Zenith, London: Penguin, 2001, 14. (Original Portuguese text: "Mas há mais alguma coisa ... Nessas horas lentas e vazias, sobe-me da alma à mente uma tristeza de todo o ser, a amargura de tudo ser ao mesmo tempo uma sensação minha e uma coisa externa, que não está em meu poder alterar. Ah, quantas vezes os meus próprios sonhos se me erguem em coisas, não para me substituírem a realidade, mas para se me confessarem seus pares em eu os não querer, em me surgirem de fora, como o eléctrico que dá a volta na curva extrema da rua." Fernando Pessoa, *O Livro do Desassossego*, ed. Richard Zenith, Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1998, Fragment 4, 48.)

24 Levi R. Bryant, Nick Srnicek, Graham Harman, ed., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, Melbourne: re-press, 2011, 8.

IV

Keywords 4: "Sex" and "Gender"

Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 landmark *Le deuxième sexe*, considered through the lens of philosophical translation, provides a compelling point of departure for the analysis of "sex" and "gender" as keywords in trans-Atlantic feminist theory. Instead of criticizing *Le deuxième sexe*, as many American readers have been wont to do, for its adoption of the difficult lexicons of Marxist alienation; Kojèvian Hegelianism; French Heideggerianism; the phenomenological experientialism of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre; and Lacanian misrecognition and structuralist accounts of kinship and myth, we should newly appreciate how the book inaugurated the gendering of ontology, a tendency whose extensive history in philosophical feminism is very much ongoing, especially in the work of Catherine Malabou.[1]

Beauvoir's translation of philosophy into a language of first-wave feminism is most apparent in *Le deuxième sexe*, where we find conceptions of the subject, existence, being, self-consciousness, freedom, negation, alterity, perception and the dialectics of power imbricated with the problems of sexual difference, sexual equality, sexed positions, feminist sex, gender plasticity and sexual translation. And, though the text was obviously written prior to the time when terms like "genre," "gender," and "sex" had cycled into modern feminist parlance, the way in which it pressed *sexe* into service as a multi-use term prepared the way for thinking about it as a philosophical

1 Catherine Malabou, *Changer de différence: Le féminin et la question philosophique*, Paris: Galilée, 2009; *Changing Difference*, trans. Carolyn Shread, London: Polity, 2011.

Untranslatable that lends itself to the *contresens*, a translation that reverses the logic or meaning of the original sentence. Increasingly, we see the *contresens* shaking up sex and gender politics; erupting, for example, in the "translation war" that followed the 2009 publication of the new English translation of *The Second Sex* by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, and surfacing, as more of a symptom than a sticking point, in a skirmish that broke out at the height of the Dominique Strauss-Kahn affair. In this latter case, the French sociologist Irène Théry accused the American historian Joan Wallach Scott of a French linguistic mistake (which led to misreading Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée* as a story of the lady's submission to the shephard when it was in fact the shephard who submitted to the lady) and of committing a gross *contresens*. She claimed that Scott performed the *contresens* after alleging that Théry's defense of *féminisme à la française* (which made a place for "seduction" unfettered by norms of political correctness) was conciliatory toward sexism and an abrogation of democratic sexual citizenship.[2]

Beyond the volleys anchored by allegations of translation errors, the gender Untranslatable emerged as a theoretical catalyst for a Mellon research project spearheaded by Judith Butler provisionally titled "Remainders: Feminist Translations in Geopolitical Time." A commitment was made to subject to critique translation's operative principles of *equivalence*, *substitutability* and *replacement*, which it claimed had become pegged imperialistically to metrics of modernity within European languages and space-time coordinates:

2 Elsa Dorlin (author of *Sexe, genre et sexualités*) in an article of July 2, 2011 in the online journal *Mediapart*, refuses the terms of the debate, which pits a feminism "à la française" against feminism "à l'américaine." According to Dorlin, as long as we stay with the question of whether consensual seduction has a right to be protected by French republicanism, the debate, at best, will simply lead to changing the place of the players in the story to demonize the venal seductrice who seduced the seducer. She suggests that a better option would be to dispense with the rhetoric of consensual seduction altogether, especially as an expression of a French democratic heritage. Dorlin is interested in the political uses of Joan Scott's notion of "genre," conceived of as a critical instrument that historicizes power, and describes its "plasticity and reversibility" as well as its reliance on linear narratives of domination.

In both multicultural and intersectional analysis, there is an assumption that equivalence can be asserted among cultural categories or identities, and yet clearly, that equivalence can only be established if a successful mode of substitution is available, and so, a mode of translation that is tied to an ideal of effective and complete substitution.

In both contexts, the idea is that translation works, which means that substitutability wins and something is fully left behind, and something new is fully installed in its place. What happens if the traces of what is lost cannot be erased from what comes into being, and which reside or persist in the newer version? At stake is how one time comes to inhabit another time, and how one place is transposed onto another. I am not committed to inhabitation and transposition as the technical terms for this process, but it seems to me that the politics of translation has to reconfigure the spatial and temporal coordinates of the globe in order to establish a critical relation to both cultural imperialism and to those "alternatives" that fail to contest its logic. The point is not to find the "structure" of translation itself, but consider the disruption of presumptive global place and time that it can effect.[3]

At stake is the need to question the idea that *translation works*, that *substitutability wins*, and that *something new can be fully installed in the place of something else*. Remainders are thus politically marshaled, like so many leftovers of nonequivalence that resist subsumption. Now, while Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* does not second guess in any obvious way these imperatives to philosophize through and against translation, it qualifies as an epochal experiment in the translation of philosophy into feminism and as a test case for philosophical translation (it has been published in forty languages and counting). Both problematics become intertwined and concretized in debates arising from the work's first English publication in 1953 in abridged form by H. M. Parshley.

Parshley's translation has been a longstanding concern of Beauvoir scholars, among them Michèle Le Dœuff, Elizabeth Fallaize, Margaret Simons, Nancy Bauer, Eva Lundgren-Gothlin and Toril Moi. In an essay published in *Signs* in 2002 titled "While

3 "Remainders"; collectively authored brief of Mellon seminar on gender and translation, June 2009.

We Wait," Moi underscored four types of systematic error in the translation. Parshley, she notes, (1) "turns terms for existence into terms for essence"; (2) "tends to take words for subjectivity (*sujet, subjectivité*), to mean the 'unsystematic,' 'personal,' or 'not objective'"; (3) "completely fails to recognize Beauvoir's pervasive references to Hegel"; and (4) "has no idea that Beauvoir's central concept of 'alienation' (*aliénation*) is a philosophical term taken from Hegel and Lacan, he therefore makes her important theory of the production of women's subjectivity under patriarchy invisible in English." Drawing on Eva Lungren-Gothlin's *Sex and Existence*, she examines the particular challenges to translation posed by the word *Dasein*, which the French philosopher Henry Corbin translated as *réalité humaine*. According to Moi,

> When Beauvoir writes *réalité féminine* and puts it in quotation marks, she is first of all alluding to Corbin's *réalité humaine* and, second, introducing a subtle understanding of sexed existence to a concept that Sartre and Heidegger thought of as universal.[4]

In her review of the new English translation by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier in the *London Review of Books* (February 2010), Moi impressed on readers how much rides philosophically on Beauvoir's word choice:

> Throughout *The Second Sex* Borde and Malovany-Chevallier confuse "woman" and "the woman," and "man" and "the man": *le mythe de la femme* is sometimes translated as "the myth of woman" and sometimes as "the myth of the woman," as if there were no difference; *la femme* becomes "women" and "a woman" on the same page. Even the most famous sentence in *The Second Sex* is affected. Parshley translated "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient" as "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Borde and Malovany-Chevallier write: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." This is an elementary grammatical mistake. French does not use the indefinite article after *être* ("be") and *devenir* ("become"), but no such rule exists in English. (*Comment devenir traducteur?* must

4 Toril Moi, "While We Wait: The English Translation of *The Second Sex*," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 27: 4, 2002: 1014–15, 1016.

be translated as "How to become a translator?") This error makes Beauvoir sound as if she were committed to a theory of women's difference. But Beauvoir's point isn't that a baby girl grows up to become woman; she becomes *a* woman, one among many, and in no way the incarnation of Woman, a concept Beauvoir discards as a patriarchal "myth" in the first part of her book. "I am woman hear me roar" has no place in Beauvoir's feminism.

Moi conjures away the specter of an essentialist Beauvoir summoned by the questionable translation of this famous phrase and others like it that she considers problematic. She lays down the gauntlet in calling for a different kind of translational practice. Whether this would entail a scholarly apparatus of explanation (footnotes, a glossary, parenthetical alternative terms) or diction and style that reflect Beauvoir's political and phenomenological usage more accurately, Moi makes clear that any translation must be attuned to the philosophical DNA of *The Second Sex*, especially if it intends to deliver Beauvoir's "coherent and deeply original philosophy of sexed subjectivity, one that never degenerates into a general theory of 'femininity' or 'difference.'"[5]

Let me take up this issue of sexed subjectivity, using a translational approach. Beauvoir's sexing of *Dasein*—could we translate it more accurately as *feminine being-there*?—was consequential since it departed from the gender impersonalism of the ego that Sartre had assumed in his books *Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. As the subject of ontology is phenomenalized in the form of being itself, Sartre positioned it as the receptacle of the famous *l'être-en-soi-pour-soi* (being-in-and-for-itself), abstracted from gendered embodiment. This is being intended toward itself; aware that the instantiating consciousness of existence is grounded in self-negation; evacuated of motivational psychology and the freer for it. Beauvoir's woman subject was also marked by negation: the subtractive, tenuous status of her existence rang out on the first page of the first volume of *The Second Sex* when she wrote, "We no longer know if women still

5 Toril Moi, "The Adulteress Wife," *The London Review of Books* 32: 3, February 11, 2010, 17.

exist, whether they will continue to exist, or whether their continued existence is desirable or not." But one could also say that her existential prerogatives, which included doing, loving, and being together, were gender situational in a way that Sartre's were not. Moreover, in adapting Sartrean constructs of reciprocal recognition and productive work, and especially of *Mitsein* (a co-transcending of subjects rather than a subject in a state of being transcended), Beauvoir emancipated the "second sex" from the nullifying consequences of egoic inferiority, social objectification, barred access to the public sphere, civil inequality and an ontological identification with immanence and phallic lack. For translators, communicating where and how Beauvoir adhered to Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre when she talked about being and existence and where she departed from them poses a difficult task but a truly interesting one. Consider this phrase of Beauvoir's: "La femme est un existant à qui on demande de se faire objet; en tant que sujet elle a une sensualité aggressive qui ne s'assouvit pas sur le corps masculin." As translated by Parshley: "Woman is an existent who is called upon to make herself object; as subject she has an aggressive element in her sensuality which is not satisfied on the male body: hence the conflicts that her eroticism must somehow overcome." As translated by Borde and Malovany-Chevallier: "Woman is an existent who is asked to make herself object; as subject she has an aggressive sensuality that does not find satisfaction in the masculine body; from this are born the conflicts her eroticism must overcome."[6]

One is initially struck, of course, by the way in which the feminine article of "la femme" is neutralized by the masculine article of "un existent." It is hard to read "la femme est un existant" without projecting a neutered femininity. Harder still is comprehending what an existent is, let alone a feminized one. An existent is a philosopheme referring to the complex relationship in German between *Existenz* and *Dasein*. Pascal David observes: "When Heidegger

6 "On ne sait plus bien s'il existe encore des femmes, s'il en existera toujours, s'il faut ou non le souhaiter": Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe* I, Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 11; Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, 172; Parshley, *The Second Sex*, 406; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, *The Second Sex*, 419.

re-injected a new meaning into *Dasein* to make it signify, in *Sein und Zeit*, the existent for whom his own being is at stake, the term was already charged with history and diverse meanings: time, the duration of an existence, presence, and also life, being, existence, being-there." David traces the problem of *Dasein* back to Jacobi's "feeling of existing" (*Gefühl das Daseins*) which Rousseau called, in the fifth of his *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire*, "the feeling of existence divested of any other affection."

In the Romantic period, he notes, Schelling figured the existent as uncannily apart from *Dasein*. But by the time we get to Husserl, for whom existents are "the phenomenon," the "'what appears' of being," this separation is no longer so obvious. For Heidegger, the existent will be associated with *Dasein*'s peculiar mode of being as distinct from *vorhandensein*. As David explains it, *vorhandensein*, or "being at hand," no longer characterizes anything but the presence of the mode of things, which "are found there," by opposition to *Dasein* struggling with its "difficulty of being" and with the care that is its essence, its arche-structure."[7] Reading this back into Beauvoir's phrase, it would seem that she is identifying the feminine existent with something closer to *ʒuhandensein* (the readiness-to-hand of an existing entity, sometimes referred to as "tool-being") than to *Dasein*. This tool-being is not reducible to a metaphysics of objects oriented toward their own ontology, thinkable independently of human thought and being, nor is it to be collapsed into a familiar notion of feminine Otherness, amenable to objectification or disposable as a prosthetic implement of masculinity. It should be aligned, rather, with an "active and prehensive" way of being—"active, *préhensive*" are Beauvoir's terms—which is to say, specially equipped to grasp things, ideas, percepts, objects, other beings, material realities, intangible materialities, placed within reach by milieu, environment and cosmos.[8] Interestingly, the philosophical term "préhensif," marked in its use as "prehension" by Heidegger and

7 Pascal David, "*Dasein*," *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, 285–6. trans. Stephen Rendall, English; the *Vocabulaire*, forthcoming, Princeton University Press. See, too, Jean-François Courtine's entry in the *Vocabulaire* on "Vorhanden," 1383–7.

8 Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 562.

Whitehead, vanishes without a trace in both English translations. Parshley referred to the emancipated woman as one who "wants to be active, *a taker*," while Borde and Malovany-Chevallier substitute "active and prehensile." In each case, the utility function of seizing hold or grasping (physically, intellectually), characteristic of comportment with tools or ideas, is conveyed, but what is forfeited is the philosophical import of prehension, keyed to Heidegger's *ʒuhanden*, or "ready-to-hand." For Heidegger, prehension is an anticipatory mode of being, an expectancy of future exploit. For Sartre, it corresponded to being's interaction with time; its "touch" of what is offered at hand in the present moment.[9]

Tunneling into the philosophical nuances of the feminine existent as a name for prehensive being, or *Dasein*'s relation to *ʒuhanden*, helps resolve an old dispute between Moi and Butler over the status of "instrumentality" in Beauvoir's thought.[10] Butler wrote in *Gender Trouble*: "Beauvoir proposes that the female body ought to be the situation and instrumentality of women's freedom, not a defining and limiting essence." And yet, Butler also claims, "The theory of embodiment informing Beauvoir's analysis is clearly limited by the uncritical reproduction of the Cartesian distinction between freedom and the body." According to Moi, Parshley's translation led Butler astray. "Parshley," she writes,

> may think of the body as an instrument and as a limiting factor for some inner spirit, but Beauvoir does not. She thinks of the shape of the human body as showing us in outline the kind of projects that human beings can have. This is more like Wittgenstein's "the human body is the best picture of the human soul" than it is like Descartes's mechanistic picture of body and soul.

9 According to Sartre: "Le présent, c'est ce que je touche, c'est l'outil que je peux manier, c'est ce qui agit sur moi ou ce que je peux changer" ("The present, it is that which I touch, it is the tool that I can manipulate, that which acts on me or which I can change"—my translation). Jean-Paul Sartre, "Venise, de ma fenêtre," 1953, *Situations* IV, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, 196.

10 See Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, U.S.: Carus, 2002.

If we introduce *zuhandensein* into the equation, we shift the terms of this debate. Instrumentality, rather than double as a term for the subject's body armor, defers to prehensive ontology, which refers to the subject's ability "to be" object-like or tool-like in a world in which inanimate objects and live beings are equalized and no longer rigidly separated in kind. Heidegger wrote of a "bringing-close" that is "not oriented towards the I-Thing encumbered with a body, but towards concernful Being-in-the-world," a being "freed up for a totality of involvements."[11]

If the objection is raised that I am turning Beauvoir excessively toward Heidegger, or into a version of an object-oriented ontologist, fair enough; but I would defend the move on the grounds that "the feminine existent" warrants philosophical extradition, especially in connection with another use of prehension that Beauvoir makes in the text. In Chapter 1 ("Childhood") of Book 2, Beauvoir evokes the "prehensive desire" incited in the child by the elasticity of maternal flesh, raising the question of prehension's relation to plasticity; and from thence, to a sexed elasticity of being: "C'est la chair féminine douce, lisse, élastique qui suscite des désirs sexuels et ces désirs sont préhensifs; c'est d'une manière aggressive que la fille, comme le garçon, embrasse sa mère, la palpe, la caresse ..." As Parshley sees it: "The soft, smooth, resilient feminine flesh is what arouses sexual desires, and these desires are prehensile; the girl, like the boy, kisses, handles, and caresses her mother in an aggressive way ..." Borde and Malovany-Chevallier suggest: "It is the soft, smooth, supple feminine flesh that arouses sexual desires, and these desires are prehensile; the girl like the boy kisses, touches, and caresses her mother in an aggressive manner ..."[12]

11 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, New York: Routledge, 1990, 12; Toril Moi, "While We Wait," 1023; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row 1962, 142, 145.

12 The reference to elastic maternal flesh is recurrent between authors: in Beauvoir: "Sa chair a cette douceur, *cette tiède élasticité* que, petite fille, la femme a convoitée à travers la chair maternelle et, plus tard, partout dans le monde" (*Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 325); in Parshley: "The infant's flesh has that softness, that *warm elasticity*, which the woman, when she was a little girl, coveted in her mother's flesh and later, in things everywhere" (Parshley, *The Second Sex*, New York, Random House, [1952] 1989, 512); in Borde and Malovany-Chevallier: "His skin has that sweetness, that warm *elasticity* that, as a little girl, the woman coveted in her mother's flesh and, later, everywhere in the world." (Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, *The Second Sex*, New York: Knopf, 2010, 555); Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 13; Parshley, SSP, 268; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, SSBMC, 283.

Once again, the decision of all the translators to use "prehensile" rather than "prehensive," while not necessarily inaccurate, elides the ontic dimension of the desire in question. Infants and young children are grabby, but the desire and aggression coursing through the child's prehensive gesture affirm the psychic drive as well. When the drive makes contact with the mother's elastic flesh, it is taken into her substance, sublated as mutable form. The child's drive thus assumes the shape of the mother's desire. Beauvoir had already touched on this feminine elasticity in Book 1, Part 3, Chapter 2 ("Myths"), but there it was harder to look past the clichés of male penetration, or the scripturally authorized metaphor of "woman as clay," to locate a theory of ontological plasticity:

> Une des rêveries auxquelles l'homme se complaît, c'est celle de l'imprégnation des choses par sa volonté, du modelage de leur forme, de la pénétration de leur substance: la femme est par excellence la "pâte molle" qui se laisse passivement malaxer et façonner; tout en cédant elle résiste, ce qui permet à l'action masculine de se perpétuer. Une matière trop plastique s'abolit par sa docilité; ce qu'il y a de précieux chez la femme c'est que quelque chose en elle échappe indéfiniment à toute étreinte; ainsi l'homme est maître d'une réalité qui est d'autant plus digne d'être maîtrisée qu'elle le déborde.

Parshley describes the situation as such:

> One of the daydreams in which man takes delight is that of imbuing things with his will—modeling their form, penetrating their substance. And woman is *par excellence* the "clay in his hands," which can be passively worked and shaped; in yielding she resists, thus allowing masculine activity to go on indefinitely. A too-plastic substance is soon finished and done with, because it is easy to work; but what is precious in woman is that something in her somehow eludes every embrace; thus man is master of a reality all the more worthy of being mastered in that it is constantly escaping control.

As Borde and Malovany-Chevallier translate it:

> One of the daydreams [the man] enjoys is the impregnation of things by his will, shaping [women's] form, penetrating their substance: the woman is par excellence the "clay in his hands" that passively lets itself be worked and shaped, resistant while yielding, permitting masculine activity to go on. A too-plastic material wears out by its softness; what is precious in woman is that something in her always escapes all embraces; so man is master of a reality that is all the more worthy of being mastered as it surpasses him.[13]

Here the verbs "malaxer" (to knead, to model, to massage, to soften) and "façonner" (to shape, to fashion, to mould, to manufacture) only reinforce the idea of a resistance within the malleability of plasticity that outplays male mastery. Resistance is aroused by handling: an inert, latent or *unmündig* property of substance, it is incited to become form by tactile manipulation.

In addition to taking up prehension and plasticity as metaphors of "being" in sex, Beauvoir mined the concept of "translation" to underscore the difficulties of naming gendered modalities of appearing as they inflect themselves on perception.[14] In the chapter titled "The Lesbian," she wrote: "On se représente volontiers la lesbienne coiffée d'un feutre sec, le cheveu court, et cravaté; sa virilité *serait une anomalie traduisant* un déséquilibre hormonal. Rien de plus erroné que cette confusion entre l'invertie et la virago." Neither the Parshley nor the Borde and Malovany-Chevallier texts transmit this reference to translation. In Parshley's version:

> We commonly think of the lesbian as a woman wearing a plain felt hat, short hair, and a necktie; her mannish appearance would seem to indicate some abnormality of the hormones. Nothing could be more erroneous than this confounding of the invert with the "viriloid woman."

13 Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 1, 282; Parshley, SSP, 176; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, SSBMC, 193.

14 I am adapting Marielle Macé's phrase "infléchir ses perceptions," which she applies to the analysis of "formes de vie" in literature: gestures, attitudes and "mental folds" that print life on perception. Marielle Macé, *Façons de lire, manières d'être*, Paris: Gallimard, 2011.

With the word "erroneous," Parshley indirectly alludes to Beauvoir's correction of a translation error in the language of gender typology (i.e., the false equation of invert and viriloid), but the notion that sex or gender might themselves be *translational anomalies* is entirely occluded. The same problem arises in the new translation:

> People are always ready to see the lesbian as wearing a felt hat, her hair short, and a necktie; her mannishness is seen as an abnormality indicating a hormonal imbalance. Nothing could be more erroneous than this confusion of the homosexual and the virago.[15]

By substituting, as does Parshley, "abnormality" (misshapenness, malign growth) for "anomaly" (a deviation from the rule, an object that eludes classification), Borde and Malovany-Chevallier diminish how Beauvoir recuperates the anomaly as a site of untranslatability and non-heteronormativity. "Anomaly" resembles Butler's term "drag," which, as Eric Fassin argues, always carries the ambivalence of a *contresens*, a grossly misunderstood or semantically inverted term. Drag implies performing sexual ontology queerly; making perceptible Hegelian orders of subjectivation and the patriarchal symbolic that otherwise remain naturalized and unseen. When Beauvoir's translators take out the word anomaly, they dilute the force of "lesbian" as a keyword of philosophical gender trouble.

Gender Trouble invites being read in counterpoint to *The Second Sex* not only because it too has an interesting translation history (with its truly unaccountable delay between date of English publication in 1990 and the French translation in 2005), but more pointedly, because its translation heralds the interest of philosophical translation for feminist theory. Take the English term "genre," which like Greek *genos*, French *genre*, or German *Geschlecht* is an Untranslatable prime. Genre interfered with the translation of "gender" in Butler's title as the book began to appear in different

15 Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 2, 170; Parshley, SSP, 404; Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, SSBMC, 417.

languages. As Butler herself observed in an article she wrote for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*:

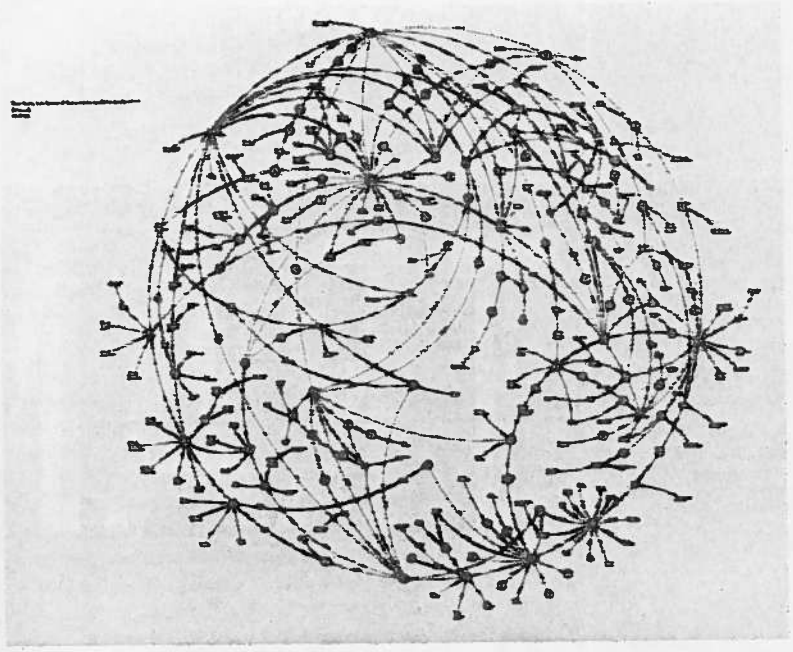
> Like "genus" in Swedish which implies species-being, so *Geschlecht* in German implied not only a natural kind, but a mode of natural ordering that served the purposes of the reproduction of the species. That early German translators of *Gender Trouble* chose to translate "gender" as "Geschlechtsidentität" (sexual identity) may have been an effort to move away from species discourse, or perhaps it was a way of responding to those emerging queer arguments that claimed that binary sex was understood to serve the purposes of reproducing compulsory heterosexuality (Rubin, Butler). The problem with that choice, however, was that it confused gender with sexual orientation or disposition. And part of the analytic work of understanding gender apart from biological causality and functionalism was precisely to hold open the possibility that gender appearance may not correspond to sexual disposition or orientation in predictable ways.[16]

In French, the title *Trouble dans le genre* prompts the question "What genre are you?" In English this sounds wrong, but in fact it is the right question to ask inasmuch as "genre" traverses sex/gender and nature/culture divisions. With genre, unlike with "gender," we have *genos*, kind, and species-being aligned with aesthetics, the sexing of language, and the fusion of corporeality and existence in agential positions.[17]

Eric Fassin introduces the variant "trouble-genre" to designate "the troubled state of gender in our time, or trouble in the house of gender." Gender trouble gradually merges with translational difference as such, discernible in words that defy translation: "fem" (from the butch-fem dyad that resignifies the French "femme"),

16 Judith Butler, "Gender" entry, commissioned for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*, forthcoming, Princeton University Press.

17 Marc Crépon's article on "Geschlecht" in the *Vocabulaire* sheds further light on the range of associations attached to "genre." It may be cued to concepts of "race, kinship, lineage, community, generation, sex, *Menschheit*, *Autrui*, *Dasein*, gender, Humanity, *Leib*, people," and straddles important questions of "orders of belonging" and "the constitution and destination of human diversity," 505.



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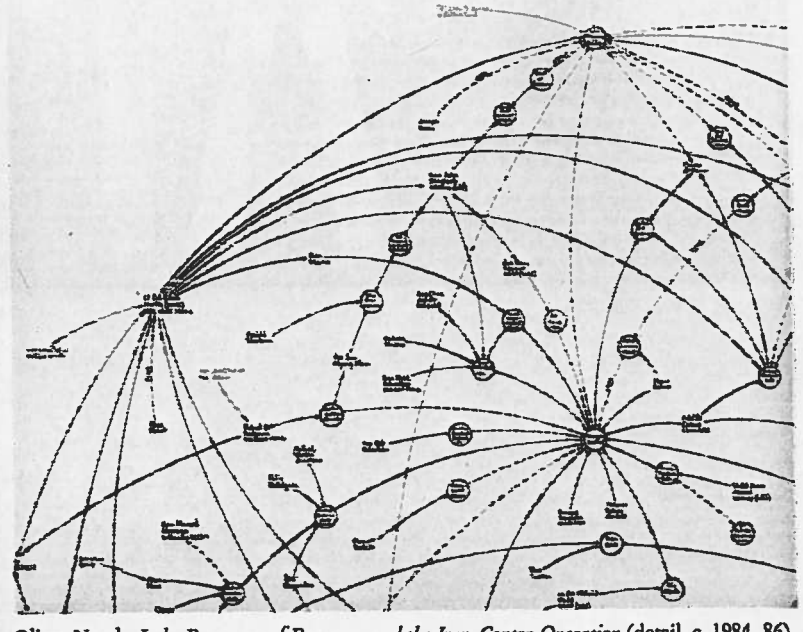
Oliver North, *Lake Resources of Panama, and the Iran-Contra Operation* (c. 1984–86)



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Oliver North, *Lake Resources of Panama, and the Iran-Contra Operation* (detail, c. 1984–86)

Khaled Jarrar, *State of Palestine, Passport Stamp*

© Khaled Jarrar, *Live and Work in Palestine* 2011–ongoing

Khaled Jarrar, *State of Palestine, Passport Stamp* (detail)

© Khaled Jarrar, *Live and Work in Palestine* 2011–ongoing

Illustration: Christine Cornell (with Eyal Weizman) 2008

Porters bringing the model into the High Court of Justice in Jerusalem, Beit Surik case (2004)

Illustration: Christine Cornell (with Eyal Weizman) 2008

Justice Aharon Barak examines the different routes

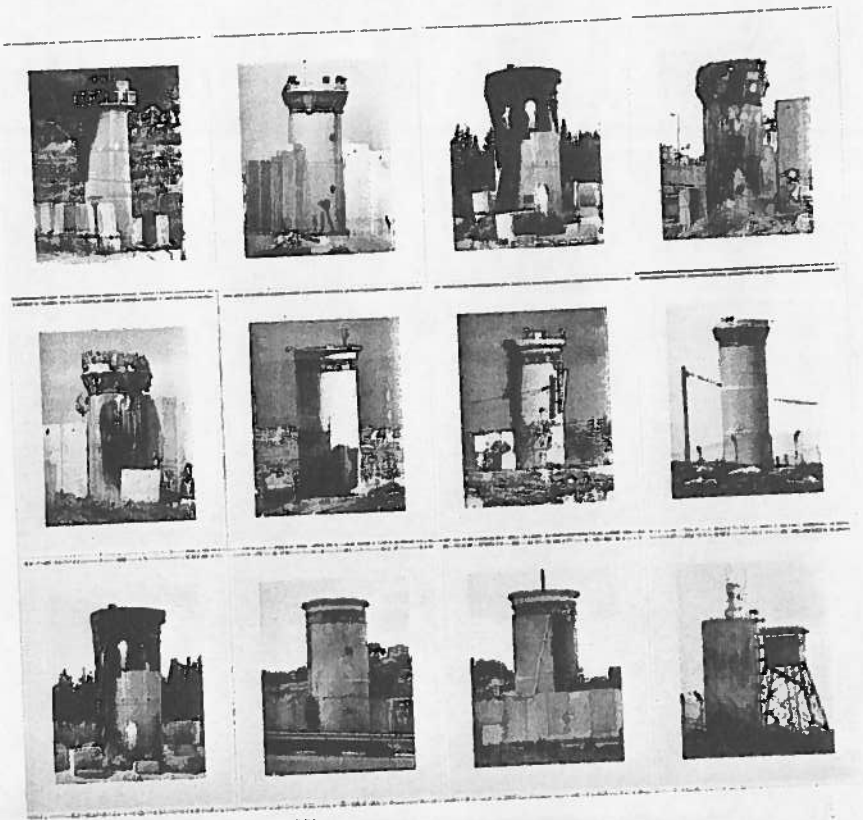
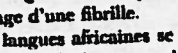


Photo: Dieter Kik

Tayeir Batniji, *Watchtowers* (2008)

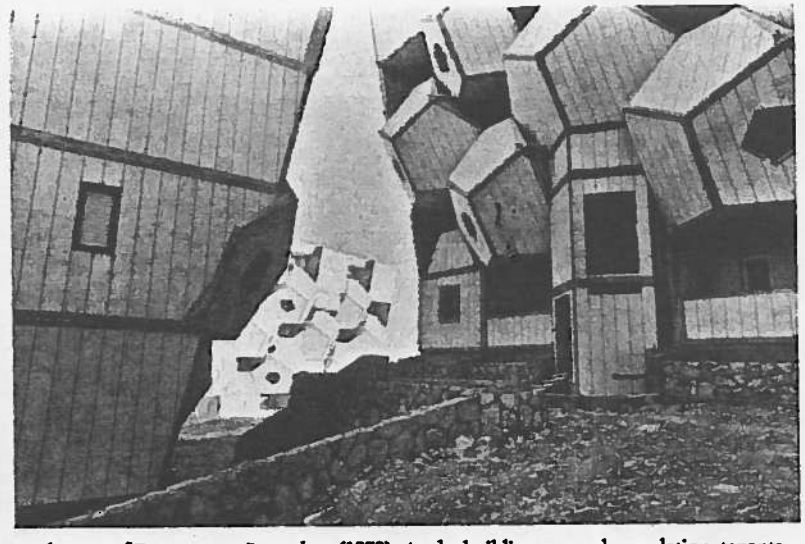
© Ognon Pictures / ARTE France Cinéma 2002

Film still from Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention*

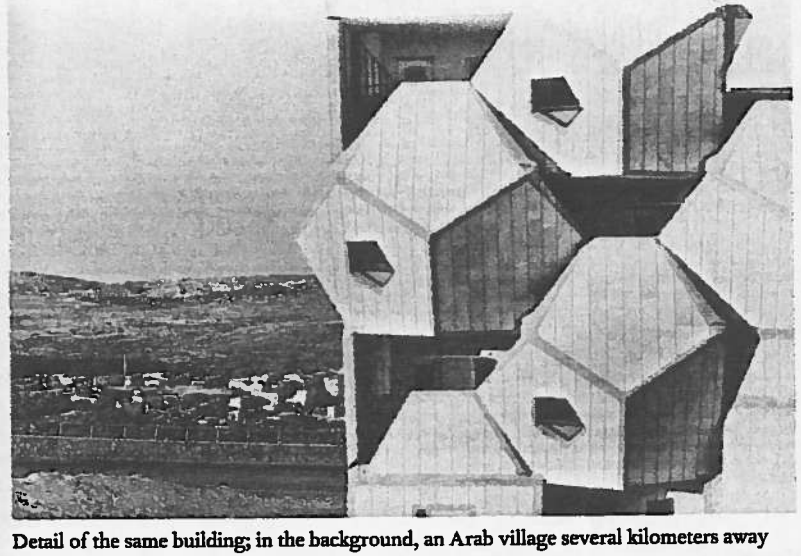
• La Traite passe par la porte étroite du bateau négrier, dont le sillage imite la reptation de la caravane dans le désert. Sa figure se présenterait de la sorte :  À l'est, les pays africains, à l'ouest les terres américaines. Cette bête est à l'image d'une fibrille.

Les langues africaines se déterritorialisent, pour contribuer à la créolisation en Ouest. C'est l'affrontement le plus totalement connu entre les puissances de l'écrit et les élans de l'oralité. Sur le bateau négrier, le seul écrit est du livre de comptes, qui porte sur la valeur d'échange des esclaves. Dans l'espace du bateau, le cri des déportés est étouffé, comme il le sera dans l'univers des Plantations. Cet affrontement retentit jusqu'à nous.

Small image of fibril that appears on first page of Glissant's *Poétique de la relation*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990



Settlement of Ramot, near Jerusalem (1979). As the buildings neared completion, tenants were in short supply (Edward Said).



Detail of the same building; in the background, an Arab village several kilometers away (Edward Said).

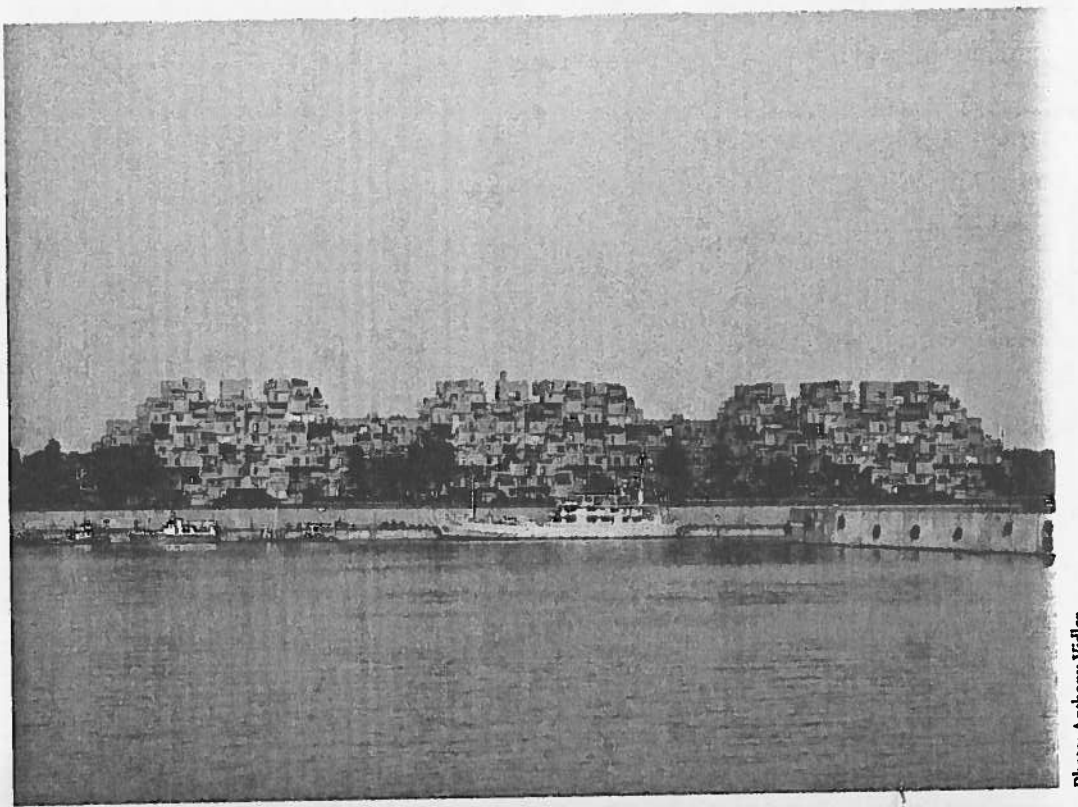


Photo: Anthony Vidler

Habitat 67, Montreal, Moshe Safdie (architect)

Jokevannoort © 2009 UPC Broadband N.V.

Cube Houses (Kubuswoningen)

Matta, *M'onda* (1989)

"gays" (which the French translator of *Gender Trouble* punctuates as "gai.e.s" to signal the term's application to gays and lesbians in both its substantive and adjectival form), and of course "gender" and "gendered," which the French translator, for better or worse, renders "genre" and "genré." Jettisoned are alternatives like "genderisé" and "gendré," Wittig's materialist "La marque du genre," Claude Mathieu's *sexe social* (social sex), or Christine Delphy's *classes de sexe* (sex-classes).[18]

The decisionism of translation—tangible in the hypothetical alternatives that haunt the words that a translator finally selects—registers as a kind of translation-trouble that bedevils trouble-genre. A case of this double trouble is on view in Stella Sandford's critique of Geneviève Fraisse's entry on *Sexe* in the *Vocabulaire*:

> For Fraisse, it seems, "sex" and "sexual difference" are synonymous; as are "*sexe*" and "*différence sexuelle*." The English "sex" and "sexual difference" "refer to the material reality of the human"; *la différence sexuelle* is the *presupposition* of a difference between the sexes defined in a certain way, whether biologically, as in the natural sciences, or philosophically, as in *"la pensée du féminin,"* the thinking of "the feminine." Most importantly, for Fraisse, "*Différence sexuelle*" coexists in French with *"différence des sexes"* from which it is distinguished to the extent that the latter "implies the empirical recognition of the sexes without that leading to any definition of content." "*Différence des sexes*," Fraisse writes elsewhere, is a "philosopheme." To the extent that the French "*sexe*" includes "*différence des sexes*" within its meaning, as Fraisse effectively argues that it does, it is already in some sense a theoretical concept, referring to something to be *thought* rather than a biological reality taken for granted. Without the philosopheme "*différence des sexes*," "*la différence sexuelle*" ("sexual difference," "sex difference" or the English "sex") is reduced to an empirical fact.[19]

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18 Trouble-genre: "Notre actualité 'troublée," Eric Fassin, Preface, "Trouble-genre," in Judith Butler, *Trouble dans le genre. Le féminisme et la subversion de l'identité*, trans. Cynthia Kraus, Paris: La Découverte, 2005, 18; Cynthia Kraus, "Note sur la traduction," in Judith Butler, *Trouble dans le genre*, op. cit. p. 23.

19 Stella Sandford, "Sex: A Transdisciplinary Concept," *Radical Philosophy* 165, January/February 2011, 24.

As Sandford amusingly puts it in a subentry on "Sex" written for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*, in Fraisse's usage "the English 'sex' is a plain and stodgy pudding, the just dessert, perhaps, of an empiricist philosophical tradition." Though Fraisse, as Sandford acknowledges, is aware that the English "gender" is "a contemporary philosophical event," she ultimately dismisses it as "a *cache-sexe*"; a pun signifying that sex is not thinkable within the terms of the anglophone "gender."[20]

Looking at the "Gender" article written for the *Vocabulaire* by Monique David-Ménard and Penelope Deutscher, other problems emerge despite the fact that they subscribe to a more psychoanalytically nuanced concept of sexual difference informed by drives and fantasies. Freud is invoked:

> Sexuation thus takes place in the domain of the formation of pleasure, displeasure and anxiety, from which are woven the experiences and thoughts of infants immersed in an adult world which supports them, threatens them, carries them, even while also being intrusive and alien.

So, too, is Robert Stoller (whose 1968 landmark, *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* consolidated the biological sex/socially constructed gender distinction), but there is no mention by Deutscher and David-Ménard of Lacan's theory of phallic lack, applicable to both sexes phantasmatically speaking, or of the experimental efforts by Wittig, Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray to find in language the underpinnings of a feminine Symbolic. Here too, then, the English "Gender" remains curiously underphilosophized despite the fact that both authors are fully conversant with philosophical feminism.

Even if one takes issue with the typecasting of Anglophone terms for sex and gender as empirical or non-ontological, the untranslatability factor, measurable in the non-commutation of "gender" to "genre," or "sex" to "sexe," is significant theoretically. In the

20 The *Vocabulaire*, English edition, forthcoming, Princeton University Press; Sandford, "Sex: A Transdisciplinary Concept," 25.

case of *Gender Trouble*, these semantic differentials make it hard to follow in French Butler's argument that "to be" sexually is to be assigned in gender. "Sex"—associated too closely with bodily sex in her view—is always already a repression of gender, so the trick is to enable gender to call itself differently. In a forthcoming entry on "Gender" commissioned for the English version of the *Vocabulaire*, Butler frames the term precisely as a translation problem: to call it itself differently, gender needs to "translate" the language of unconscious articulation seated in the psychic drives:

> If gender is relayed through the overwhelming language and gestures of the adult, then it arrives first as a kind of noise, indecipherable, and in demand of translation. For now, it is most important to note that the assignment of gender arrives through the enigmatic desire of the other, a desire by which somatic life is infiltrated and which, in turn, or simultaneously, incites a set of displacements and translations that constitute the specific life of the drive or sexual desire. Is somatic life determinable outside this scene of assignment? To the extent that bodily "sex" appears as primary, this very primariness is achieved as a consequence of a repression (*refoulement*) of gender itself. Indeed, gender is in part constituted by unconscious wishes conveyed through the enigmatic assignment of gender, so that one might say that gender emerges, from early on, as an enigma for the child. And the question may well not be, "what gender am I?" but rather, "what does gender want of me?" or even, "whose desire is being carried through the assignment of gender that I have received and how can I possibly respond? Quick—give me a way to translate!"

Butler gives herself a way to translate by doing things with sex and gender Untranslatables. And one can take away from this example a general impetus toward using translation—and specifically philosophical untranslatability—to pose the problem of sexual difference to ontology. Consistently, in Butler's work, we are brought back to the problem of what it means "to be" in genre.

Catherine Malabou has also grappled with these issues, and in doing so, brings us back to Beauvoir's notion of the feminine

existent as an extensive mode of being-at-hand and a reliance on metaphors of plasticity to define feminine *Dasein*. In *Changer de difference* (translated as *Changing Difference* but which also could be rendered "change of difference" or "difference-changer"), Malabou tracks the way in which Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida used "the feminine" to signify a concept of genre open to multiple modes of being. "It is by the name of '*Dasein*' that I would introduce the question of sexual difference," Derrida wrote in his seminal essay "*Geschlecht:* Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference." Heidegger, he reminds us, underscored the neutrality of *Dasein* when he wrote: "For the being which constitutes the theme of this analytic, the title 'man' (*Mensch*) has not been chosen, but the neutral title '*das Dasein.*'"[21] Translating *Dasein* in terms of the untranslatable *Geschlecht,* Derrida is in search of a neutrality of sex that is "pre-differential" and "pre-dual," a sexuality "more originary than the dyad." While Malabou questions the wisdom of retaining *any* sexualization of genre, she holds on to a possible "sense" of the feminine (aporetically deployed) that would continue to embody difference and refute the radically asexuated notion of Heideggerian *Dasein*. The challenge—posed by Derrida in the "Geschlecht" essay as well as in *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question* (1987)—is how to define, in the gap between being and the existent, "a sexual difference that is ontologically pluralized" or re-neutered in such a way as to avoid effacing the feminine.

21 Jacques Derrida, "*Geschlecht*: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference," *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1), 1983, 68 and 69. The essay was published in French in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre*, Paris: Galilée, 1987. This was the first of three essays on *Geschlecht*. The second was entitled "Heidegger and the Hand of Man." The third was devoted to Heidegger's 1953 essay "Language in the Poem: A Placement of Georg Trakl's Poem." See, too, Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, where he refers to *Geschlecht* as "that frighteningly polysemic and practically untranslatable word (race, lineage, stock, generation, sex) in [Heidegger's] ... text on Trakl from *Unterwegs zur Sprache*." In his article "Marginalia to Geschlect III," David Farrell Krell identifies Derrida's "primary problem," via Heidegger on Trakl, as "the two strokes that constitute a sexually marked *Geschlecht*, especially the second stroke, the one that induces not only *dispersion* but also *unchained individuation* and *dissension* into the duality of the sexes." *New Centennial Review* 7: 2 (2007): 178.

It would seem that Malabou wants to affirm feminine singularity within gendered ontology as a "matter of matter." She places herself in a continuum of feminist philosophy that includes Beauvoir's concept of embodied prehension, Luce Irigaray's work since the 1980s on material elements, Judith Butler's recent engagement with A. N. Whitehead's process philosophy, and Emma Bianchi's reclamation of the Aristotelian *hyle* (transformational substance) for a feminist anti-teleology built around aleatory capacity, changeability and en-formation. Taken together, a shift is discernible here from biological sexing and sexually differentiated "identity" (prevalent during the heyday of identity politics in gender theory), to the gendered ontology of material embodiment and theories of plasticity.

Plasticity derives from the Greek *plassein*, "to model, to mould," malleable, "having the power to bestow form, the power to mould," as in the expressions "plastic surgeon" and "plastic arts." Grimm's dictionary defined it as "that which takes or gives shape, or figure, to bodies (*körperlich ... gestaltend oder gestaltet*). In Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1831), as Malabou observes in "The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic," the concept corresponds to substance's "self-determination" (*Selbstimmung*), which is to say, its filtering out of arbitrary, personal, immediate and particular content on behalf of a fully embodied Notion, a becoming of "*Dasein*," or being-there of "Spirit."[22] Malabou recuperates plasticity's regenerative and reconstructive principles (as in cosmetic and plastic surgery), its usage in neuroscience to designate "an alteration in structure or function brought about by development, experience, or injury," and its reference to plastic explosives, bombs or similarly combustive matériel: "The word plasticity [Malabou writes, in *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*] thus unfolds its meaning between sculptural molding and conflagration, which is to say explosion. From this perspective, to talk about the plasticity of the brain means to see in it not only the creator and receiver of form but also an agency of disobedience to every constituted form, a

22 Catherine Malabou, "The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic," trans. Lisabeth During, *Hypathia* 15: 4, Fall 2000, 206.

refusal to submit to a model."[23] As a metaphor for both that which explodes the brain, and that which inoculates it against traumatic injury, plasticity affirms the indestructibility of psychic life and stanches the subsidence of will into inertia and compulsive repetition (characteristic symptoms of the death drive). The pivotal role assigned to the prophylactic violence of plasticity (which protects formal emergence against the destruction of form), relates her work on neuroscience and Hegelian dialectic to her discussion of genre in *Changing Difference*, where, it might be said, she identifies plasticity with a feminine *Dasein* that has survived the constant threat of extinction by a "Being" that has been violently gendered as Neuter.

23 Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, trans. Marc Jeannerod, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, 6.

V

Keywords 5: "Monde"

> ... what is this philosophizing? What are we in this? Where do we want to go? Did we once just stumble into the universe by chance?[1]
>
> —Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*

"Manifeste pour une littérature-monde en français," published in *Le Monde* on March 6, 2007, and signed by forty-four French-speaking writers, swept its readers into the mental ping-pong of "pro" versus "con" on the question of whether there should be a "World Literature in French" positioned to answer to the widely validated, postcolonially inflected model of Anglophone world literature. Two books, *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde* and *Pour une littérature-monde* offer representative samples of contradictory responses. Notable arguments in favor touch many bases. *Littérature-monde en français* represents an improved alternative to "littérature mondiale," the commonly used expression in French for world literature, in that it references specifically transcontinental literatures connected by French. Moreover, it has done away once and for all with the outmoded term "Francophone," a carrier of neocolonial, Orientalist baggage; a ghettoizing, divisive, exclusionary term in publishing and academia; and a tautology since all speakers of French are Francophone. The "world" can no longer be excluded from literature in French and should be taken fully on board by the Paris-oriented French literary establishment (Michel Le Bris's argument). The strongest literature in French is

1 Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 5.

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"Manifeste pour une littérature-monde en français," published in *Le Monde* on March 6, 2007, and signed by forty-four French-speaking writers, swept its readers into the mental ping-pong of "pro" versus "con" on the question of whether there should be a "World Literature in French" positioned to answer to the widely validated, postcolonially inflected model of Anglophone world literature. Two books, *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde* and *Pour une littérature-monde* offer representative samples of contradictory responses. Notable arguments in favor touch many bases. *Littérature-monde en français* represents an improved alternative to "littérature mondiale," the commonly used expression in French for world literature, in that it references specifically transcontinental literatures connected by French. Moreover, it has done away once and for all with the outmoded term "Francophone," a carrier of neocolonial, Orientalist baggage; a ghettoizing, divisive, exclusionary term in publishing and academia; and a tautology since all speakers of French are Francophone. The "world" can no longer be excluded from literature in French and should be taken fully on board by the Paris-oriented French literary establishment (Michel Le Bris's argument). The strongest literature in French is

1 Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 5.

arguably being produced by extra-hexagonal writers (the manifesto was indeed partly occasioned by their high percentage of literary prizes in 2007). The World Literature perspective brings attention to less internationally exposed writers, putting them into dialogue with each other in an expanded comparative frame. The appellation World Literature in institutional academia abolishes the ontologically objectionable "us-them" dichotomy between national and "foreign" language departments. Global literary markets generate new consumers of literature with tastes, interests, and cultural literacies no longer satisfied by writing authored by or aimed principally at *les français de France*. Regional, translingual affiliations (the connection, say, between Indigenous francophone and anglophone Pacific cultures or the circum-Atlantic cultural contacts inaugurated by the slave trade) appear in sharper relief through a worldly viewfinder. The practice of creolization extends beyond language to "platforms" (curator Okwui Enwezor's coinage) of the aesthetic, putting French literature into colloquy with greater world-systems and non-literary media. The Glissantian *tout-monde* has provided a poetic and philosophical framework for thinking "world" as an anti-exoticist francophone *nomos*. World Literature is suited to an era in which the electronic dissemination of information, even in countries with restricted Internet and Web access, has transformed the economics of literary distribution and editorial gatekeeping. Secular criticism, marked by Edward Said's practice of contrapuntal reading and the politics of humanism, warrants a more developed counterpart in French studies.

Arguments contra *littérature-monde en français* cover a comparable gamut. It is criticized for being too quick to ape an Anglo-American-style comparative literature in French studies, reinforcing an Anglocentric (or worse, Globish) tendency in the human sciences worldwide and defeating the purpose of defining a French-based praxis differently. World Lit cartography obscures important divergences in the French-speaking context between postcolonial, extra-hexagonal, and continental *banlieue/Beur* writing, while at the same time lumping together wildly discrepant postcolonial literatures. Ambassadorial efforts to support French culture

in formerly colonized territories belie attitudes of cultural imperialism, curatorial patronage, and salvage rather than commitment to the veritable renewal of French-language expression (as Alain Mabanckou has intimated). The fantasy of a decommercialized literature without borders must perforce remain oblivious to the way market capitalism works. Any French version of World Literature respectful of the Goethean/Auerbachian heritage in the humanities will perpetuate Eurocentric humanist universalism as well as a static lexicon of style, periodization, and genre defined largely by Western classics. World Literature is a cosmopolitan project better suited to privileged emigrés than to immigrant, second-generation minority cultures. World fiction uses *métissage* as yet another Occidental foil for inattention to cultural and historical particularism. World Literature inadequately takes stock of the impact of colonialism and decolonization on literary history. *Littérature-monde*, like World Literature paradigms in general, either reinforces old national, regional, and ethnic literary alignments or projects a denationalized planetary screen that ignores the deep structures of national belonging and economic interest contouring the international culture industry. World Literature remains oblivious to the systematic critique of globalized literary studies contained in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of "planetarity" (in *Death of a Discipline*). In their rush to franchise "global" campus outposts all over the world, universities seize on World Literature as a catch-all rubric for flimsy programs in the humanities that ignore rather than deepen local knowledge. World Literature is all-too-conducive to the downsizing of "foreign" language departments and furthers monolingual coverage of literatures and area studies in other languages. Even the most recent and intellectually creative attempts to remake World Literature for a future-oriented planetary pedagogy often end in a pluralist critical practice of comparison that massages neoliberalism (the regime of post-political or post-ideological aesthetics, in Christopher Bongie's ascription).

While there are clearly valid points on both sides of the aisle, and important stakes for the study and redistribution of "Frenches" within the future of comparative literature, it strikes me that the

polemics summarized and played out in *Transnational French Studies* insufficiently address two concerns: First, in seeking to comparatize French literary criticism and theory, *litt-monde* partisans and detractors alike assume translatability as both a given and heuristic good, thereby devaluing the importance of non-translation and untranslatability for the politics of cultural relationality. And second, the term "world" in *littérature-monde* remains curiously under-theorized as a reserve of philosophical untranslatability and conceptual density. In fairness, Typhaine Leservot, in her essay "From *Weltliteratur* to World Literature, to *Littérature-monde*: The History of a Controversial Concept," offers a compelling genealogy casting *littérature-monde* as a "view of the world" in contrast to earlier models of World Lit that emphasize the fomenting of international canons. Mounia Benalil notes the untapped potential of Antoine Volodine's notion of what it means to "faire monde" (render the world) and calls for "a formal-thematic axis that could identify a literary grouping displaying qualities worthy of a 'world-poetics.'" And Jeanne Garane problematizes the location of "world" in *littérature-monde*, taking her cue from the title of an essay collection edited by Christophe Pradeau and Tiphaine Samoyault titled *Où est la littérature-monde*? Pondering whether Le Bris's use of the term implies a generalized *tiermondialisation* of the hexagon, Garane notes that "the relationship between *littérature-monde*, *littérature mondiale*, and its German and English counterparts *Weltliteratur* and 'world literature' is made explicit neither in the manifesto ... nor in the introductory essays by Jean Rouaud and Michel Le Bris."[2] These observations notwithstanding, few interventions question what a world might be. More emphasis on how philosophy has defined "monde" would contribute theoretical substance to the paradigm of *littérature-monde* and nuance debates around world literatures in every language.[3]

2 Christophe Pradeau and Tiphaine Samoyault, *Où est la littérature mondiale?*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2005; Jeanne Garane "*Littérature-Monde* and the Space of Translation, or, Where is *littérature-monde*," in *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde*, ed. Alec G. Hargreave, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010.

3 In proposing that more pressure be put on the analysis of the word "world" in World Lit debates, I am implicitly subscribing to a philological critique nourished by John T. Hamilton's observation that "philology has always distinguished itself from other disciplines in the humanities by considering words themselves as objects of analysis and not merely as vehicles for the formation of concept," per letteras.

The historian Anthony Grafton has emphasized the world-making power of words in his analysis of the *Respublica literarum* in the early modern period.[4] Barbara Cassin, by contrast, maps worlds through philosophical philology. In the *Vocabulaire*, the German term "Welt" makes a real incursion into Greek and Roman intellectual estates. Of course, *Ur*-cognates in Greek (*kosmos*), Latin (*mundus*), and Hebrew (*'olam*) are duly represented in the modern languages—a trinity comparable to the three monotheisms. After Kant (whose dissertation written in Latin in 1770 dealt with "the notion of the world in general"), and in a line leading through Hegel and Schelling to Heidegger, *Welt* gathers momentum to the point where it would seem that German is truly the language in which the word "world" is most fully philosophized. The only other language that comes close in claiming philosophical territory is Russian, buoyed perhaps by the movements of folk revival, Slavophilia, nationalism, socialist utopia, and communism. Generally speaking, the Russian terms for world are sutured to a vision of society, as in *mir* (world, peace, village community); *svet* (world); *obscina* (primordial communism); *sobernost'* (uni-totality); *narodnost'* (adhesion of the people); *svoboda* (liberty, collective will); *samost'* (human nature); and *vseedinstvo* (uni-totality). Russian aside, what we perceive most clearly in the *Vocabulaire* is the extent to which *Welt* becomes the center of a substantial concordance comprising *Weltalter* (ages of the world), *Weltgeist* (world spirit), *Weltanschauung* (worldview), *Weltlauf* (way of the world), *Welten* (to make to the measure of the world), *Weltkenntnis* (knowledge of the world), *Mitwelt* (contemporaries), *Weltbürger* (citizen of the world), *Umwelt* (environment), *Umweltschutz* (environmental protection), *Umweltverschmutzung* (pollution), *Verweltlichung* (secularization), and *Weltliteratur*, so indelibly marked by Goethe. As strings of apposite meanings are

4 Anthony Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

generated, *Welt* annexes semantic approximations like *Leben* (life) or *Heimat* (homeland). The landgrab is consolidated by the success of *Welt* in drawing off earlier French usages of monde whose gamut covered diplomatic and courtly codes of conduct, success in society (*mondanité*), and the idea of plural or possible worlds associated with the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ascriptions of Fontanelle and Rousseau.

Pascal David tracks the way in which this "German adventure of world" chronicles a gradual ontologization of the term:

> Is there something like a predisposition to phenomenology or even to existentialism in the "Germanic" concept of the world? One that should be properly separated out from any strictly cosmological conception? If such is actually the case, it is nonetheless the semantic trajectory of the ancient Greek *kosmos* [χόσμος] (from Heraclitus to Saint Paul and Saint John, passing through Plato), which seems to have prefigured the splitting of meaning, to be clearly found in Kant, between a cosmological sense corresponding to the universe and a cosmo-political, anthropological, or existential sense referring to a way of relating to both the universe and the community of men. Paradoxically, Kant himself emphasized, in an anthropological perspective, how the French word *monde* had rubbed off some of its connotations on the German word *Welt* in its cosmopolitan acceptations. *Welt* is further enriched, in the philosophical vocabulary of the twentieth century, through an impersonal verb, *welten*, *es weltet*, a word coined by Heidegger or at least endowed with new meaning by him ...
>
> It has been possible to detect a "Germanic" concept of the world underlying Heidegger's thought on the subject "because the sense in which it is to be understood is suggested by the etymology of the terms" in Germanic languages, including the German *Welt*, the English *world*, the Dutch *wereld*, Swedish *vårld*, the Danish *verden*, *verdensalt*, etc. The Germanic etymon is a compound word which combines an element signifying "man" (from the Latin *vir*) and a second element signifying "age" (cf. English "old"). The resulting meaning would be something like "where man finds himself as long as he is alive" ("*ce dans quoi l'homme se trouve tant qu'il est en vie*", R. Brague, *Aristote et la question du monde*, 27–8, n.37). We can note in passing that the (seventeenth-century) German word *Weltalter* "age(s) of the world" is essentially redundant, since it can be taken apart as: Ger. *wer-alt* (= "epoch", "world", "generation") + Ger. *Alter*, "age", whence: *age of ages of man*! As opposed to the cosmological concept of the world which defines a whole of whom I am but a tiny part, there is then perhaps a predisposition in the Germanic etymon leading in the direction of its phenomenological conception; that within which the human being deploys his being, according to a triple determination: cosmological, anthropological, and ontological.[5]

Welt's superimposition of temporality, existence and anthropocentrism comes into focus as Enlightenment modernity's counterpart to the Hebrew word *'olam* (whose synonyms include *Welt*, *aiôn*, humanity, life). Rémi Brague stresses the ontological provisionality of *'olam*; its emphasis on the subject's entrance and exit onto the scene of life:[6]

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5 Pascal David, entry "Welt" in *Vocabulaire*, translation by Christian Hubert (forthcoming in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, eds. Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood, Princeton University Press).

6 Rémi Brague, "Olam" entry, in *Vocabulaire*: 877, translation by Steven Rendall (forthcoming *Dictionary of Untranslatables*). Pascal David, in a complementary vein to Brague, emphasizes "the co-belonging of the world and time" in the German Romantic conception of *Welt* put forth by F. W. Schelling: "Etymologically, *Welt* maintains an optional relationship with time. This relationship is underscored by Schelling, the author of the *Weltalter* (Ages of the World), by means of a debatable, if not outright phantasmagorical, albeit illuminating, etymological link between *Welt* and *währen* (to endure), at the end of lesson 14 of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, in order to maintain the speculative equivalence of world and time (the cosmic eon): 'True time itself consists of a series of times, and inversely, the world is only one element of true time, and is in this respect itself a time, as the very name *Welt* indicates, which derives from *währen* and thus indicates a *duration*, which the Greek *aiôn* reveals even more directly, as it also designates a time of the world' " [*Wie schon das Wort, das von* währen *herkommt und eigentlich eine* Währung, *eine Dauer, anzeigt, und noch unmittelbarer das griechische* aiôn *beweist, das ebsensowhol eine* Zeit *als die Welt bedeutet*], *Schellings Werke*, vol. 6, addendum, 308. "Even if *Welt* does not come from *währen*, which is itself a term related to *wesen* and to the third root in the etymology of the verb 'to be': Sanskrit *vasami*, Germanic *wesan* ('to dwell, remain, to live')," cf. Heidegger, *Introduction*, trans. 81. Schelling has nonetheless instinctively sensed the essential co-belonging of the world and time in his reference to the Greek *aiôn* [αἰών], "cosmic eon", even if in an essentially Paulist sense (I Corinthians 7, 31: "the form of this world [χόσμος] will pass away")," David, forthcoming, translation by Christian Hubert, 2004: 1390–1.

> Among the words designating the world certain designate the order of things, as with the Greek Kosmos (χόσμος) and the Latin mundus, and others accentuate the living presence of the subject. The world is that into which we are born and leave upon dying. Such is the case with the English world, the German *Welt*, and the Dutch vereld, which are etymologically the most legible in connoting the duration of the life (cf. Eng, old) of man (lat. vir; ger. wer- in Werewolf, "wolf-man", fr. "loup-garou"). The Hebraic word for world is 'olam (עוֹלָם) and although it features in the Bible, it is not used in this particular sense, even in a late text such as Qohelet 3, 11. Rather, another temporal sense is communicated in which an undetermined duration informs expressions such as le-'olam (לְעוֹלָם), "an undetermined future", from where we have "for always", or më-'olam (מֵעוֹלָם) "since a period where the beginning has been ignored" from where we have "since always."

The study of *Welt* as an Untranslatable shows how bound up it is conceptually with Biblical and Enlightenment notions of time; Gnostic intuitions of the concordance of mind and universe; and the philosophical shifts from cosmological metaphysics, to Heideggerian phenomenology, and to logics of worlds (including Wittgenstein's logic of truth-conditions in philosophical grammar or Badiou's singular multiples). It also sheds light on an interesting tension, registered in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, between "having" and "knowing" the world: "In addition, the expression 'to *know*' the world and 'to *have* the world' are rather far from each other in their meaning, since one only *understands* the play that one has watched, while the other has *participated* in it."[7] Michel Foucault, in his translation of this passage, would render *Welt kennen* as "connaître le monde" and *Welt haben* as "avoir du monde," the latter translation recalling the fact that the German *Welt haben* was originally a translation of the French import. David

7 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 4. "Noch sind die Ausdrücke: die Welt *kennen* und Welt *haben* in ihrer Bedeutung zeimlich weit auseinander: indem der Eine nur das Spiel versteht, dem er zugesehen hat, der Andere aber mit gespielt hat." Immanuel Kant, "Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht," in *Akademie Ausgabe*, vol. 7, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900–20; cited in the *Vocabulaire*, 1393.

wants to modify Foucault's translation using the French "*avoir les usages du monde*" (which takes it away from the everyday meaning of "having company" and closer to the very French notion of *savoir vivre*, or "knowing the ways of the world"). In English, we enter new thickets of untranslatability. As Christian Hubert, the English translator of David's entry, queries: "What does 'having the world' mean in English, especially when it is being contrasted with 'knowing the world'?"[8]

"Having the world," or the variation, "having world," does not really signify in English, but it is thoroughly naturalized in German within a Heideggerian conceptual landscape. In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger designates "world-forming" (*weltbilden*) as that which characterizes the human. Animals, by contrast, are "poor in world" (*Weltarmut*) and stones are "world-less" (*Weltlos*). Within this scheme, having world can be taken to mean an animal apprehension of what is being withheld (*Vernehmen*, from the cognate verb *nehmen*, connoting "to take," "to seize," or "to apprehend" with reference to the way in which the animal "is taken by things") or to refer to the couplet of mastery and servitude: "Thus man is, first, a part of the world, and second, as this part he is at once both master and servant of the world." Heidegger's singular conception of "world-having" suggests a property-drive harnessed to the acquisition of resources and the mastery of technological know-how. "Master of the universe" might be the closest colloquial "translation" of *Welt haben* in this context. "Not having world" would lead philosophically in the direction of Peter Singer, whose "just enough" notion of distributive justice encourages a non-extractive approach to the earth, or a depropertied way of existence. Alternatively, "having world" could be ramified in Rémi Brague's sense of "an open channel leading from the senses, which enable our being *in* the world, and morality, which reveals that we are not *of* the world."[9] "Having" in this instance connotes a new

8 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*, trans. Michel Foucault, Paris: Vrin, 1984, 11–12. Christian Hubert in a note appended to this translation of "Welt" in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood (to be published by Princeton University Press).

9 "Taken by things": Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 247; "Thus

in/of relation between humans and the earth. Following Isabelle Stengers, to "have world" would be to "have *cosmos*"; which is to say, to have a cosmopolitical notion of politics that resists the "give-and-take in an exclusive human club," and "allows objects to have lives of their own."[10] It could also be applied to Edward Said's notion of worldliness; a terrestrial humanism forged by the politics of the Palestinian right to return, and aesthetically attuned to Erich Auerbach's Dantean understanding of earthly (*irdisch*) humanism in the 1929 classic *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (translated by Ralph Manheim as *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*). Finally, "having world" might be extended to Edouard Glissant's *tout-monde*, where to be in possession of place or possessed by a spirit of place (*genius loci*) corresponds to apprehending the translated worlds of place-names.

Consider, in this regard, how Glissant performs an incantatory operation on the name of an American state in *Faulkner, Mississippi*. Sounded out in the manner of school children reciting its orthography—"miss-iss-ippi"—the French ear produces *émail-less, éssailless, éssaill-pi, pi-aille.*"[11] We hear echoes of *émail* (enamel); *émmailler* (to glaze, to sprinkle, to speckle); *emmailloter* (to swaddle or to bind a limb); *essaimer* (to swarm, to hive off, to emigrate); and *pi-aille*, proximate to the verb *piauler* (to whimper, to whine); or *piailler* (to squall, to squeal, to chirp); or *chialer* (to blubber). Out of the proper name springs an entire accursed history of the slaves' bondage, forced emigration, and cries of pain and tears, as well as the white South's social crack-up, documented mythically in Faulkner's sagas of malediction, secessionism, hereditary finalism, and familial dysfunction among the Compsons, Sartoris and Snopes. Homonymic names are magical, like translation, because they show how one language world divides into two. In *Faulkner, Mississippi*, one of these homonyms is the name of a plantation manor on the outskirts of Baton Rouge. It is called *Nottoway*: "It occurred to us

man is": ibid., 177; Rémi Brague, *Les ancres dans le ciel: L'infrastructure métaphysique*, Paris: Seuil, 2011, 29.

10 Bruno Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics?" in *Common Knowledge*, 454 and 450, respectively.

11 Édouard Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*, Paris: Stock, 1996, 21, 24.

that Nottoway must certainly have signified 'not a way,' not a path or means of egress, not a single possibility of evasion (the verb *marroner*, a creole Untranslatable used in the French original, refers to the slave's fugue."[12] Housing a curator's dream of soiled antebellum frippery that doubles as a reliquary of slave labor, "Nottoway" sits in its present-day industrialized surround as an anachronistic redoubt of tourism. What matters here though is not just the familiar *frisson* of Southern Gothic but the way in which this monument to past decadence enters the lives of slaves into the temporal world of *durée*. Glissant discovers this Bergsonian register of time in his translation of Faulkner's phrase "They endured." ("Ils enduraient. Ils endurèrent.") The declension leads him to ponder what it means to endure from within, "duraient dans," to stand, in a kind of civil disobedient posture, like the proverbial cats whose immobility and somnolence allow them to conquer eternity.[13] If Faulkner's Blacks escape death, it is because they have found durability within duration. By simply being—obstinately and obdurately—they have built a *tout-monde* that lasts forever.

If Glissant uses place-names—"Mississippi" and "Nottoway"—to translate the world of the American South into the language of Caribbean worlds, he also makes worlds out of signs that are not place-names. In one striking case, which appears in a note on the first page of *Poétique de la relation* (poetics of relation), an image "translates" slavery's geographic compass. The image resembles a rope frayed at each end, suggesting a lasso used to rope people into captivity; a bondage tie; or a noose (that low-tech technology of execution)—or a length—used to measure property on the Middle Passage. Glissant dubs the image a fibril:

> The Slave Trade as it came through the cramped doorway of the slave ship leaving a wake like that of crawling desert caravans. It looks like this: ... African countries to the East; the lands of America to the West. This creature is in the image of a fibril.[14]

12 "Nous nous suggérions pourtant que '*Nottoway*' avait sans doute voulu dire: 'pas un chemin,' *not a way*, pas une voie, pas un moyen, sous-entendu: d'échapper au lieu. Pas une seule possibilité de marroner." Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*.

13 Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*, 87.

14 "La Trite passé par la porte étroite du bateau négrier, dont le sillage imite la

Technically speaking, a fibril is a fiber or cable-like string of cellulose binding plant cell walls or holding in place the cylindrical structure of spirochetes; those wiggly, worm-like bacteria most famously and ignominiously associated with syphilis. The fibril depicted here fibrillates in the manner of a vocal chord. Glissant writes, "Within the ship's space the cry of the departed was stifled, as it would be in the realm of the Plantations. This confrontation still reverberates to this day."[15]

Another philosophical cartography for "world" would have appeared if the *Vocabulaire* had extended its mandate to creolized or exogamous forms of French, not to mention non-European languages. Discussions of the difference between the Arabic words عالم (or *a'lam*, which refers to countries of the world) and دنيا (or *dunya*, which refers to the world we live in now as opposed to the world after death); between the Swahili word *dunia* (world) and *Ulimwengu* (universe); or the Mandarin compound 世 (or *shì*, which refers to life, age, generation, era, world, lifetime) plus 界 *jiè* (boundary, scope, extent, circles, group, kingdom) would have added worldliness to the definition of world. The translational tension in the term *vishwa sahitya* (roughly "literatures of the world") is particularly rich. Vinay Dharwadker maintains that its range of definitions for world encompasses "world literature, universal literature, universalistic literature, and cosmopolitan literature" in contradistinction to that for *rashtriya sahitya* (roughly "national literature" in modern subcontinental languages), with *rashtra* (nation) harking back to a Sanskrit word for "territory, country, kingdom, empire, and the people or subjects of a realm."[16]

For some literary critics, the worlds of literature are mapped in a combative arena of competing literary nationalisms (Pascale

reptation de la caravane dans le désert. Sa figure se présenterait de la sorte: ... A l'est, les pays africains, à l'ouest les terres américaines. Cette bête est à l'image d'une fibrille." Edouard Gillant, *Poétique de la Relation*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990, 17.

15 "Dans l'espace du bateau, le cri des déportés est étouffé, comme il le sera dans l'univers des Plantations. Cet affrontement retentit jusqu'à nous," 17. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2004.

16 Vinay Dharwadker, "Constructions of World Literature in Colonial and Postcolonial India," *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, ed. Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir, London: Routledge, 2012, 477.

Casanova) and emergent literary world-systems (as in Giuseppe Cocco's notion of Brazil's "becoming-world," dubbed "monde-Brés"). For others, the worlds of literature are thinkable as data systems based on quantitative indices of plot and style, as suggested by Franco Moretti. For others still, worlds are constituted in literature by the techniques of totalizing aesthetics: panoramic perspective or realism (elaborated as a continuum between fictional mimesis and the "real" world, as argued recently by Tiphaine Samoyault). And, if we take into account the factors identified by former editor at Pantheon Books, André Schiffrin, a literary world must be defined by forms of self-censorship that affect a book before it reaches publication. This thoroughly capitalized literary world-system assumes that authors internalize commercial values and mediate their textual productions with projections of price points and sales figures.[17]

Without necessarily taking on the full complement of phenomenological philosophies of "world" that lead inexorably to Heidegger's abandoned structures of in-dwelling (the *Abbau*, or original temple), where metaphysics runs aground, there are also interrogations of the "globe" in globalization that philosophically complicate the world in world literatures. One key example is Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, which builds on his earlier book *The Sense of the World*, and brings to light the manifold differences between "globalization" (the crushing uni-totality of the network society) and *mondialisation* (a creative "world-forming"), not to mention the more subtle distinctions between the English "globalization" and the French *globalisation*. Nancy casts the philosophy of world as a translation problem. Taking his cue from Cassin's *Vocabulaire*, he defers to the Untranslatable *mondialisation* in his preface to the English edition of the book:

17 Pascale Casanova, ed. *Des littératures combatives: L'Internationale des nationalismes littéraires*, Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2011; see Thomas Pavel, *Univers de la fiction* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), and Tiphaine Samoyault, *Excès du roman* (Paris: Nadeau, 1999), as well as her "Le roman-fleuve ou le monde déplié," in *Actes du colloque international d'Oslo: Point de rencontre: le roman* (ed. Juliette Frölich, Oslo: KULTskriftserie 37: 2, 1995, 141–56); André Shiffrin, *Words and Money* (London: Verso, 2010). For a study of the landscape of translation and the international publishing industry, see Gisèle Sapiro, *Translatio (Le marché de la traduction en France à l'heure de la mondialisation)* Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 2009.

> It is not without paradox that in many languages the French term *mondialisation* is quite difficult to translate, and that perhaps this difficulty makes it almost "untranslatable" in the sense that the term has acquired in the recent *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*. This difficulty lies in the fact that the English term *globalization* has already established itself in the areas of the world that use English for contemporary information exchange (which is not necessarily symbolic exchange) ... there has been in the English *globalization* the idea of an integrated totality, appearing for example with the "global village" of McLuhan, while *mondialisation* would rather evoke an expanding *process* throughout the expanse of the *world* of human beings, cultures, and nations.
>
> The usage of either term, or the search for an English translation that would keep the semantics of "world" are not without real theoretical interest: the word *mondialisation*, by keeping the horizon of a "world" as a space of possible meaning for the whole of human relations (or as a space of possible significance) gives a different indication than that of an enclosure in the undifferentiated sphere of a unitotality. In reality, each of the terms carries with it an interpretation of the process, or a wager on its meaning and future. This also means that it is understandable that *mondialisation* preserves something untranslatable while *globalization* has already translated everything in a global idiom.[18]

Mondialisation is summoned to offset the negative effects of globalization, itself cast as the philosophical equivalent of *Globish*. Moving beyond this familiar opposition, Nancy projects a theory of world-making that puts into colloquy the *orbis* of the planet, the *urbs* of the city, the "globe" (as geometric icon) and its dark twin *glomus* (associated with the technoscientific nightmare of population explosion and the "dissipation of the certainties, images and identities of what the world was with its parts and humanity with its characteristics"). Nancy proceeds transhistorically, alternating between the early modern "vision of God" (Descartes's sense of "continual creation," Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*); Marx's conjugation of the *mondial*

18 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey Librett, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, (original French title: *Le sens du monde*). Nancy, *The Creation of the World*, 28.

("'worldwide' [coexistence]") with the *mondain* ("'worldly' [immanence]"); and phenomenological accounts of World (the latter invoked with critical distance). Nancy "deconstructs" "the becoming-world of the world" as inflected by Husserl, Heidegger, Bergson and Wittgenstein.[19] On the trail of a *mondialité* (worldhood) that enjoys itself through the "effervescence of its thought in act," and through "its creation of forms and signs" sui generis, Nancy projects a non-sovereign multiplicity of worlds that disavows the conventional alignment of planetary law with unequal territorial distribution: *cosmos/nomos*.[20] Here, one could say, he approaches Peter Szendy's "nomos of the sensible," characterized by the aesthetic repartition of the world's material forms.[21] Finally, Nancy's philosophical worlding asks to be read with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of "planetarity," set apart "from notions of the planetary, the planet, the earth, the world, the globe, globalization and the like in their common usage." Associated with "a species of alterity belonging to a system that we inhabit on loan," planetarity for Spivak refuses a custodial model of sustainability "that keeps geology safe for good imperialism" and "emphasizes capital's social productivity but not its subalternizing tendency."[22]

In these interrogations of the cosmopolitical, cosmological and philosophical dimensions of World, all wheels are turning and no point of orientation is consistently privileged. Philosophical

19 Ibid., 33–4, 49, 51.

20 Ibid., 64, 173. Nancy has the work of Hans Blumenberg in mind when he identifies the task of today as the creation of a new form of symbolization of the world. Blumenberg's *The Legibility of the World* (1979) draws on *metaphorology* to adduce time-sensitive worlds of sense. Figures that concentrate hermeneutical content like "the book of nature" or "the book of the world" function as "answer points" to the question of what a world is, posed from the point of view of nature or the cosmos. Metaphorology in this instance arguably effects a reverse "translation" from phenomena back to human language.

21 Peter Szendy, *Kant chez les extraterrestres: Philosofictions cosmopolitiques*, Paris: minuit, 2011, 144–5.

22 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, entry on "Planetarity" for the English edition of the *Vocabulaire* (forthcoming, Princeton University Press, 2013). Spivak confirms that as an English word planetarity was first used in her paper "Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet," presented at Stiftung-Dialogik in Zurich, December 16, 1997. The revised talk was published in *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet/Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten*, ed. Willi Goetschel, Vienna: Passagen, 1999.

world-making, another way of defining what world literatures do, is called out with different names—*mondialité* (Nancy), philosophizing in languages (Cassin), planetarity (Spivak), *toutmondisme* (Glissant), *philosofictions* (Szendy). And these names emerge as heterocosms (alternative worlds accessible to all) that encourage reimagining what in the world the "world" in literature might be.[23]

23 "Heterocosm" is qualified by Sam Tanenhaus as "alternative but accessible worlds, open to us all" that are the result of Harold Bloom's "esoteric populism." See his review of Bloom's *The Anatomy of Influence* in the *New York Times Book Review*, May 22, 2011, 13.

Part Three
Translating "World Literature"