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Heterogeneic Time: An Anachronistic and Transcultural Rethinking of Eurochronology

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Abstract: The focus of this article is the relation between time and transcultural space in literary history. The argument is that the concept of anachronism can help us understand the complexity of temporality and that the analysis of transcultural exchanges between European and Latin American art and literature may change literary history and further an understanding of the anachronism of Eurochronology. Two examples of a transcultural and anachronistic relation between Europe and America will be analyzed, both of them novels and writers of magical realism. Gabriel García Márquez's novel *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) is analyzed as a challenge to European historicity, while the transcultural aesthetics of Miguel Ángel Asturias is analyzed as a challenge to the understanding of avant-gardistic modernity. The analyses are carried out in critical dialogue with historicism and theories about world literature.

Keywords: anachronism, transculturation, literary history, world literature, magical realism, Eurochronology, historicism, avant-garde, primitivism, myth, Gabriel García Márquez, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Georges Didi-Huberman

Un espejo: un espejo que mira
de las Américas al Mediterráneo
y del Mediterráneo a las Américas.
(Fuentes 12)¹

¹ "A mirror: a mirror that looks from the Americas at the Mediterranean and from the Mediterranean at the Americas." (Translation K.-M. S.)

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Es una ciudad formada de ciudades enterradas, superpuestas, como los pisos de una casa de altos. Piso sobre piso. Ciudad sobre ciudad. ¡Libro de estampas viejas, empastado en piedra con páginas de oro de Indias, de pergaminos españoles y de papel republicano! (Asturias, *Leyendas de Guatemala* 15)²

1 Introduction

For more than a hundred years, critique of European, teleological historicism has been abundant. The latest attacks have come from scholars of world literature.³ European historicism has been criticized for many good reasons but perhaps the time has come to focus on alternative possibilities of historicism. If the European model of literary historiography (including its model of periodization, development, and *Aufhebung*, its rationality, and not least its foundation in a national framework, etc.) does not hold for world literature, we have to ask the question: Is there another way of historicizing that fits world literature better?⁴ And how will the historicity of European literary historiography be rethought through the perspective of world literature? The hypothesis of this article is that in order to find an answer to these questions, we have to rethink the temporality of transcultural exchange.

In debates about world literature, the problem of historicity has not been given too much attention, but the problem of periodization has not gone unnoticed. It has been claimed that different areas of the world have different histories, and thus different concepts of periodization are needed (cf. Zhang 53; Prendergast

² “It is a city formed by buried cities, on top of each other like storeys in a skyscraper. Storey upon storey. City upon city. Book of old images, made out of stone with pages of gold from the Indians’ land, of Spanish parchment and Republican paper!” (Translation K.-M. S.)

³ Walter Benjamin’s early ideas about a history turned into ‘rubble’ might serve as a precursor. The possibility of historicizing was undermined in the Western world from within by epistemological problems related to language and conceptualization of historical periods, and by historical events like World Wars I and II. Since World War II, postcolonial scholars and scholars of world literature have criticized the Eurocentric model of literary historiography. Walter D. Mignolo and Dipesh Chakrabarty criticize the rationality of this historiography. Nirvana Tanoukhi claims that the rising interest in world literature is the “latest, most pronounced attempt to diffuse the teleological thrust of ‘literary history’ with a radically synchronic outlook” (599). David Damrosch writes in an article with the promising title “Toward a History of World Literature” that a true world literary history is an almost impossible task. He recommends a Wikipedia model which enables “basic history to expand via hyperlinks into nested levels of greater depth and specificity” (489). I have explored some of the critiques of historicism in “Frames of Literary History” and “Towards a New Europe.”

⁴ ‘World literature’ refers here to ‘literatures of the world.’

6; Valdés, “Hacia una historia” 35). This in itself is a challenge to the historiography of world literature, but in addition to this problem, different areas of the world also have different understandings of historicity. The historiography of world literature, therefore, faces two related problems: that of different histories and that of different historicities. As a first step to open up literary historiography to different kinds of historicities, I will discuss whether the concept of *anachronism* can be helpful in reshaping the temporal dimension of European and world literary history. The article will have three sections.

First, I will argue that transcultural relations between Europe and non-European areas reshape our understanding of *Eurochronology* (cf. Appadurai 30), because they entail an exchange between different kinds of historicity. After a brief discussion of the concept of anachronism, I will present a couple of examples of transcultural and anachronistic relations between Europe and America. Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *Cien años de soledad* (One Hundred Years of Solitude, 1967) will be analyzed as a challenge to European historicity. The discussion will be undertaken in critical dialogue with Franco Moretti’s reading of the novel in *Modern Epic*. Second, the triangular exchange between pre-Columbian culture, European surrealism, and the magical realism in the work of Guatemalan writer Miguel Ángel Asturias will be analyzed. The analyses build on previous research. They are here only sketched out as examples in order to underline the argument that attention to anachronism and transcultural relations may change literary history. In the final section, I will discuss the implications of anachronism and transcultural exchange for the rethinking of *Eurochronology* in a global world. I will here draw on the temporal dimension of the concept of transculturation as it was described by Fernando Ortiz in 1940.

2 *Eurochronology* and Anachronism

Eurochronology refers in this article to two different dimensions of European (or Western) historicism: modernity and rationality. The concept of modernity is connected to the Enlightenment and to capitalism (cf. Appadurai 1; Jameson; Chakrabarty 45–47). According to the principle of modernity, what is new is better, more advanced, more complex, more liberated, more civilized, or more profitable than what is old. The rationality of history is an idea derived from Hegel and relates to a belief in the inner purposefulness of history (cf. Hegel 21). According to Hegel, development can only be understood through the reflective placement of cultural objects in relation to their purposefulness within the general world history (cf. 38–39). In 19th-century European historicism, it became clear that the dimension of both modernity and rationality (*Vernunft*) installed

hierarchy in cultural comparisons, since Europe seemed to be the most modern and most rational location of historical development (cf. Chakrabarty 7).

Anachronism is a critique of both dimensions, but it is also an important strategy to reconstruct the understanding of multilayered temporality. But how does anachronism become a positive part of reconfiguring historicism? Anachronism is most often seen as a regrettable error: an error of logic (cf. Eco 35), an error of fact (cf. Fèbvre 32), or an error of politics: a form of conservatism (or even fascism) that betrays progressive history (cf. E. Bloch 97–98). Lucien Fèbvre calls it “the worst of all sins, the sin that cannot be forgiven” (“le péché des péchés – le péché entre tous irrémissible: l’anachronisme” 32). Since the development of modern, positivistic historicism and of *Geistesgeschichte*, anachronism has been seen as an unmistakable sign of amateurism because it seems to mistake two periods for each other, to misplace an event inside the chronological order of things, to insist on the importance of historical elements that belong to previous periods that have been overcome historically or to include events that have not yet happened. The word anachronism thus refers to the incorrect inclusion of both past and future events in a given period.

However, recently a new understanding has emerged that does not see anachronism as a mistake in the historian’s approach to historical reality but as an unavoidable part of that reality itself. Anachronism is thus another word for any given period being possessed by temporal complexity. This is what Georges Didi-Huberman calls the sovereignty of anachronism (cf. “Before the Image” 40–41). As I understand the concept, it is not a complete negation of chronology, since *chronos* is written into the very concept; rather, it is a dynamic exploitation of productive temporal ‘errors’ and a realistic acknowledgment of time’s incongruity with itself, as it is seen especially in historical reality. Understanding how this works might pave the way for new forms of literary history that go beyond the dichotomy of progressive, linear history and disruption of the possibility of linear history. The idea here is not only to acknowledge the ‘natural’ protention and retention of history, related to the historian’s cultural horizon – a phenomenon acknowledged by hermeneutically inspired approaches (cf. Valdés and Hutcheon 6) – and it is not only about acknowledging for instance the *longue durée*, suggested by the Annales School (Braudel, M. Bloch) or *deep time*, suggested by Wai Chee Dimock, which traces cultural influences beyond fixed periodizations, and focuses on “extended and nonstandardized duration” (758); it is more about conflictual times.

Dimock’s approach certainly opens up history to other cultures, like the Islamic, and also allows for new temporal taxonomies and crossing borders between cultural relations (cf. 759). The anachronistic approach suggested in this article also works with duration beyond fixed periodization; however, the focus is

not so much on the duration in itself but more on the creative or critical heterogeneity that such duration creates inside the temporal relations of literary history.

Two small examples from art history might illustrate what is at stake here: baroque art from the 20th century creates what Mieke Bal in *Quoting Caravaggio* calls a hallucinatory relation to the past: it recreates the Baroque as if it were contemporary but insists on distance at the same time. In Neo-Baroque artworks, historicity is a living, heterogenic part of artistic expression. The contemporary artist and art historian thus see historical Baroque through a present filter, but at the same time they experience the layers of history incorporated in the picture (Bal 7–9). This double historicity constitutes a real anachronism.

Likewise, the art historian Didi-Huberman relates his experience of a forgotten Renaissance fresco painted by Fra Angelico in the convent of San Marco in Florence (cf. *Fra Angelico*). In the lower part of the painting, called *Madonna of Shadows* (1440–1450), below the figurative part, Didi-Huberman sees a red fresco dotted with a number of erratic spots that looks as if the pigment has been projected from a distance “like rain in a fraction of a second” (31). The rain has produced the image as if it were a constellation of fixed stars. This painting has been in the convent since the 15th century and, as Didi-Huberman says, it will probably stay there for many years after he has died. In that way, the painting incarnates a *longue durée*. In front of this image, he is the transient moment, the fragile element. But the image is also under the influence of time: the colors change, the material deteriorates; time changes the very materiality of the past. So, in this case, there is duration and change. Also, according to Didi-Huberman, the painter himself was not euchronistic (contemporary) with his own time, since it is possible to establish that he used painting techniques that derive from at least three different periods. This means that there are echoes or “memories” of three periods present in the painting from the 15th century (“Before the Image” 37). As Didi-Huberman phrases it, Fra Angelico is an artist “manipulating times that were not his own” (40). Finally, and this is what changes the understanding of the image and of anachronism completely, it is interesting why Didi-Huberman was struck by the non-figurative red fresco below the Madonna instead of the Madonna herself: the main ‘object’ in the painting. Afterwards, he realized that it reminded him of Jackson Pollock’s abstract paintings. His attention towards the medieval painting was thus guided by an involuntary and unconscious remembrance of a contemporary painter. In this way, the past was produced as an after-effect of a present memory: this is also what Mieke Bal has called “preposterous history” (cf. 7).

Anachronistic history is preposterous since it works against the assumed rationality and linearity of history. However, it is not preposterous in the sense that it is unintelligible. It works deliberately with the presence of several times *or*

several forms of times, and it assumes that it is not only the (literary/art) historian who works with historicity, it is also the artwork itself. A reworking of time takes place through critical engagement with these layers of temporality.

Anachronisms are everywhere, but transcultural relations may further an awareness of the anachronistic mechanisms. Some attention has been given to the historiographic dimensions of these relations, for instance in the study of the Neo-Baroque of Latin America. In the case of the Neo-Baroque, we also see how anachronism can be a highly critical strategy, for instance of decolonization. As Monica Kaup has argued, when Neo-Baroque Latin American artists use the Baroque style of the Spanish empire, they do not reproduce the Spanish Baroque but reinvent it. Kaup argues that Neo-Baroque artworks can be seen as modern “instances of countermodernity” (233).

In the production of European literary histories or even European art or literature, it has often been assumed that Europe was the cradle of modernity, in constant transition, whereas areas outside Europe were static, embedded in a natural environment, and ‘frozen’ in time (cf. Heffernan 4). Stasis, achronicity, mythical time, etc., have been considered foreign to European modernity. In a certain sense, the modernity of Europe is dependent upon the exclusion of the untimely. Yet, as Jacques Rancière reminded us in 1996, the untimeliness (or “a time that ignores succession” 24) is at the heart of European historicism itself. The unacknowledged fact of this may also explain some of the fierce reactions against anachronism, for instance the reaction by Lucien Fèbvre (cf. Rancière 24). Therefore, in order to change *Eurochronology*, it is important to engage with what has been deemed to be outside time: what is either untimely or achronic. Sometimes, this is called myth (cf. González Echevarría 21; Chocano, Rowe, and Usandizaga 9).

3 *Cien Años de Soledad*: a Challenge to European Historicity

Latin America did not appear on the stage of world literature until the 1960s and when it did, it was almost in the form of what Wlad Godzich and others have called a true “emergence” (Godzich 291; Domínguez 3). Except for the attention given to important poets like Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda, nobody but specialists paid much attention to Latin American literature. It was not until the appearance of the boom generation, which included writers like Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Isabel Allende, that the eyes of the world were turned towards Latin America (cf. Donoso 10, 70).

According to Franco Moretti, this was the first time at all that European attention was drawn to a literary phenomenon outside Europe:

For the first time in modern history, the centre of gravity of formal creation leaves Europe, and a truly worldwide literary system – the *Weltliteratur* dreamed of by the aged Goethe – replaces the narrower European circuit. (*Modern Epic* 233)

For the first time, Europe finds a non-European literature that is not only at the same aesthetic level as the European but at the forefront when it comes to “formal creation.” Latin American literature is therefore an especially interesting area of study when we are talking about world literature and transcultural literary history.

According to Moretti (as quoted above), the most important eye-opening event was the publication of Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *Cien años de soledad* in 1967. The novel was immediately translated into many languages and it is fair to say that the interest for this novel drew attention to the whole continent (cf. Siskind 352). However, what is interesting in this context is the threefold argument that Moretti proposes for the acceptance of García Márquez as a spearhead of a literary development in the Western world. First of all, there is an aesthetic argument: García Márquez writes well – according to Moretti, just as well as Thomas Mann. Secondly, his novel has the double character of foreignness and homeliness that is necessary to create interest in the European reader. Moretti says that it is “sufficiently at home there to make itself understood – but also sufficiently alien to say different things” (233). Thirdly, and most importantly, *Cien años de soledad* was published at the right moment, at a historical point when European literature had moved into a formalistic, sterile deadlock and needed “re-enchantment” (249). As Moretti explains, magical realism opened the eyes of Western culture to a naturalized form of magic that was able to “set modernism’s feet back on the ground” (235).

Latin American literature thus became world literature for three reasons: aesthetic quality, strategic and well-portioned foreignness, and historical ‘timeliness.’ All three criteria are only meaningful seen from a European or Western viewpoint of world literature. World literature is the unspecified totality to which the literary example is supposed to belong.

Historicism is at the heart of this comparison and not just any historicism, but a historicism that creates hierarchies of value. As Dipesh Chakrabarty explains, historicism in the 19th-century European version was not only a way of organizing literature in a chronological way; it was a historical strategy that “enabled European domination of the world” almost in a naturalized way since historicism was seen as a rationalized form of development (7). According to the logic of historicism, literature from outside Europe had to demonstrate its novelty in

relation to the development of literature in Europe in order to be seen as world literature. In his reading of García Márquez, Moretti does not ask the question of whether the world literature written by García Márquez might invite a new and non-European understanding of world literature or might even question the historicism of Europe. On the contrary, he sees Latin America as a kind of ahistorical, mythical place that is appealing to European literary history precisely because of its place outside history, or as a more traditional understanding of myth has it, at the beginning of time (cf. Eliade 1). At the end of the chapter, Moretti discusses the place of myth in Latin American literature, writing in a strangely sexualized language:

What is certain is that myth (understood in its broadest sense) is the sign and instrument of a *symbolic resistance* to European penetration. *Men of Maize*, which in so many ways is the prototype of magical realism, tells precisely the story of how mythical thought is reinvigorated by forced modernization which it seeks to oppose by every means. (248)

Even though one could argue that primitivism and myth are part of the present, according to Moretti they are not part of modernity but only a regressive “resistance to European penetration,” Europe here meaning modernity. Given the sexualized language that does not seem ironic, the *resistance* is feminized and passivized. There is thus a strong European historical model of progress and imperialism underlying the evaluation of Latin American magical realism in Moretti’s book. In that sense, it is an example of what Walter Mignolo, following Johannes Fabian, has called “the denial of coevalness” to a culture outside Europe (284). The novelty of Latin American literature, its ‘enchantment,’ consists to a certain extent in being outside history, but paradoxically ‘happening at the right time’ in relation to European history, fulfilling the European need for a free enchantment without historical implications or implications for history.

At the end of the book, in a somewhat sinister conclusion, Moretti explains the European fascination with García Márquez’s novel as a way of facing colonialism and imperialism in a playful manner, without being faced with “gunboats [...] and military violence” (250). It is a sinister conclusion, but it can also be conceived as ironic because *Cien años de soledad* is also a testimony to the violent history of Colombia and of colonialism.

While Moretti’s reading is useful in order to understand the success of García Márquez’s novel within a European context, it confirms European historicism rather than questioning it. The fact that he incorporates García Márquez in a world system of the modern epic does not in itself change the hierarchies. Moretti argues that novels like *Cien años de soledad* and the continents they come from are “the reserves of magic of the modern world-system: places of prophecies and archetypes; of apparitions, and pacts with the Devil” (249). This may very well be true

seen from the point of view of the world market, but the phrasing makes it appear as a dehistoricized confirmation of that market mechanism. In contrast, one could argue that the true historical significance of *Cien años de soledad* does not lie so much in its ‘magical moments’ and mythical resistance to history, but precisely in the opposite: its ability to rethink historicism as such. As it has been emphasized in other readings of the novel, the novel’s structure intertwines circularity (including numerous labyrinthine repetitions) with linearity in a way that makes it impossible to separate ‘myth’ from ‘history.’

This duality – history/myth – is present throughout *Cien años de soledad*, separating the world of writing from the atemporal world of myth. But the play of contradictions issuing from this duality reaches a precarious synthesis that is perhaps the most important feature of the novel (González Echevarría 21).

González Echevarría argues that the function of the duality myth/history is to enable an understanding of Latin American history as the “history of the other” (21) or to create a mythical foundation of Latin American history. However, while I agree with his analytical point, I would argue that the duality reshapes our very understanding of what history is, not only in Latin America but also in the Western world. García Márquez reveals the mythological foundation of historicity as such. The critical question is how to understand myth.

The novel consists of twenty unnamed chapters that can be divided into five sections. Each chapter mimics the structure of the whole book and tells a story of a development from a new beginning to an apocalyptic end (Zerlang 168–169). In this way, the reader has the feeling that the story begins again in every new section even though the story develops in a linear way. Due to the circularity, modernity is undermined as a futuristic moment. Instead, modernity is the very moment of temporal collapse and apocalypse. The historiographic importance of García Márquez is thus structural, and only indirectly related to the magical moments of the novel. Through this structural principle, García Márquez also investigates what myth is. In his reading, Moretti builds on Claude Lévi-Strauss’s understanding of myth which sees it as an inherent trait of ‘primitive’ societies who ‘deny’ that societies change and try to make prior states of society as “permanent as possible” (Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* 232–234, qtd. in Moretti, *Modern Epic* 248), that is, a bad form of anachronism. But this understanding of myth is highly reductive. Far from being a sign of the static, the mythical instance in García Márquez and in Latin American literature in general can be seen as a moment of radical transformation, or to put it differently, a moment when the relation between order and chaos is close but indeterminate.

Franco Moretti notes in his reading that myth is a way of making meaning and order out of the meaningless (cf. *Modern Epic* 248). He also notes that there is a strange nostalgia for disorder in the book (cf. 241), but he does not explore this

contradiction further. A closer reading reveals that *Cien años de soledad* has a different approach to time, exactly when talking about the relation between order and disorder. Ursula, the mythical *Urkraft* at the centre of the novel, keeps the family together and makes sure that the house is orderly and up to date with the most modern investments, like the imported pianola on which the Italian expert Pietro Crespi plays music that makes the listeners wonder because of its order and clarity (“el orden y la limpieza” García Márquez 153). However, she is also the person closest to chaos. When Aureliano’s seventeen bastard sons turn up and wreck the house for three days, smashing plates and glasses, destroying the rosebushes, killing the hens, letting a pig loose in the dining room, she rejoices (cf. 331). When Fernanda later establishes a rigid Catholic order in the house, Ursula longs for the chaotic days of the visit of the many bastard sons. She is the incarnation of the longing for both order and disorder, and she always stands on the border between the two.

The mythical moment is when order loses its grip on us and is overturned by chaos or when chaos is almost tamed and turned into order. This is a moment when anything can happen, defined by a radical and open potentiality (cf. Camacho Delgado 22). It is a mythical transformative moment, and it is transcultural since it implies logics from two different worlds that cannot logically coexist, yet in fact do coexist. As Alejo Carpentier has pointed out, myth in Latin America is not a story that reestablishes an original order but an original moment of transformation, metamorphosis or *mestizaje* where an “unexpected alteration of reality” takes place (6).

The historiographic importance of García Márquez is thus structural, and the mythical aspect of his novel is related to the collision between orders rather than directly to the magical moments of the novel. The magic of García Márquez’s novel lies in the way in which it intertwines historical and circular time in order to undermine any stable sense of historicity. The fact that he hardly uses any Native Indian myths but mostly bases his novel on Christian myths, inscribes the story directly and critically into European historicity.

4 Miguel Ángel Asturias: Anachronistic Strategies and Heterogeneic Transculturation

The European avant-garde radically rebelled against history and tradition. The incorporation of artistic elements from so-called ‘primitive cultures’ into modern art (cf. Brodskaya 47; Rubin 319) must be understood in light of this, but it remains a wonder how incorporation of what was regarded as primitivism could

become a sign of modernity. How can it be that the African inspiration in Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907) was not seen as a mythical resistance to modernity but as a sign of absolute modernity? The painting was considered to incarnate "the paradigm of all modern art," to be the "harbinger comet of the new century" and "the first truly twentieth-century painting" (Chave 597). As André Breton declared: "with this painting we bid farewell to all the paintings of the past" (qtd. in Chave 597).

The reason for categorizing the painting as 'modern' was probably related to the fact that Picasso was not really interested in the culture of Africa (cf. Gikandi 456). He was interested in the strangeness and aggressiveness of the African masks. According to Picasso himself, the African sculpture was his "first canvas of exorcism" (33) that helped him rebel against tradition. To put it differently, the untimeliness and the decontextualization of the African masks were a necessity for transforming them into a sign of the modern and as a means to destroy painterly tradition in Europe and create something new.

In contrast, 'mythical elements' played a completely different role for Miguel Ángel Asturias. The paradox is that he discovered his own mythological past in Paris. Asturias, a *mestizo* from Guatemala, was educated as a lawyer. When he went to Paris in 1924, he had just finished a book about the 'problem of the Indians' who, according to Asturias, were unable to contribute to the modern development of society due to their cultural backwardness (cf. *Sociología guatemalteca: El problema social del indio* 1923). Paradoxically, and just like it happened to Alejo Carpentier, it was in Paris that Asturias discovered the rich pre-Columbian heritage. In Paris, he attended lectures at La Sorbonne by Georges Raynaud who taught classes about the culture of the Mayas and, from the very beginning, saw a living example of a Maya in Asturias (Bellini 19). Together they translated *Popol Vuh* into Spanish. It was thus European anthropology that opened Asturias's eyes to his own heritage (cf. González Echevarría 14; Prieto 34; Bellini 19–22).

But Asturias did not only discover Maya culture in Paris, he also met with the European avant-garde, especially surrealism, which inspired him enormously. All of his writing can be seen as a creative combination of the two different aesthetic worlds he found respectively in Maya culture and the European avant-garde. In his novels, the avant-garde inspiration is written into a Latin American tradition. While primitive elements for European writers were a means of destroying old European traditions of literature, they were transformed in Asturias's writing into a means of constructing a new Latin American identity and style of writing. In *El señor presidente* (1946), *Hombres de maíz* (1949), and *Mulata de tal* (1963), one can follow the development of this particular experimental style that is based on sensuousness, rhythm, visual images, colors, parallel worlds, and an imaginative association of ideas. Again, the mythical elements were not resistance to moder-

nity but a thorough engagement with modernity through an anachronistic employment of pre-Columbian elements.

It is anachronistic because the pre-Columbian elements subsist in Asturias's works as if they were present today. It is anachronistic because Asturias sees pre-Columbian culture through surrealism. Or to put it differently: Asturias creates a contemporaneity between surrealism and Maya culture. Through the combination of surrealism and Maya aesthetics he rethinks Latin American identity and history. It is important to emphasize that Asturias does not only mix local content with European form (a claim made by Franco Moretti about the genre of the novel, "Conjectures on World Literature" 65); he combines the form of the Maya aesthetic culture with the form of surrealism, thus transforming the understanding of the world and the novel. One could ask the critical question: Does Asturias use surrealist elements in the same way as Picasso uses African elements, that is, in a decontextualized, dehistoricized manner? The answer would probably have to be no. Asturias engages dynamically with surrealism and its European history. For instance, in his writing, the psychoanalytic elements of surrealist poetics are mixed with Maya myths.

The style Asturias created was called magical realism, a European name first invented by Franz Roh for the early 20th-century German style, also called *neue Sachlichkeit* (a post-expressionist, neorealist, but uncanny, *unheimlich*, mode of painting, for instance used by Otto Dix and George Grosz). When it was transformed or tropicalized by Asturias and Alejo Carpentier, and later by writers like Juan Rulfo and Gabriel García Márquez, it was understood as a truly Latin American style, and as such it was ready to be imported to Europe as a foreign, yet homely style.

It is generally acknowledged that the unique style of Asturias has two different cultural roots and that he intertwines the different inspirations into his own personal style (cf. Prieto 35; Lanoël-d'Aussenac 25–26). However, the literary historical question is rarely raised: whether Asturias's use of avant-gardist and Mayan aesthetics to reshape literary style also may influence the understanding of the European avant-garde and of the anthropological, historical roots of both the avant-garde and magical realism.

It has been claimed that the novel in Latin America in the 20th century was written "through the model of [...] anthropological studies" (González Echevarría 111). But as Walter Mignolo has stated, anthropology was never just an innocent interest in foreign culture since its methodology affirmed rather than questioned European rationality (cf. 12–13).⁵ Reading the European avant-garde through

⁵ The relation between surrealism and anthropology in the early 20th century created a rare opening up to the world. Some surrealists, like Georges Bataille, were hugely inspired by anthro-

Asturias entails turning the anthropological gaze around and questioning European modernity. Such a reading in itself would probably be deemed anachronistic since Asturias was inspired by the avant-garde; the inspiration was not as strong the other way around. Yet, Asturias and the avant-garde had the same inspiration in ‘primitive’ art. Reading the European avant-garde through Asturias therefore also means highlighting both the mythical elements in Europe’s own tradition and the historicity of mythical forms. Eileen Julien has argued that acknowledgment of the fact that modernism (or the avant-garde) was a reaction to the world outside Europe will undermine the description of influence between ‘source’ and ‘target’ literatures (as described by Franco Moretti) and change the way we understand world literature (cf. Julien 126). I agree that acknowledging this is a good step towards a more nuanced understanding of Western modernity. Contextualizing and historicizing the interest in myth and the changeability of mythical forms may be another. Just like Asturias’s engagement with Mayan culture, the engagement of the European avant-garde with ‘primitive’ culture is an anachronistic endeavor.

5 Anachronism as a New Historicity of Transcultural Literary History

A new world literary history should not only incorporate new and previously unacknowledged literatures, it should also rethink the multiple historicities of concrete transcultural exchanges. Such a literary history would not only describe the development of literature(s) but also the dynamic historicity inherent in this development. Fernando Ortiz’s original concept of transculturation formulated in 1940 contains some relevant ideas concerning time:

pology and the experimental exhibitions of Musée de Trocadéro that were like surrealistic montages, especially before 1930 (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* 135). The exhibition *The Truth about the colonies* (1931) criticized colonialism in general and more specifically, an exhibition in Paris with the title of “Colonial Exhibition”. The exhibition *The truth about the colonies* was followed by a critical report: the “First report on the colonial exhibition,” written by André Breton and other surrealists (Antle 1). Michel Leiris later called on the ethnographers to support anticolonialism (Antle 1). The exhibition at MoMa in 1984 “‘Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art” that traced connections between European art and primitivism was criticized by James Clifford for celebrating the affinity between modernism and African art but without questioning the underlying Western prejudices (“Histories of the Tribal and the Modern” 355).

I am of the opinion that the word *transculturalización* better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition, it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena which could be neoculturation. (Ortiz 102–103)

Transculturation is, therefore, a complex, dynamic, unavoidable, painful negotiation of cultural identity. It is an edgy, open-ended process filled with losses, suppression, and gaps but also with potential richness of culture and progress. In contrast with, for instance, a Hegelian understanding of development, transculturation works in a counter-dynamic (*contrapunteo*) which can never be turned into smooth dialectics (including *Aufhebung*). The concept of transculturation underlines the fact that losses may continue to have effect, even when they appear to have been overcome historically. Thus, transculturation opens up another way of regarding history: not as linear progress, but as development on the basis of spatial interaction and the simultaneity of nonsimultaneous elements.⁶

The question is how we should understand this simultaneity of nonsimultaneous elements. One way of understanding it is as sedimentation. Thus, Kumkum Sangari has given the following explanation of the phenomenon in a Latin American context:

The simultaneity of the heterogeneous is a matter of historical sedimentation that results from the physical coexistence over time of different ethnic groups (native, American-Indian, Arab, African, Indochinese, Asian, Spanish), each laden with its respective cultural freight of language, myth, oral narrative, magic, superstition, Roman Catholicism, Cartesian education, and modern rationalism. Simultaneity is the restless product of a long history of miscegenation, assimilation and syncretization *as well as* of conflict, contradiction, and cultural violence. (901)

⁶ Many of the later uses of the word *transculturation* have either focused on the idea of cultural exchange without discussing the time aspect or have paid no attention to the potential reciprocity of the exchange. One famous example would be Mary Louise Pratt who writes that transculturation describes the process in which “subordinated cultures select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (6). Walter D. Mignolo has criticized the word *transculturation* for being too attached to the concept of *culture*, which he sees as a semi-biological term (14). While I certainly share his critique of the Europeans’ rationalistic domination of other peoples, I think that the diversity of cultures in Latin America is a living historical reality, not only a conceptual reduction of that reality. Cornejo Polar has criticized the concept for presupposing synthesis and, according to David Sobrevilla, for placing transculturation in the space of hegemonic culture (22). In contrast, I think the concept holds the potential to go beyond the dichotomy of hegemonic and subaltern culture while preserving a critical dimension.

Sedimentation is a process that allows previous periods to persist during new developments that tendentially should have negated their relevance. But, as it is clear from Sangari's presentation, sedimentation is unavoidable in a culture that allows for the coexistence of different cultural identities. This is a highly conflictual domain, but according to Sangari it is precisely the simultaneity of the heterogeneous that also creates the fertile ground for a multifaceted history of change, rather than a unidimensional history of (lack of) progress. The experience of time is dependent upon the exchange between the different layers of culture in the sedimented reality. As has been argued in a recent book on the pre-Hispanic presence in Latin American literature, sometimes the word myth simply refers to the historical persistence and presence of non-Western, pre-Columbian elements in contemporary Latin American literature (cf. Chocano, Rowe, and Usandizaga 9). But this kind of non-contemporaneity is also present within *Eurochronology* and coproduces transformations. Harry Harootunian explains it as follows:

The unscheduled revenants in the present, reminding its inhabitants of the untimely past now in their midst, refer less to some debt the present must pay to the past than to the transformative energy such ghostly arrivals are capable of unleashing. (124)

In 1999, Antonio Cornejo Polar commented on the status of twenty years of research on Latin American identity and claimed that, despite the efforts, it was not possible to think of Latin American literature as one literature, since there were too many contradictions, even bellicose ones, between the literatures and cultures of Latin America. This did not make him give up on the project of thinking about Latin American literature and culture, but he considered the implications of the heterogeneity to be enormous:

[El empleo de categorías como transculturación, pluralidad, heterogenidad, híbridez, etc.] supone una historia hecha de muchos tiempos y ritmos, algo así como una multihistoria que tanto adelanta en el tiempo como se abisma, acumulativamente, en su solo momento. Como decía Enrique Lihn en un verso memorable, los latinoamericanos “somos contemporáneos de historias diferentes.” (11)⁷

To be “contemporary of different histories” is also what one could call *heterochronicity*. In a recent article, Jacob Lund argues that the anachronistic intertwining of different temporalities “should not only be understood vertically, as

⁷ “[The use of categories such as transculturation, pluralism, heterogeneity, hybridity, etc.] presupposes a history made up of many temporalities and rhythms, something like a multihistory that moves as much forward in time as it moves into an abyss, accumulatively, in one singular instant. As Enrique Lihn said in a memorable line, we, the Latin American people, ‘are contemporaries of different histories’.” (Translation K.-M. S.)

connections between past, present, and future within one singular unified history (most often the Western one), but also horizontally as the interconnection of different vertical histories in the *same* present” (176). Here, the epistemological problem of dynamic interaction of times comes together with the problem of interconnection between different cultures of the world.

The consequences of the presence of multi-temporalities in any given period for the writing of literary history are many. First of all, it means that we have to perceive of the ‘totality of literary history’ in a different way. This totality must be constructed as a process between the individual parts and the ‘whole,’ since temporality cannot be a neutral preconstructed framework into which literature has to fit. Secondly, it should be created on the basis of transcultural time: a time that is constructed through the interrelation between different cultures and their interdependent inspirations and conflicts. And thirdly, as I have argued in this article, deliberate anachronism can be a good means of opening up alternative historicities.

6 Magical Realism, World Literature and Literary History

Magical realism has a special role inside world literature (if there is such thing as an ‘inside’ of world literature). As Roman De la Campa argues, “magical realism obtains more prominence in the late twentieth century than any other literary mode” (205), adding that a close study of this genre is interesting because it can be linked to “an unsuspectedly rich history of related literary forms throughout the world, a study of which can provide new links to earlier periods and different narrative modes” (206). I agree. A close study of the history of magical realisms will create new relations not only between different parts of the world but also between different parts of history. Many comparative studies have already examined magical realism novels written for instance by Salman Rushdie, Orhan Pamuk, Haruki Murakami, Einar Mår Gudmundsson, and García Márquez. It has been argued that the study of magical realism has a special potential to understand the intersection between postmodernism and postcolonialism *and* to criticize or destabilize Western metropolitan centres (cf. D’Haen 200–202). It has also been argued that Latin American literature has a special agonistic worldliness (Khadir 439). However, there is always the risk that the ‘exoticism,’ which Franco Moretti deems necessary for the success of the genre in the world market, eliminates its critical potential, for instance its ability to reshape our understanding of *Eurochronology*.

Franco Moretti has argued that *Cien años de soledad* is a novel where forced modernization is an “extraordinary delight” and an enchantment in a “benign form” (*Modern Epic* 250). Its prose, he claims, is as “transparent as a summer morning,” adding that the novel is “without irony” “without ideology” (246), and that “[a]nybody would have liked to live in Macondo” (250). According to Moretti, this kind of benign magical realism thrives on continents outside Europe and North America – continents that he sees as “reserves of magic of the modern world-system” (249). This reading of the novel is at best one-sided, and many of the magical realism writers did in fact resist the role as magical enchanter. According to García Márquez, the whole idea of the ‘method’ of magical realism was to “reduce the tropical enigma to the smell of a rotten guava” (*Gabriel García Márquez* 43–44, translation K.-M. S.). I return to Moretti’s reading of García Márquez here, not so much to criticize Moretti himself once again but because I see his reading as representative of a certain tendency to include literatures from other cultures ‘inside’ world literature in a way that does not ask about the consequences for the understanding of what world literature and world literary history are.

In an article about the globalization of the novel, Mariano Siskind has suggested that we should see world literature as “a cosmopolitan social relation, as both a critical discourse and a concrete field of cultural exchanges, constituted by structural, asymmetrical forces disputing the meaning of the global” (346). If we follow Siskind here, the interesting thing is not only how local literatures fit into the global but how they redefine the global. My article is a modest contribution to this kind of critical, cosmopolitan project. As I have argued, I believe that attention to transcultural and anachronistic historicity can be one way of working with cultural exchanges that redefine *Eurochronology*. An anachronistic approach works against the persistent globalized use of old historicism, but it also opens up for alternative forms of historicizing in dialogue with old historicism.

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