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**Cosmopolitanism and the
Postnational**

Literature and the New Europe

Edited by

César Domínguez
Theo D'haen

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COSMOPOLITANISM, POSTNATIONALISM, NEW EUROPE.

INTRODUCTION

CÉSAR DOMÍNGUEZ

Locating cosmopolitanism in the N/new Europe is both a challenge to the usual understanding of the former concept and an opportunity to encourage a timely, critical reflection – from a literary, artistic and cultural perspective – on the present state of the European Union (EU) as a postnational polity. In 2005 Muriel Rambour considered postnationalism to be "a useful framework in studying the interactions between national references and the prospects of a European identity". She defined this framework as the construction of "an identity that could emerge beyond specific traditions determined by a particular national history" and linked it to "the notion of 'constitutional patriotism'".¹ From the perspective of the period between the 1990s and the 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis, the prospect of a country abandoning the EU (one of the varieties of the return of the nation-state) was unrealistic, for Europeanization was commonly conceived as a gradual but irreversible process. Today (March 2015) this is not longer the case, as Europeanization may be brought to a halt both unilaterally and multilaterally, either voluntarily or not.

Indeed, in 2015 it looks as if the mythical foundation of Europe's cultural identity – Greece – might be expelled from the Eurozone, while some countries may well choose to leave the Eurozone rather than pay Southerners' debts. What is in question, then, is the very concept of "European citizenship" as institutionalized by the 1997 Treaty of the

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¹ Muriel Rambour, Muriel, "References and Uses of Postnationalism in French and British Debates on Europe", Workshop "National Identity and Eurocepticism: A Comparison between France and the United Kingdom", 1. < http://oxpo.politics.ox.ac.uk/materials/national_identity/Rambour_Paper.pdf >.

**ROOTING "NEW EUROPEAN LITERATURE":
A RECONSIDERATION OF THE EUROPEAN MYTH OF THE
POSTNATIONAL AND CYNICAL COSMOPOLITANISM**

SIBYLLE BAUMBACH

The essay focuses on the question of what constitutes "new European" literature and explores the potential and pitfalls of concepts such as the "postnational" or "cosmopolitanism" and their impact on European and "new European" literature. Following a brief overview of what has been perceived as "old" versus "new" European literature, it looks back at Europe's founding myth and Moschus' image of Europa, more specifically Europa's dream, to reconsider the cosmopolitanism of European literature and reflect upon both the continuous strife for the postnational and the question of emergence of "new" European literature. Providing a critical outlook with the regard to the promotion and proliferation of new European literature, this essay explores literary genres which seem particularly effective for communicating new European values ideas, especially concepts of transnationalism or cosmopolitanism that are often associated with European culture. In this context, the essay proposes the hybrid genre of the Menippean satire as an inherently cosmopolitan and transnational genre, which is based upon the continuous crossing of borders without completely overcoming them, and can thus assist the "new European" agenda of literature.

Some thoughts on "new European literature"

What makes literature "European"? Are there any qualities, themes, or modes of narration which are essentially connected with "Europe", let alone "new Europe"? Following the question David Damrosch raises in connection to world literature,¹ we have to ask ourselves which literature and whose Europe we are referring to when talking about "European" or "new European" literature since Europe and especially "new Europe" is a relational concept, adopting different connotations depending on the perspective it is viewed from. The most obvious way to define "European" literature is to distinguish it from other literature groupings by means of geographical and historical categories. Accordingly, literary texts which were composed within a European framework and penned preferably by authors of European origin would pass as "European"

¹ See David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003, 1. See also Robert M. Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)*, Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007, 87-133.

while the most renowned masterpieces amongst them would form a widely-recognized literary canon.² The quest for "new European literature", however, calls for a reconsideration of previous classifications. Once again, turning to geographical categories would be the easiest way to explain "what's new in European literature". A recent literary festival in Slovenia organized by the HALMA-network, for instance, which interlinks literary centres in Europe to promote the transnational exchange of authors and translators, provided one valid, yet not the only answer to this question by focusing on literature(s) and authors from new EU-member states.³

The notion of a "new European literature", that is, a literature that emerges within the expanded and further expanding boundaries of the European Union, involves considerable difficulties in view of an increasingly globalized world, in which forces are combined in the attempt to create a trans-ethnic, trans-cultural, and transnational global sphere where national literary canons take a backseat while world literature enters the stage. With the growing mobility of writers, readers, and narratives in today's "global village", its flourishing translation industry, which speeds up the transfer and interchange of literary works, and the intensifying inter-cultural and inter-national exchange, national boundaries are increasingly softened, supporting the travelling of literature across Europe as well as across different continents. Both in the United States of Europe and in the global republic of letters, literature ultimately opposes geographical or ethnical categorization to the same degree as authors and readers, who can be rooted in, but not engrossed by their countries of origin. Taking into account the intrinsic cosmopolitan quality of literature, the question arises of what can be gained by differentiating between European or "new European" and world literature and whether such a differentiation would be feasible at all.

In this essay, the idea of "new European literature", its caveats and imperatives, potentialities and limits shall be further investigated. Instead of identifying specific literary texts that could potentially pass as "new

² Philip Gaskell, for instance, includes thirty-two masterpieces of key European authors from Dante to Brecht in his *Landmarks in Continental European Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999.

³ *What's New in European Literature?* European Literary Festival: 16-19 September 2009: <http://www.halma-network.eu>.

European literature" and provide the foundation for a "new European" canon, it is my aim to open up some opportunities for "new European literature", to explore its potential to engage in the promotion of a new European identity and finally to suggest some literary genres which would transport and communicate the idea of "new Europe" and "new Europeaness" particularly well. Thereby, I will proceed in three steps: first, some key factors which might aid the differentiation of European and non-European as well as "new" and "old" European literature will be examined, taking into account the origin and development of the idea of cosmopolitan European literature by a brief reconsideration of Europe's founding myth. In a second step, concepts of cosmopolitanism, post- and trans-nationalism shall be discussed in their relation and applicability to "new Europe" and its literature before finally shifting the focus onto the question of whether there are any literary genres or sub-genres which appear particularly apt for communicating new European values and ideas, promoting cosmopolitan identities (or, "cosmoties"), and launching a "new European literature".

"New European literature" and/as *Weltliteratur*

The notion of a "new European literature" presupposes certain distinctive qualities which allow its differentiation from other national and trans-national literature(s), including, supposedly, also world literature. And there's the rub: the concept of *Weltliteratur*, which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe introduced in 1827 and which sparked wide-ranging discussions and orchestrations of world-literature, literary cosmopolitanism, and a global republic of letters, was essentially a Eurocentric concept. For Goethe, world literature evolved from and was first to be equated with European literature, which as a literature of exchange and intercourse between the literary works and peoples of Europe enabled world literature to "spread in ever-widening circles to a system which in the end will embrace the world".⁴ This notion of the inclusivity of world literature, however, has to be put into perspective.

While subscribing to an ethics of trans-nationalism, world literature does not eliminate cultural differences. Quite the contrary, especially in a globalized world, which complicates rather than simplifies identity formation, boundaries between different cultures and nations persist.

⁴ Fritz Strich, *Goethe and World Literature*, trans. C.A.M. Sym, Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1972, 16.

Even if they are reconsidered and re-negotiated, they are ultimately redrawn to preserve, recollect, and revive notions of identity on a regional and also on the national level, especially by means of literature.⁵ As Jacques Derrida claimed, cosmopolitanism remains a mission and entails "forms of solidarity yet to be invented This invention is our task",⁶ a task that is designed to be never fully achieved since the establishment, recognition, and acceptance of difference are the prerequisites for cosmopolitanism to come into being. Consequently, all cosmopolitan notions embrace the notion of the provincial. The permanent assertion of otherness in sameness, of the regional in the global leads to the development of "transcultural localisms",⁷ which could be seen as having given way to a new European consciousness, thus bearing the seeds for a new cosmopolitan European literature – a literature that is an integral part of world literature while, at the same time, differentiating itself from other kinds of literature as well as from what can be referred to as the traditional, old European literary canon. Europe, in this sense, has become its own Other against which it defines itself while world literature can be regarded as both the offspring of European literature and the foundation of "new European literature".

What is new in European literature?

The distinction of European literature in "old" and "new" literature is not unproblematic and includes some pitfalls which are worth considering in order to be avoided. First of all, to refer to "new Europe" in opposition to an "old Europe" is to subscribe to an ideological debate, fuelled by Donald Rumsfeld's remark in 2003, which aimed at dividing Europe rather than describing a profound change in European values, politics, or culture.⁸ Fading out the polemical flavour connected with this differentiation, the term "new European literature" *per se* points to a fresh approach to, a certain detachment from, and a critical reflection on

concepts that are connected with "old" European literature, with literary works that belong to the traditional literary canon and were composed before the former nation-centred Europe became reinvented with the foundation of the European Union.

Furthermore, the notion of a genuinely "new European literature", which emerged in the sense "that [it] cannot be predicted or explained from antecedent conditions",⁹ has to be put into perspective. Even though unprecedented forms of literature can develop (such as the e-mail novel, for instance, which pays tribute to the changing landscape of communication-media and the growing mobility of writers and "characters"), these are *stricto sensu* not so much "emergent" but rather "resultant".¹⁰ In fact, literary trends, themes, and genres that surface within and outside "new Europe" can often be revealed as receptions, revivals, and re-fashionings of concepts, ideas, and literary models that already exist(ed) but need to be redressed to meet the expectations of a new era, a different cultural scene, and a changing readership. As will be argued, especially in "new Europe", the impact of ancient literary concepts and *topoi* plays a major role in the formation of new trends and developments in literature and culture.

The alleged novelty of emerging or rather re-emerging forms of literature moreover implies a certain room for variation, adjustment, and further development, which precludes any attempt of a providing closed definition and thereby meets the requirements and expectations of the new European Union: the latter remains a heterogeneous entity, a union of diversity; its culture and literature are still in flux, its potentialities and limits are continuously to be re-negotiated and its boundaries are in the process of becoming rather than being. Just like the concept of "Euro-peanness", therefore, "new European literature" is not easily grasped but it can be narrowed down by concentrating on some characteristic features.

Rather than being restricted to literature of Europe or literature that is produced or received in Europe, "new European literature" refers to an expandable consortium of literary texts, which embrace, reflect, and promote European values, vistas, and ideals, and do not only travel across national and geographical boundaries but also incite new ideas of

⁵ See *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, London: Routledge, 1990. See also

Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities, eds Laura García-Moreno and Peter C. Pfeiffer, Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996.

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes, New York: Routledge, 2001, 4.

⁷ See *Transcultural Localisms: Responding to Ethnicity in a Globalized World*, eds Yiorgos Kalogeris et al., Heidelberg: Winter, 2006.

⁸ See Thomas Pedersen, *When Culture Becomes Politics: European Identity in Perspective*, Aarhus: Aarhus UP, 2008, 165–82.

⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Emergence".

¹⁰ See Tony Voss, "The Literature of Emergency", in *Emerging Literatures*, ed. Reingard Nethersole, Bern: Peter Lang, 1990, 31.

the transnational and cosmopolitan by featuring transgressions of traditional categories, establishing unity in diversity, and enacting a critical self-reflection on their own hybridity. This can be achieved on two different levels, that of content and that of style. In both cases, the revisiting and discussion of its own origin and tradition and the return to its ancient roots are the prerequisites for European literature to invent itself anew.

"New European literature" might affirm its novelty by a critical and creative reception and revitalization of traditional European *topoi*, opening up new vistas based on a familiar source, whose full potential has not yet been tapped effectively. However, the notion of a "new literature" can arise from the (re-)invention of new literary forms and genres, which accommodate concepts of transnationality and cosmopolitanism particularly well and could serve to both communicate and incite ideas of the "New Europe". On the level of content, one might furthermore add literary allusions and discussions of economic, political, and ideological issues, which are pressing in current debates within the European Union, as further unequivocal indicators of "new European literature".

However, the considerable difficulty of pinning down such themes is evident since they more often than not connect to questions of integration, trans-national cooperation, and cosmopolitanism – to issues, therefore, which are trans-European rather than Euro-specific. Especially the discussion and promotion of cosmopolitan vistas can be attributed to literature *per se*: the embracing of a "variety of worlds"¹¹ is a key characteristic of "European" as much as of "world literature" if a distinction between the two is to be made at all. And yet, cosmopolitan ideas have become ubiquitous and omnipresent especially within the European Union considering the vast changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the prospective of future entrances, and the ongoing pursuit of an economic and political unity without abandoning national sovereignties. Thus, Robert Fine rightly claimed that "it was only after 1989, at the close of the Cold War, that a new configuration of cosmopolitan practices seemed to change the very character of the epoch".¹² Even

though, as indicated by Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, European literature has always been designed as cosmopolitan literature, this potential was not tapped effectively before the fall of the Berlin Wall provided a new space for literature to develop, experiment, and reinvent itself.

Especially with the entry of the new European members, the idea of "new", cosmopolitan Europe became more concrete and its motto "unity in diversity" came to the fore. Literature has reacted and continues to react to these changes and joins the quest for a new European identity, probing potentialities of limits of the "new Europe", which can be felt, for instance, in the increasing interest in travel-writing, fictions of migration, and also autobiographies, which exhibit "where Europe begins".¹³ Does this imply that "new European literature" is in fact following the path American literature has already been taking for centuries in the attempt to achieve *e pluribus unum*? Is "new European literature" engaging in an enterprise which has been on the agenda of its American counterpart ever since the foundation of the US? This is definitely not the case since the United States of America were founded as unity in diversity while the United States of Europe face the challenge of creating unity across established nation states. Their starting point on the road to cosmopolitanism, therefore, is very different. Even though the popular distinction between European and American culture might more often than not, as Peter Baldwin argues, arise from the "narcissism of minor differences"¹⁴ and be further diminished with the new entries to the EU, one can assume that the perspectives on cosmopolitanism and the critical reflection thereon take quite different shapes in "new European and American literature" even though to engage in an in-depth analysis of chosen literary works would exceed the scope and aim of this essay.

So, what is new in European literature? As already suggested, novel aspects that serve to distinguish "new European literature" might include the critical discussion or even dismissal of traditional canons, a reconsideration and recreation of ancient *topoi*, and the hybridization of established literary forms as well as a growing interest in pointing out the

¹¹ David Damrosch, "What Is World Literature?", *World Literature Today*, LXXVII/1 (April-June 2003), 9 (my emphasis).

¹² Robert Fine, "Taking the 'ism' out of Cosmopolitanism: An Essay in Reconstruction", *European Journal of Social Theory*, VI/4 (November 2003), 436.

¹³ Yoko Tawada, *Where Europe Begins*, trans. Susan Bernofsky and Yumi Selden, New York: New Directions Books, 2002.

¹⁴ Peter Baldwin, *The Narcissism of Minor Differences: How America and Europe Are Alike*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

shortcomings of renowned European authors and their masterpieces. The changing geographical landscape thereby provides the incentive for a new perspective on the concept of Europeaness and a reconsideration or even a breaking-up of traditional literary forms, themes, and genres in the attempt to promote new European ideas and values through literature.¹⁵

Any consideration of a European genre, however, must lead back to the first instance when Europe and literature met, to Europe's founding myth and its role for the emergence of European literature. To begin at the beginning, let us thus return to the story of Europa, which encapsulates ideas of the transnational and features the first crossing of boundaries that led to the invention and manifestation of "new Europe".

"I had a dream" – the myth of Europe

The idea of Europe is essentially based on a myth, on a shared narrative which, made popular by Ovid, has been travelling across various oral and written traditions, experienced numerous retellings and modifications and is deeply engraved in our cultural memory. As *mythos*, the story of the Phoenician princess and her abduction to Crete not only provides an etymological source of Europe but also contains the prerequisites for the continuous revitalization and renewal of European ideas and ideals, ensuring their survival, reception, and recreation as it itself is designed for incessant translation and transferral across the ages into changing national and cultural contexts. The story of Europa, who was abducted by Zeus in the disguise of a beautiful bull and brought to Crete where she gave birth to Minos, its future king, not only suggests an anti-essentialistic origin of Europe but offers a story that is outrageous in almost every aspect: boundaries are ignored and transgressed both on the level of being (by means of metamorphosis) and with regard to geographical, imperial borders. Rules are broken, diverse forms of being are crossed, and territorial sovereignty is violated. The story of Europa is a story of conquest, uprooting, and alienation, featuring a tension between same- and otherness, which is especially apparent in Moschus' version of the myth, part of which describes Europa's dream, which foreshadows her abduction:

... she beheld two Continents at strife for her sake, Asia, and the farther shore, both in the shape of women. Of these one had the guise of a stranger, the other of a lady of that land, and closer still she clung about her maiden, and kept saying how "she was her mother, and herself had nursed Europa." But that other with mighty hands, and forcefully, kept hailing the maiden, nothing loth: declaring that, by the will of Aegis-bearing Zeus, Europa was destined to be her prize.¹⁶

Waking from this "sweet dream", Europa finds herself surprised at the strong attraction exerted by the exotic, foreign woman. This encounter, which symbolizes the origin of Europe in Asia, exhibits an experience of cultural alterity and thus provides the precondition for European identity to come into being and for Europa to be transferred to an unfamiliar territory.

The founding myth of Europe thus provides pre-colonial evidence supporting Edward Said's provocative claim that "the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also ... the source of its civilizations, ... its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience".¹⁷ While providing a means to distinguish Europe or Western civilization from its counterpart, from the East and Persian barbarism, the myth also serves as a fruitful foundation for ideas that are connected with the "new Europe" but often overlooked. Even though giving birth to the first European citizen, the abducted Phoenician girl herself persists in a state of alienation, forced to live in-between cultures and thus bridging Europe and the Orient, embodying difference as existence and existence as difference,¹⁸ or even as *différance*. For not only is difference, or rather: multitude or multinationalism, a key characteristic of "new Europe" but the latter is rooted and continues to reside in a state of diversity, variation, and ultimately also deferral: rather than being a static compound of values and knowledge from the past, Europe is a praxis and a process of constant expansion, of the revitalization of the old and the implementation and provocation of the new. Renewed and redressed, yet never ultimately fulfilled, it continues to be a cosmopolitan project

¹⁵ For the connection between literature and values, see *Literature and Values: Literature as a Medium for Representing, Disseminating and Constructing Norms and Values*, eds Sibylle Baumbach, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning, Trier: WVT, 2009.

¹⁶ Moschus, "Europa and the Bull", in *Theocritus, Bion and Moschus*, trans. A. Lang, London: Macmillan, 1906, 189.

¹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 1995, 1.

¹⁸ See Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Das kosmopolitische Europa: Gesellschaft und Politik in der zweiten Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004, 392.

whose full potential is yet to be realized as more countries join the European Union, whose identity constantly has to be renegotiated by its people(s).

The key feature Europe shares with its namesake in "existence as difference" is no weakness. On the contrary, a cosmopolitan Europe, which is aware of its existence as and in a state of difference as well as of the paradoxes it comprises, can both overcome ignorance of the foreign and avoid romanticizing and idealizing the Other while demonizing itself. Self-consciousness and self-confidence are the ingredients of cosmopolitanism, whose realization and implementation remains "our task",¹⁹ a task wherein literature and especially mythical narratives always played and continue to play a key role, as indicated by the re-reading and reconsideration of Europa's myth.

Going one step further and considering different ways of generation, manifestation, and reflection of cosmopolitan values and ideas, it is especially myth that can lead the way. Myth, which is understood here not in the sense of Northrop Frye's paradigm, not as the structuring principle of all literature,²⁰ but as relating to mythological stories, not only offers a space for the negotiation and unification of differences, for the dissemination of universal knowledge, and the promotion of multinational concepts and ideas that greatly contribute to European identity politics: it also travels particularly well insofar as it exceeds temporal, political, geographical, national, and ideological boundaries and continues to shape and be shaped by the multiple cultural contexts it passes on its journey across the global republic of letters.

As Paul Ricoeur already observed, the history of European culture consists "of a confluence of different myths, which have been expatriated from their original community, i.e. Hebrew, Greek, Germanic, Celtic".²¹ Displaying what could be referred to as "an ethics of inclusiveness", myth embraces a great variety of stories from different cultures and holds a firm place in the greater narrative web which does not only inform literature but also reaches into our daily lives, being one of the most powerful means of world-making. It is multiplying, multifocal, and

multicultural, constantly questioning and redefining itself, gaining in complexity as it travels across time and space. At the same time, myth offers a space of negotiation and exchange, which is to a certain degree aloof from reality and thus can serve as a critical commentary and reflection of past, present and future states of Europe while providing a space where heterogeneity, border-crossing and hybridization, which is both the spring and "muddle" of Europe, can be maintained or overcome.

As Manfred Pfister argued, "in its 'capitalization' of Europe, its colonization of the Other and its deletion of the awareness of its own constructedness and relativity, it [myth] proves to be at one and the same time 'surpassed', outdated, and unsurpassable".²² The Minoan myths especially, comprising the story of Europa, the Minotaur and the labyrinth as well as the story of Daedalus and Icarus, experience a revival in twentieth-century European literature and culture,²³ first and foremost because they epitomize three key concepts fundamental to the idea of Europe, namely alienation, liberation, and invention, thus providing part of the *mythos* for the conceptualization of cosmopolitan or postnational Europe. The reiteration of European myths, which continue to play a key role in European literature as sources of inspiration, as part of our cultural memory and as popular reference, is to reflect its *autopoiesis* as well as reconsider its origin in the familiarization of the unfamiliar, which began when Europa had a dream.

"New Europe", cosmopolitanism, and the postnational

Moschus' version of the Europa myth features not only the encounter with the Other but also contains an ekphrastic image, which transports ideas of multiculturalism and transnationalism into the story, prefiguring the concept of cosmopolitan European literature: before her abduction, the princess is said to have gathered flowers in the meadows, showing "great delight in all sorts of flowers"²⁴ that she collects in a basket, which is decorated with images of Io, the heroine of the counter-myth to Europa's story: Io, a Greek priestess from Argos, was seduced by Zeus and metamorphosed into a heifer to conceal the crime. Found out by

¹⁹ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism*, 4.

²⁰ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, New York: Atheneum, 1966, 136.

²¹ Quoted from Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, 122. Paul Ricoeur refers to "the history of Western culture" in this context.

²² Manfred Pfister, "Europa/Europe: Myths and Muddles", in *Myths of Europe*, eds Richard Littlejohns and Sara Soncini, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007, 31.

²³ See Theodore Ziolkowski, *Minos and the Moderns: Cretan Myths in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

²⁴ Moschus, "Europa and the Bull", 192.

Hera, the transformed woman was put under guard of the watchful Argus, then freed by Hermes, and thereafter roamed the world until she finally settled in Egypt where she gave birth to Epaphus. Condensed in the surface of the basket, we find the reversed movement from that in the myth of Europa.

What is depicted is the journey from occident to orient, from Europe via Asia to Egypt, under the guard of the travellers' patron Hermes, which serves as foundation and pretext for future transgressions of national boundaries such as that initiated by Europa's abduction. At the same time, the integration of Io's transnational passage into the myth of Europa not only transports ideas of intertextuality and the narrative global web of myth and literature, which bears the seeds and calls for further reiterations of these two founding myths, it also features a level of self-reflexion which is crucial for the concept of a "new European literature". Exploring impulses of ancient narratives and *topoi*, the latter might gain in shape by reinventing itself in the reconsideration of its roots, which not only bears material to support national literatures (which "old" European literature mainly used them for) but also includes the beginnings of a cosmopolitan, transnational understanding of Europe. To read the myth of Europe not as a story of separation but of the unification of differences and to re-evaluate its cosmopolitan roots in antiquity is both the task and the opportunity of "new European literature".

The remarkable recurrence of mythical figures in contemporary European culture in general and the political, psychological, feminist or deconstructive receptions of the Europa-myth in particular,²⁵ bear witness to a "new" European trend, which arises from a reconsideration of ancient narrations, characters, and *topoi*. Regardless whether mythical figures are recognized as such, many of them have become an integral part of European culture (they quite frequently appear as names for library catalogues, travel agencies, motor vehicles, etc.), which points to the precious role and considerable impact of antiquity on contemporary European culture, and also on its literature. Before turning to the consideration of "new" or rather "renewed" European genre, it is necessary to further qualify concepts of the cosmopolitan and the postnational, and assess their relevance for "new European literature". These considerations once again take us to antiquity.

²⁵ See, for instance, Douglas Dunn, *Europa's Lover* (1982) or Heinrich Böll, "He Came as a Beertruck Driver" ("Er kam als Busfahrer") (1969).

In ancient Greece, we not only meet the first European but also the first cosmopolitan citizen. As early as the fourth century BCE, we are told, the cynic Diogenes of Sinope, on being asked where he came from, claimed to be "a citizen of the world (*kosmopolites*)".²⁶ This first commitment to cosmopolitanism was meant as a critique of parochialism and emerged from Diogenes' disdain of Greek civic society, a disdain that was supported by his own lifestyle of extreme individualism and self-sufficiency at the margins of the *polis*. Concepts of cosmopolitanism and the idea of a mixed community, where national, ethnic, religious, or other affiliations were meaningless, became fundamental in the foundation and organization of the city of Rome, which embraced several different cultures, languages, and nationalities and thus emerged as the first cosmopolitan society, preconceiving multicultural Europe.

Considering this tradition of cosmopolitan values and their intimate connection to the idea of Europe, the question arises whether cosmopolitanism, as Derrida suggests, is indeed a mission or whether we are already approaching post-cosmopolitanism or (for the sake of avoiding another "post-"-ism) whether we are experiencing a cosmopolitan awakening, a new cosmopolitanism? If we assume to have arrived at a "postnational" Europe, we are already post-cosmopolitan insofar as cosmopolitanism requires the existence of the national, the patriotic, or an idea of national rootedness, which it can detach itself from and which the postnational pretends to have fully overcome.

To come into existence, however, cosmopolitanism requires a counter-part since the recognition, acceptance, and integration of the Other presupposes "otherness". The concept of the postnational, however, implies an overcoming of the national, which is a desire, awaiting and to a certain extent also resisting fulfillment and is thus confined to the fictional, to the literary realm. Undoubtedly, Europe has begun to embrace hybrid cultures: not only does literature embark on transnational journeys almost immediately after its publication thanks to the growing translation industry, writers' nationalities also fade out behind the autonomy of the work as is suggested by the cosmopolitan spirit that guides the distribution of literary prizes, for instance²⁷ – the

²⁶ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R.D. Hicks, London: William Heinemann, 1925, II, 65 (6.63).

²⁷ To refer to but two examples: W.G. Sebald, who was born in Germany and settled in England, was awarded the American National Book Critics Award and Haruki Murakami

Nobel prize in literature is awarded to postcolonial and minority writers; some of the greatest literary works are written outside the "homeland" (think of García Márquez, Salman Rushdie, Edward Said); authors write their best fiction in a language which is not their mother tongue and some of the greatest novelists are also translators. Hence, we can indeed assume to be part of a transnational literary community.

Postnationality, however, is not so much a concept that can be attributed to a literary text but rather it is in the act of reading that the feelings of being or becoming "postnational" can arise. On the fictional level, national categories and categorization still play a more or less significant role: strategies of characterization, for instance, often include a national perspective and root personae in specific socio-cultural contexts, which are frequently defined by national boundaries. The latter have a strong impact on the characters' cultural knowledge as well as on their perspectives within the fictional world. While the act of reading and the concept of empathy allow for a temporal entering into, and identification with an Other, they do not eliminate the essential attributes that come into place during the process of identity formation, namely national background, family ties, ethnicity, religion, history, culture, and tradition. By contrast, the protean self, which the postnational assumes, essentially lacks an identity and can thus only be experienced in and through multiple projections, which literature offers.

Even though we should refrain from stretching the great potential and variety of interpretation embraced by European myth too far,²⁸ in the founding myth, the ability to adopt multiple identities and various shapes is limited to divinity: it is Zeus who exemplifies the protean self, which is out of human reach. To further sharpen the argument: we have never been and will probably never be postnational. As a temporary experience, arising from the encounter with the Other in literature, the postnational is designed to remain under construction. Rather than opting for the rise of the postnational, therefore, which would require the consideration of a post-cosmopolitanism, it would be more feasible to

received the Franz Kafka Award for Literature. See Søren Franks' essay in this volume.

²⁸ According to Aleida Assmann, myths offer an "archive of images and traditions", whose "messages ... are extremely diverse, if not downright contradictory, which means that a message may easily be found for almost every purpose and project" (Aleida Assmann, "Imagining Europe – Myths, Visions, Identities, Memories", in *Time Refigured. Myths, Foundation Texts and Imagined Communities*, eds Martin Procházka and Ondrej Pihý, Prague: Literaria Pragensia, 2005, 140).

base the idea of a "new Europe" and a "new European literature" on a "rooted cosmopolitanism"²⁹ or a rooted transnationalism, which does not require the detachment of the national but maintains linked to it while engaging into a complex interaction of, and negotiation and exchange with, other cultures.

Insofar as literature is a way of world-making and provides a space, for "worlding",³⁰ for a process in which more than one world may be realized, and where different "worlds" may be contested, it undoubtedly provides the most adequate medium for the generation, dissemination, and reflection of ideas of cosmopolitanism, offering a space for "imagined communities"³¹ to come into being – including the European Union of letters and literature. Imagined communities or identities, however, are not what makes literature "European". To come back to my initial question, it is now high time to define some qualities of European literature and propose genres that accommodate ideas or ideals of the "new European" particularly well.

Towards "new European literature": cosmopolitan genres

As already argued, the major pitfalls opening up in any quest for a "new European literature" are connected to the impossibility of pinning down a distinct European physiognomy and identity and the immense difficulty of differentiating European from a Eurocentric western canon or world literature. The former can be avoided by acknowledging that European literature should pay tribute to an "identity" that has to be seen "as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation".³² The latter, however, is more difficult to overcome. If, as already suggested, cosmopolitanism and the desire for unity in difference are particularly present within the "new Europe", then especially "new European literature" would embrace a genre that communicates this desire and offers a space for reflecting its own hybridity, by creating tension between the familiar and the foreign,

²⁹ Mitchell Cohen, "Rooted Cosmopolitanism", *Dissent*, XXXIX (Spring 1992), 487-93.

³⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", *Critical Inquiry*, XIV/1 (Autumn 1985), 243.

³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso, 2006.

³² Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, New York: Columbia UP, 1994, 392.

between that which is "heimlich" and that which is "unheimlich", accommodating the idea of being *étrangers à nous-mêmes*, as Julia Kristeva considers Europeans.³³ Key features of a "new European genre", therefore, include a decentring of the narrator and the story; the depiction of multiple identities, multi-perceptivity as well as the continuous crossing of geographic, thematic and stylistic boundaries – features therefore which arouse feelings of discomfort in the reader and stimulate his or her critical reflection on cosmopolitan and "new European" ideas and ideals.

Amongst those genres that seem to lend themselves to the agenda of "new Europe" is indisputably the novel, especially the "cosmopolitan novel",³⁴ which succeeds in conveying a "synchronicity of the incongruous, multifarious and seemingly disconnected at the same time".³⁵ In engaging in these cosmopolitan narratives, readers are immersed in unknown cultures, leaving their own cultural comfort zone to enter into a dialogue with, or even enter the space of the Other, and therewith a lesson in world-citizenship.

A further essentially cosmopolitan genre, which is a highly effective means of world-making as it performs the interaction of diverse cultures and opens up new integrative spaces while being firmly rooted in European culture is drama. William Shakespeare's "Globe" especially epitomizes the idea of cosmopolitanism, both by its architecture and by continuously bridging the theatrical stage and the *theatrum mundi*. Entering the Globe was to engage in a world citizenship and yet, at the same time, to realize the performative aspect of "cosmopolitanism" as part of the theatrical experience. Insofar as Shakespeare's plays are still highly popular especially on the European continent and are often (more or less successfully) modernized to meet the demands of our time, they belong to the sphere of "new European literature" even though they are also part of the traditional European canon. Thus, they are a case in point, indicating that "new European literature" is to a great extent a reanimation, renegotiation, and dissemination of traditional *topoi* and genres.

³³ Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1988. See Sylvie Gambardo, "Europeans: Foreigners in Their Own Land", in *The Idea of Europe in Literature*, eds Susanne Fendler and Ruth Wittinger, London: Macmillan, 1999, 225–39.

³⁴ See especially Berthold Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

The fact that cosmopolitanism was first proclaimed by a cynic coincidentally points to a genre which seems marginal in literary history but would provide an ideal vehicle to promote "new European literature", namely the "menippeia", which takes its name from the cynic, the "dog" Menippus of Gadara and consists of a mélange of literary forms, themes, styles, and cultures, laying the foundations for future aesthetics of cosmopolitanism. Northrop Frye ranked the menippeia amongst the key literary genres, and Mikhail Bakhtin regarded it as an essential part of the European literary tradition. It is not only the stylistic freedom and generic mixture of poetic and prose language, which makes this subgenre particularly attractive for accommodating the concept of "new Europe": the menippeia is intrinsically experimental, defying traditions in favour of the unprecedented and exceptional. It adopts extraordinary perspectives to dissociate itself from the familiar and therewith embodies difference in existence and existence in difference, which is at core of cosmopolitanism.

Featuring narrations that take place at multiple locations below, on, and above our world and leaving familiar territory in search for the ultimate truth, the menippeia resides at the cross-roads of two or more different domains, opening up a variety of different worlds and exposing otherness while creating sameness. The multi-perspectival approach as well as strategies of estrangement and "reciprocal relativization"³⁶ enacted in this particular genre tie in with values connected with "new Europe". Critical in its tone, "biting" in its satire, and unpredictable in its form, the menippeia astonishes, alienates, fragments, differentiates, hybridizes and reconciles while, as Bakhtin pointed out, being essentially dialogic. It is not so much its affinity to utopian literature, but rather the foundations it laid for future travelogues and the incentive it provided for the transgression of boundaries (generic, stylistic, national) as well as its experimental quality, which makes of the menippeia a highly apt vehicle for "new European literature", whose potential has yet to be fully tapped.

The seminal role of this particular genre for European literature has recently been investigated by Werner von Koppenfels, whose study *Der andere Blick (The Other View)* already by its title suggests the continuous redefinition, self-reflection, and the willingness as well as the

³⁶ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Narrativizing visual culture: Towards a polycentric aesthetics", in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, London: Routledge, 1998, 46.

ability to engage with the cultural Other, which is characteristic of literary "worlding" in general but particularly present in the hybrid realm of Menippus' genre, which embraces polyvalency, as has been pointed out by Bakhtin in relation with the carnivalesque. The celebration of the heterogeneous over formal unity, the transgression of boundaries, the revolt against the canonical as well as the provocation, dislocation, alienation, the violation of rules and the subsequent overcoming of the created tension, which characterize the ludic manner of the menippea, could be regarded as key features of a "new European literature". The carnivalesque body thereby finds its correspondent in the malleable, expandable, and unfinished body of Europe, which also transgresses itself, "passing one form into another" and "reflecting the ever incomplete character of being".³⁷

According to Salman Rushdie, "Newness enters the world [through] hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, ideas, politics, movies, songs [from] ... Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that"³⁸ – this is what the menippea can transport. Whenever perspectives are shaken, shifted, or somehow disturbed to open up new vistas, which call for a reconsideration of the familiar and an integration of the Other in favour of a revised concept of "sameness", cosmopolitanism can come into existence.

With regard to the notion of a cosmopolitan theatrical experience, it is especially the coupling of diverse genres in a menippean spirit which could support the performance of a "new Europeanness" insofar as it engages us in multifaceted travels across different cultures and spaces of knowledge as well as reflecting past, present, and future concepts and ideas, which are discussed and exchanged within European theatre. In the context of drama, this can be achieved especially in tragicomedy, which not only comprises aspects of the menippea but which also features conflicts arising from sameness. Plays by Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, for instance, are situated at the crossroads of the tragic and the comic, renegotiating differences and confronting the spectators with a

³⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968, 32.

³⁸ See Salman Rushdie, "In Good Faith: A Pen against the Sword", *Newsweek*, LII (1 February 1990). Quoted from Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Narrativizing Visual Culture: Towards a Polycentric Aesthetics", in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 46.

complex combination of other- and sameness. This is not to say, however, that "new Europe" or its literature should become the subject of absurdist drama (nor is it the subject of satire albeit its affiliation to the menippean). For Europe does not call for movement just to remain the same like the characters in Beckett's often cited closure of *Waiting for Godot*: "'let's go' [*They don't move*]."³⁹ It is moving and thereby expanding both its other- and its sameness. What is essential for a "new European literature", however, is a strong degree of self-reflection, which requires a certain detachment from its own state of becoming as well as a reconsideration of its own tradition, which genres like the menippea exhibit.

Where do we go from here?

By suggesting that new European cosmopolitanism should be regarded as "rooted cosmopolitanism", which has to be differentiated from the postnational and which, to a certain extent, still heavily draws upon ancient literature, I do not intend to reduce the "new Europe" to a re-fashioning of "ancient Europe" but to open up some opportunities and vistas for a "new European literature", which as yet resists a closed definition: not only because Europe is still in the making or in the process of "worlding" and not only because it shares the same origin as world literature but first and foremost because canonization can never be prescriptive but only descriptive, which suggests that a new European canon can thus only be established when the newness has worn off. And even then, such a canon might be unfeasible since literary canons remain to be national phenomena hypostatized as universal or "cosmopolitan". With regard to a "new European literature", therefore, the struggles for "recognition",⁴⁰ the striving for the appreciation of different identities of Europe and diverse new European literature(s), continues, not as a new *querelle des anciens et des modernes* but rather as an incessant endeavour to implement new European cosmopolitanism in literature, to engage in new readings of the origins and sources of Europe and to open up new spaces for European literature to experiment in.

While the desire for cosmopolitanism might be the animating force

³⁹ Samuel Beckett, *Dramatic Works*, ed. Paul Auster, New York: Grove Press, 2006, III, 87.

⁴⁰ See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'*: An Essay, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992.

behind "new European literature", we might never reach this prospect. If we did, we would not be cosmopolitans but universalists, annihilating the differences, which are essential for cosmopolitanism to practise radical inclusion. Thus, in some way, we might hold it with Beckett, saying "let's go" and rather "not move" in order to maintain a "strategic bargain with universalism,"⁴¹ and not to be but to become cosmopolitan.

NATIVE COSMOPOLITANS

MARIA DIBATTISTA

The contemporary fascination with cosmopolitanism as a moral and political ideal is one response to the widespread, seemingly irreversible changes in the way human beings think about their relation to their family, tribe, community, country. What we can discern behind the headlines, in the marketplaces, and through the literature of the present day is that the era of identity politics is waning and the age of global character is struggling to be born. What form it will take is a riddle the novel can help solve. The novel has more and more been absorbed in chronicling the emergence of a new social type that I call "native cosmopolitans". Their growing prominence, which has aroused the curiosity, anxiety and imagination of novelists like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Karin Desai, Edwige Danticat, represents a new form and hope for character: formed in the enduring ethos of local traditions and habits, but marked (stunned, traumatized, exhilarated) by the consciousness that one is more connected to, yet less at home in the global cities in which their destinies are often decided.

"How does newness come into the world?" is a question posed by entrepreneurs, social engineers, makers of legislation, cultural anthropologists, mad men and novelists preoccupied with the changing fortunes of human character. This particular version of the question is posed at the beginning of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, where it alerts us that the world we have known, often (if we are lucky) have loved, and sometimes despaired of, is approaching exhaustion and that now is the time to be wondering where and how to introduce something new and vital into its depleted midst.

Rushdie begins his search for an answer where a novelist would instinctively look – in an image of human creatures undergoing, in this instance suffering, metamorphosis: two distinct figures (both actors, hence already accomplished in, and presumably devoted to, the arts of self-transformation) plummeting from the sky after the plane in which they were traveling explodes, instantly transformed into a "seedpod giving up its spores, an egg yielding its mystery". As they plunge toward the earth, they apparently still have enough of their wits about them to

⁴¹ Scott L. Malcomson, "The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience", in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, eds Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998, 234.