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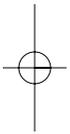
GLOBALIZATION

Though literature has long been a globalized cultural form, only recently has there been a concerted attempt to understand what globalization means for literary theory and criticism. This attempt needs to be distinguished from a longer tradition of critical and literary explorations of the global situation that extends back in its contemporary form to world systems (Wallerstein) and dependency theory (e.g., the work of Samir Amin) and also finds roots in the rich if unduly neglected theorization in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s—both in the West and outside of it—of the already properly "global" conditions of literary and cultural production (e.g., in Roberto Schwarz's exploration of the problems of Brazilian national culture, C. L. R. James's analysis of Caribbean culture, Paulin Hountondji's examination of the extraversion of scientific research, and much of the theoretical writing now taken as postcolonial criticism *avant la lettre*). By its nature, globalization insists on the supposedly unique character of the present moment (the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century) in a way that ren-

ders past relations and theories moribund and inadequate. In considering the significance of globalization, and globalization discourses in particular, for literary theory and criticism, as opposed to mapping out theories of the literary that have long investigated worldwide forces and global interchanges, including everything from "greatest hits" versions of world literature to structuralist accounts of "universal" laws of genre, from ERICH AUERBACH's *Mimesis* to postcolonial criticism and theory, there is a real danger of reinforcing and rearticulating globalization's presentism. Equally, however, the concept of globalization has the potential to refocus literary theory and criticism on historical gaps and lost connective opportunities, most insistently in the still relatively limited intersection of Western theory with its non-Western counterparts.

Attempts to connect globalization and literary studies have run into the blizzard of contradictory meanings, relationships, and discourses that have swirled around the concept since it came into existence in the early 1990s. Globalization discourses became prominent only after the end of the Soviet bloc in 1989, originating in part to explain the characteristics of the "new world order" announced by U.S. President George Bush at the conclusion of the cold war. As these discourses have tried to both confirm and challenge the unabashedly imperial aspirations of Western modernity in general and the United States in particular, it is not surprising that there is wide disagreement and debate over what globalization is (whether it is something new or merely more of the same) and what impact it has on cultural production and interpretation. Nevertheless, the growing body of work on globalization produced from within literary studies suggests that it has become a key concept for understanding the present, future, and past of literary theory and criticism. Globalization has been taken as a periodizing term, a description of contemporary geopolitics, and an ideological project or agenda. For literary studies, globalization also seems to name a moment in which a conjunction of historical, political, and theoretical developments necessitates a wholesale rethinking of the role and function of literature and literary criticism by bringing hitherto obscured features of (the history of) literary theory into a new light.

Most generally, "globalization" is the name given to the social, economic, political, and cultural processes that, taken together, have produced the characteristic conditions of contemporary (late twentieth-/early twenty-first-century) existence. In particular it refers to the ways previously distant parts of the world have become connected in a historically unprecedented manner, such that developments in one part of the world are now able to rapidly produce effects on geographically distant localities. This in turn has made



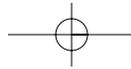
it possible to begin to imagine the world as a single, global space linked by a wide array of technological, economic, social, and cultural forces that are able to cross and criss-cross the imagined boundaries of cultures or nations with relative ease. Globalization has been used to refer both to this larger, historical process and to the effects produced separately in a variety of conceptual registers, as in discussions of contemporary finance capitalism and the scale of corporatization and privatization (economic), the erosion of the nation-state system and the rise of transnational organizations and corporations (political), the threat posed by global culture to local cultures and traditions (culture), the deleterious impact of human activity on the natural world (ecological), and the communications revolution introduced by new technologies like the Internet (communications).

The term "globalization" is perhaps still most often used to describe the profound transformations that have taken place in capitalism over the past several decades, beginning with the elections of the conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom), Ronald Reagan (United States), and Brian Mulroney (Canada) in the 1980s and extending through to the establishment of powerful international agreements and institutions regulating global trade and finance (World Trade Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, etc.). In the West, these changes have resulted in the shattering of the fragile post-World War II accommodation between labor and capital through the elimination or rollback of the (always already modest) programs of the welfare state. In much of the rest of the world, the shift of capitalism from Fordist to post-Fordist regimes of flexible production and accumulation has led to the transformation of imperialist economic relationships into even more powerful and debilitating neoimperialist ones, stifling the sovereign ambitions of postcolonial states almost immediately following their independence. The expanded transnationalization and increasing deterritorialization of industry has allowed capital to expand profit margins considerably through the establishment of a complex system of globally exploitative labor (in the form of sweatshops and global outsourcing) that is without historical parallel. The mobility of contemporary capital, made possible by the actions and policies of nation-states rather than (as commonly supposed) against their wishes, has produced an especially rapacious form of capitalism that has resulted in the expansion of slave economies, the formation of deindustrialized zones ("rust belts"), the renewed use of child labor, the creation of exploitative "free trades" areas (e.g., the *maquilladoras* on the U.S.-Mexico border), and a vast and intensified degradation of the global environment. One of the most

misleading and yet the most common narrative of globalization is one that substitutes economic cause for effect. Never has it been clearer that the state is the executive committee of the ruling class than in the oft-repeated claims of Western governments that globalization (treated as an abstract, invisible, and irresistible force) has made it impossible to reign in the excesses of mobile capital; the only course of action is to go along for the ride, whatever consequences this might have for the majority of citizens. Public acceptance of such rhetorics, which have shrouded the growth of corporate power in the language of fiscal responsibility, deficit cutting, and pragmatic decision making, has led to the worldwide weakening of social policies and a deficit in public imaginings of alternative social orderings.

Literary theory has been impacted both implicitly and explicitly by these global economic transformations and their public policy outcomes. Thinkers such as FREDRIC JAMESON and PIERRE BOURDIEU (*Contre-feux*, 1998, *Acts of Resistance*, 1999) have speculated on the cultural dimensions of contemporary conservative or "neoliberal" ideology, drawing attention to the ways in which the logic of the market has all but obliterated the public sphere and broken down the semiautonomy of different elements of society (e.g., the cultural and the economic). In the wake of fiscal attacks on the humanities and the reorganization of the professoriate into a flexible work force of contract labor there has been renewed attention to the material conditions that underlie the institutions of literary theory and criticism, as expressed variously in the work of Bourdieu (*Homo Academicus*, 1984, *Homo Academicus*, 1988) and RAYMOND WILLIAMS, and, in the United States, Cary Nelson, Evan Watkins, Richard Ohmann, and Louis Kampf. In addition, an examination and critique of the effects of global economics and politics has played an important role in work produced within politically engaged modes of theory, such as Marxism and postcolonial studies, especially in terms of the perpetuation of economic and cultural imperialism, materially and discursively. Contemporary feminist theories too have had to address the political and social consequences of the worsening situation of women worldwide. For instance, sweatshops worldwide are disproportionately populated by women workers, a fact that has had complex social impacts in traditional patriarchal societies above and beyond the brutal abuse of female labor power, and the illegal global sex trade (often connected to slave economies) is just one of many issues that has demanded continued attention to the horrific abuses faced by women around the world.

It should be stressed, however, that these points of connection between literary theory and globalization remain at an early stage of development. Compared with treatments



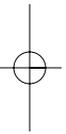
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of globalization in the social sciences, literary-theoretical responses to globalization came at the end of the 1990s as opposed to the beginning of that decade. There are several reasons for this: postcolonial criticism had already been addressing many of the issues and concerns that seemed to be contained within discussions of globalization (e.g., cultural imperialism, global shifts in political power, etc.), and the existence of other global cultural discourses (such as those described at the outset: world systems, dependency theory, theories of the “global” conditions of literary and cultural production) seemed to mitigate the quick generation of connective tissue between the literary-theoretical and the global. Insofar as there have been attempts to make this connection, they have taken the form of a variety of sophisticated ways of extending or moving beyond existing literary discourses toward a more global frame of analysis that includes not only an acknowledgment of the complex intercultural dynamics of the literary but also the ways in which these have always been suspended in a network of global forces. These attempts include ambitious works such as Emily Apter’s *Continental Drift* (1999), Timothy Brennan’s *At Home in the World* (1997), Neil Lazarus’s *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (1999), and Pascal Casanova’s *La République mondiale des lettres* (1999), all of which both interrogate globalization theory and its impact on literary theory (and vice versa) and offer a theory of literature in a global frame. Notable here as well is Franco Moretti’s *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to García Márquez* (1996), which offers a theory of the “modern epic” as a globe-hopping genre that includes works from Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* to Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Unlike many discourses, globalization has circulated freely in both the academy and the public, in obscure journals and international newspapers, in government documents and business memos. This is one of the reasons that it has become difficult to separate the rhetoric of globalization from its reality. For right-wing think tanks and the directors of the International Monetary Fund, globalization is a force that “lifts all boats,” helping everyone in the world to achieve prosperity; for many others, it is capitalism at its rapacious extreme, a mode of global proletarianization intent on absorbing everyone in the world into the mechanism of capitalism. Of course, like other social and historical discourses, globalization is always both rhetoric and reality, a series of competing discursive constructs that purport to offer an explanation of the significance of historical developments and changes. Critics of existing narratives of globalization have drawn attention to the tropes and metaphors used to construct such narratives, as well as to significant elisions and overstatements concerning

globalization’s origins and originality (see, e.g., Blaut, Rosenberg). While there seems to be little dispute that the world is now interconnected in significantly different ways than in the past (different enough, for instance, to permit the construction of discourses or narratives of “globalization” as opposed to “internationalism”), there is growing debate over both the degree of its difference and its ultimate political and cultural significance.

Especially in their earliest articulations, discourses of globalization insisted on the absolute difference of the present from even the immediate past; like POSTMODERNISM, which anticipates discussions of globalization in complex ways (see Anderson), globalization initially seemed to designate a whole new *épistémè* (e.g., Waters). Most recent accounts of globalization have challenged its originality, drawing attention to historical precedent and the *longue durée*. With respect to economics, it has been pointed out that contrary to what one might expect, global exports make up only a small portion of national gross domestic products globally, and a smaller portion than at the height of imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century (e.g., Burtless et al.; Hirst and Thompson). Social interrelations and migrations have long been features of the human experience, as shown by the multicultural character of the Greek *polis* and the well-established Afro-Eurasian trade routes that preexisted European modernity (e.g., Bernal, McNeill). Contemporary global politics are prefigured in the “mixed constitution” of the Roman Empire and in the various political modernities associated with Dutch mercantilism, British imperialism, and cold war politics in the twentieth century (e.g., Hardt and Negri; Taylor). The communications revolution began two centuries prior to the advent of the Internet with the development of the telegraph and the race to lay transnational communications cables on the floor of the world’s oceans (Mattelart). Finally, culture and cultural forms have long traveled outside of their “natural” boundaries, a situation attended to by the field of comparative literature from its outset and increasingly addressed over the past three decades within literary studies as a whole (Greenblatt). While these accounts have all drawn attention to limits and gaps in globalization discourses, there do seem to be genuinely new conditions and circumstances (even if only intensified or extensified versions of older ones) that have challenged the accepted practices and definitions of almost every area of the humanities and the social sciences. This is as true for literary theory and criticism as for sociology, which has begun to focus on the reflexivity of social life (e.g., Beck et al., Giddens), or anthropology, which has had to grapple with the derealization of its object of study (e.g., Appadurai; Comaroff and Comaroff).



Globalization has introduced new theories of culture, especially of the ways in which culture circulates and the processes through which it produces effects. There has, for example, been an insistence on the need to understand culture in terms of “networks,” “flows,” and “routes” or through its mode of transmission, rather than through its relationship to concrete spaces and places. For the most part, however, globalization names a set of complex problems and questions for literary and CULTURAL STUDIES rather than any new theory or group of theories. These problems and questions are only beginning to be articulated and relate to at least five major issues in literary studies that have already been subjects of concerted analysis in other contexts and for other reasons: (1) the object of literary studies; (2) the framework or context of analysis of this object; (3) the future of the institution of literary studies; (4) the relationship between art, literature, and consumer culture; and (5) the politics of the aesthetic. One of the most difficult challenges faced in proposing answers to the questions raised by these issues is to puzzle out the relationship of post-World War II forms of theory in general to the metatheoretical problematic named by “globalization.” For instance, postmodern and postcolonial discourses already posed significant challenges to the objects and politics of literary studies; whether these in some ways anticipated globalization, naming fragments of a more general problematic that has only come together under the aegis of globalization, is a question that scholars are now beginning to pose (Anderson, Brown, Gikandi). The same can be said, of course, of the explosion of academic discourses concerning the nation in the 1980s, which now appear as proleptic figurations of many of the issues encountered in globalization discourses.

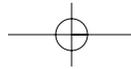
Object of analysis. Over the past several decades, traditional ideas about the character of the literary object itself have undergone intensive theoretical probing and questioning. For a number of reasons, globalization further accelerates this process. As a consequence of the bringing together of scholars and national literary traditions, through both physical travel and electronic communication, different notions and forms of the literary have been brought into contact in especially powerful ways, and national scholarly parochialisms have been thrown into welcome relief. This interconnection and increasing emphasis on comparative or cross-border analysis, even in those fields or areas that remain committed to a national frame of analysis, has changed the questions that are directed toward literary texts. These questions supplement the kinds of deconstructive fragmentation and splintering of the unity of literary texts by interrogating the political, social, and cultural role and function of literary texts given present historical circum-

stances. Once again, this is best understood as an acceleration or generalization of existing theoretical practices, from postcolonial studies to new historicism, rather than the creation of new forms of theory per se.

More significantly, the emphasis within globalization discourses on telecommunications, popular culture, and consumer culture has led many scholars to shift away from literary studies and traditional forms of humanistic research toward those forms that reflect contemporary mass experience. Once again, this is in part the continuation of the development in the West of cultural studies, not through its expansion or spread to other parts of the world (though this too has happened), but as a result of greater opportunities to share research on popular culture that was already being conducted throughout the world (e.g., Garcia Canclini, Sarlo). The deemphasis on the literary also reasserts the need expressed in cultural studies to deal with cultural phenomena that interpellate and affect greater numbers of people than do contemporary fiction, drama, and poetry. In addition to a turn to different forms of cultural expression, the tools of literary theory have been increasingly directed toward an analysis of those policy documents and international agreements that performatively and discursively construct the global present (Harlow and Carter). There has been increased attention, for instance, to the investigation of contemporary regimes of intellectual property and their related aesthetic and cultural significance. While questions of authorship and originality were also dealt with, if rather more abstractly, in postmodernism, these issues take on more urgency in a world in which intellectual property has been extended to life forms as well as literary texts (Coombe).

The wholesale questioning of the (Western) literary object in the context of globalization is not limited to analyses dealing with contemporary literature. Indeed, one of the most interesting outcomes of discussions and debates over globalization has been the extension of these arguments concerning the appropriate object of study to the whole of the Western canon. For instance, the widespread circulation in globalization of discourses concerning cultural hybridity and transmigration has led to an exploration of these themes in the whole history of English and American literatures (e.g., Kaplan and Pease) and to increased attention by literary critics to popular culture and the circulation of cultural objects other than literature in periods prior to the development of mass culture.

Framework of analysis. Though there has been increasing attention to the complex origins and contexts of literary fields, literary studies have nevertheless continued to be organized institutionally and intellectually around the study of discrete national literatures (with the notable exception



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of postcolonial literature) and national literary histories. The analytic limitations of this approach, as well its problematical debt to a parochial nationalism, have been articulated and rearticulated with increasing frequency over the past several decades (Baldick). Nevertheless, it has been easier to articulate theories of cultural or literary flows and dislocation than to actually undertake a new mode of literary analysis divorced from the easy causality of geographical or national belonging. Even in the wake of globalization, the geographical, whether national, regional, or "local" (often in opposition or contradistinction to the global), has remained the common ground for cultural and literary analysis.

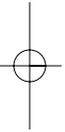
In part, continuing to assert a national basis for literary studies does manage to capture the importance of discourses of nationalism to the construction of literature and literary criticism, whether or not the nation itself is "merely" imagined. What it disallows or disables, however, is forms of analysis that cut across the literary text in different ways, not simply acknowledging multiple, extranational influences (literary or otherwise) on national texts but rethinking the literary text in a fundamental way that does away with the geographical frame entirely. Globalization has pushed literary theorists and critics to attempt to fundamentally rethink the spaces of culture that have undergirded literary analysis since the late eighteenth century. Most successful in this respect so far have been various forms of postcolonial studies, especially those that emphasize cultural and literary relations produced in in-between or liminal spaces, and discussions of literary regionalism or of alternative modernities, which interrupt the idea that modernity has "flowed" from one definite space to another. Marxism and other internationalist or antinationalist cultural discourses have also offered models for a new frame in which to understand the production and circulation of literary texts, although such models, it should be noted, were also being articulated within Marxist theory long before the moment of globalization. Finally, there has been a critical reinvigoration of the discourse of "world literature," as exemplified in David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* (2003), as well as in GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK's call for a reconstituted comparative literary studies in *Death of a Discipline* (2003).

The institution of literary studies. The challenge that globalization poses to the institutional sites of literary studies should be evident from the points raised above. Over the past two decades the contemporary neoliberal agenda has also led to a concerted material attack on literary studies and the humanities more generally. The idea of culture that has been the object of study for the humanities arose at a specific historical moment for specific reasons,

developing alongside the nation-state in the late eighteenth century and acting as one of the "sites of reconciliation for a civic and political society that is seen to be riven by conflict and contradiction" (Lloyd and Thomas 1). Due in part to the waning of the importance of nation-state to the operations of global capitalism, there is now less of a need for a social institution geared toward the production of a national narrative or a discourse mediating the relationship between the populace and the state: the replacement of the "citizen" with the "consumer" is just one sign that such a mediating discourse is now to be found within the operations of capital itself. As a result, it is not surprising that it has become increasingly hard to justify and explain the value of the humanities, whether in the neoliberal vocabulary of economic efficiency (i.e., the "output" of a humanities education) or in terms that do not simply invoke forms of "bad" humanism, trumpet its essential criticality, or reimagine an Arnoldian vision of the humanities for a new gilded age. The corporatization of the university in the age of globalization poses both challenges and opportunities for literary theory and criticism. Though it is likely that the continuation of literary studies as usual is threatened, this can also be seen as potentially opening up the possibility of new forms of analysis and critique that capitalize on a whole range of post-World War II challenges to humanism. The introduction of interdisciplinary humanities programs offers one such (ultimately limited) possibility, even if they are in many cases an expression of neoliberal cost-savings measures as much as examples of genuine intellectual progress. At the same time, even if "the humanities as we have known it[JSA1] for many decades have ceased to be of use," the possibility of a new form of intellectual activity remains open: "to learn and watch problems in as many sites as they [academics] can keep track of, not in any specific areas, nations, races, ages, genders, or cultures, but in all areas, nations, races, ages, genders, and cultures" (Miyoshi 49).

Art, literature, and consumer culture. With respect to culture, globalization continues to be most commonly understood as the worldwide spread of American-style mass and/or consumer culture. This vision of globalization comes with a "ready to hand" politics that tends to simplify complex processes and histories: powerful, dominant cultures overwhelm weaker, smaller, more vulnerable ones, threatening difference and polysemy with a form of negative universalism whose sole aim is to create a single, planetary culture defined by shopping and cultural consumption—the "McWorld" envisioned by Benjamin Barber as our planetary future. Furthermore, this McWorld is possible only as a result of communication technologies and the global circulation of barbaric, debased words and images that speak to the lowest common denominator. In this

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view, the “low tech” form of literature acts as one of the sole imaginative bulwarks against the encroaching, antihuman global homogeneity of mass culture.

This essentially Romantic vision of the function of literature, along with the identification of globalization with consumerism (and with the culture of the United States in particular), is conceptually limited in a number of ways, which John Tomlinson has thoroughly outlined in his *Globalization and Culture*. In terms of literary criticism and theory in particular, though this ready-to-hand discourse about globalization is frequently employed, the vision of culture that it articulates has itself been powerfully challenged from within literary theory itself. Without wishing to deny the importance of relations of power, and highly unequal ones at that, the process by which cultures interact and come into contact with one another mitigates against the easy equation of the popularity of U.S. cinema abroad with the imposition of U.S. values—whatever those might be in a society as internally complex as the United States. The tendency to fall back on theories generally disavowed in other theoretical registers suggests that literary and cultural critics still face a significant challenge in producing a sophisticated theory concerning the relationship between consumer culture and literature or the literary. Responses to globalization within literary criticism have just as often reinforced the opposite position: a retrenchment of older ideologies of the literary and of literature against these new threats to the human. More sophisticated and open analyses of the complex dynamics of popular culture in a global frame can be found, for instance, in Naomi Klein’s widely read analysis of branding in *No Logo* (2000) and in Thomas Frank’s challenge to theories of the corporate appropriation of supposedly genuinely “popular” culture in *The Conquest of Cool* (1997). Strangely, however, it is in this area, where perhaps the most has been written on globalization from a cultural perspective, that there has been the least insight into contemporary culture and the place of the literary within it.

The politics of aesthetic form. When not linked to such Arnoldian ideas, the contemporary politics of the aesthetic has continued to draw energy from its modernist definition, that of a cultural intervention into the social via shock and transgression. Such ideas about the political effectivity of the aesthetic continues to inform much literary theory and criticism. Without ever being explicitly stated, it is the criterion that informs the choice of exemplary literary models in most theoretical essays; deconstruction, for instance, has been constructed on the back of the monuments of high modernism, as has (perhaps more problematically, as Franco Moretti has pointed out in *Signs Taken for Wonders*) much of Western Marxist literary theory.

Globalization has presented a challenge to this connection between aesthetics and politics. The global phantasmagoria of visual images, blending high art and pop culture to a degree and extent adumbrated in postmodern discourses, has made it apparent that “aesthetic experience is now everywhere and saturates social and daily life in general” (Jameson 100). The ubiquity of the aesthetic, the generalization of its shocks and transgressions into the cultural landscape at large, necessitates a wholesale rethinking of the presumed politics of the aesthetic. As Jameson points out, “The image is commodity today, and that is why it is vain to expect a negation of the logic of commodity production from it, that is why, finally, all beauty today is meretricious and the appeal to it by contemporary pseudo-aestheticism is an ideological manoeuvre and not a creative resource” (135). Globalization suggests that the “society of the spectacle” is indeed a global phenomenon: there are no longer spaces “outside” of the spectacle that can be recuperated for the purposes of aesthetic renewal, the function, for instance, that African art and literature performed at different moments in the history of Western modernism.

It is not just the formal, social, or cultural function of cultural objects that needs to be rethought. Increasingly, globalization has prompted a reexamination of modernism itself. For example, Malcolm Bull has argued that the opposition commonly made between modernism and both classicism (which precedes it) and commodity culture (which follows) is mistaken. Modernism is seen as a slim moment of aesthetic and political possibility between two epochs that block effective resistance to capitalism; this is why modernist aesthetics continue to be the site at which the conjunction of aesthetics and politics is theorized. Bull suggests, however, that the opposition between modernism and capitalism is overstated. Modernism is not a gap in the seamless and inexorable development of a commodity culture on its way to becoming global. “Modernists were not partisans resisting the present and pressing on eternity, they were negotiating the equally tricky but rather more mundane path between the two cultures of capitalism . . . working between two antithetical cultures meant that resistance to the one almost always involved some degree of complicity with the other” (97).

One of the signs of the decline of the link between aesthetics and politics has been the renewed interest in the politics of situationism, especially in the possibilities of *détournement*, the appropriation of the signs and materials of capitalist culture in an effort to bring about its demise. Such practices have appeared in demonstrations against the neoliberal regimes of globalization around the world, as well as in various forms of “culture jamming” (which explicitly traces its routes back to surrealism and situationism),

though the political effectivity of these practices remains open to question.

Whether or not they continue to be discussed in reference to globalization—a concept that may outlive its use as quickly as the (admittedly less widespread) concept of postmodernism—these interrelated issues are likely to remain at the forefront of literary theory and criticism for some time to come. Far from signaling the end of literature or the end of theory, globalization has forced literary theory to address in substantive ways criticisms of those problems and limits that have led to feelings of “crisis” in contemporary theory. Spivak’s attempt in *Death of a Discipline* to reinvigorate comparative literature and area studies alike by placing them into radical dialogue with one another is but one example of an attempt to think past this sense of crisis in a highly sophisticated way that avoids easy returns to literary humanism or uncritical universalisms. However, discussions of the institutions of literary theory in the context of globalization must remain vigilant against their (perhaps unavoidable) complicity with neoliberal discourses of globalization. As Masao Miyoshi and Arif Dirlik have pointed out, the academic fascination with globalization has in some cases reinforced the belief in both its empirical reality and its historical inevitability. While the internationalization of the theory conference circuit has led to an ever-increasing realization of the contexts in which Western literary theory arose, as well as to greater cultural and intellectual interchange among scholars, it has also led to globalization discourses’ being written largely from the perspective of what Zygmunt Bauman describes as the mobile class of “tourists” rather than the increasingly immobile “vagabonds” that make up most of the world’s population.

Though it is important to remain wary of the limits (and inevitable contamination) of the theoretical enterprise as practiced in the Western university, it is equally important to stress that the spreading global awareness of the enormous challenges facing humanity has generated an ever-expanding articulation of and struggle for a “globalization against globalization,” a *genuine* globalization (as opposed to a rhetorical screen for capitalism) that strives to produce a world characterized by real social justice. The “movement of movements” that makes up the (misnamed) antiglobalization struggles that came to prominence in the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 has found its rallying cry in the slogan popularized by the World Social Forum: “Another world is possible.” Contemporary literary theory and the humanities more generally no doubt still have a role to play in helping to bring this world into existence.

Imre Szeman

See also AFRICAN THEORY AND CRITICISM, CARIBBEAN THEORY AND CRITICISM, JAPANESE THEORY AND CRITICISM: 2. 1990 AND AFTER, and POSTCOLONIAL CULTURAL STUDIES.

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GOETHE, JOHANN WOLFGANG VON

CHARLES AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE called Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) "the greatest critic of all ages," and MATTHEW ARNOLD termed him "the supreme critic," yet as late as 1955 René Wellek could still complain that there existed "no systematic discussion of [Goethe's] literary criticism" (201). There are many good reasons why this should be so. Goethe seems not to have been interested in a systematic theory of literature. The same "fear of abstraction" that had led him to develop an alternative scientific method seems to have informed his work as a literary critic. Many of his most important theoretical pronouncements are obiter dicta scattered throughout minor essays, reviews, and conversations recorded by others. Some are presented in a dialogic form that refuses to reveal which of several positions, if any, is to be privileged. The majority refer to art generally rather than literature per se. Goethe also changed his mind,

or seemed to, several times in the course of his long life. Thus, in order to speak of Goethe's "literary theory" one must not only assemble widely scattered comments but also remember their original contexts and beware of elevating passing remarks into fundamental theoretical axioms (Koopmann 30).

Clearly, the extent to which one can and should generalize from such unsystematic comments is questionable, yet Goethe's heirs have not hesitated to read their own ideological programs—German classicism, *Bildung*, dialectical method—into his writings, whereas Goethe himself sought to promulgate nothing of the sort. Among the worst culprits in this program of ideological recruitment are the *Geistesgeschichtler*, a school of German intellectual historians that was widely influential during the first half of the twentieth century, who went so far as to read Goethe's entire literary *oeuvre* as an extended allegory of a philosophical system. Ernst Robert Curtius, for example, sees Goethe's view of literature as a Hegelian "phenomenology of human existence" (52). Yet not only do such historians fail to respect the particularity of Goethe's theoretical pronouncements; the *Geistesgeschichtler* (and also, surprisingly, the German *textimmanent* school, a parallel to NEW CRITICISM) fail to respect the "literariness" of his literary works by reading texts such as the discussion of *Hamlet* in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, as well as Goethe's drama *Torquato Tasso*, as pronouncements on literary theory (see, e.g., Curtius 32 and Wellek 204ff.).

Since the 1980s, and not surprisingly, several studies have been published that seek to recruit Goethe as a progenitor of contemporary literary schools. Some, such as Benjamin Bennett's and other vaguely poststructuralist attempts to coopt him, are wild and completely alien to the spirit of Goethe's work. Others, such as the arguments offered in Karl Fink and Max Baeumer's collection *Goethe as a Critic of Literature* that Goethe must be seen as having anticipated *Rezeptionsästhetik* (RECEPTION THEORY) OF READER-RESPONSE THEORY AND CRITICISM, deserve to be taken far more seriously but remain ultimately unconvincing. Goethe rejected emphatically any concession to the psychology of the audience, asking in a review of Johann Georg Sulzer, "What does the gaping audience matter?" and arguing in his essay "On Harsh Judgements" that "the true artist must ignore his public, just as the teacher disregards the whims of his children, the physician the desires of his patients, the judge the passions of the litigating parties" (Wellek 203, 216).

Just as it has been claimed that Goethe's contribution can be resolved into one or another programmatic philosophy or reduced to an anticipation of contemporary schools, so it has also been argued that Goethe merely gave fuller