

Critical Cosmopolitanism and Anglophone Literary Studies

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ABSTRACT

As the discipline of English studies evolved and spread during the twentieth century, it performed both civic humanist and instrumental/vocational roles, with these two broad goal orientations sometimes at odds with each other. It performed a normative function for the hegemonic ruling-class, helping to train and assimilate a cadre of managers, professionals and clerks among both working-class students of the metropole and subaltern colonial students of the periphery. On the other hand, literature sometimes had progressive and inclusive effects, preparing citizens for democratic participation in the public sphere of the modern nation-state. In the current moment of neoliberal globalization, these traditional functions of literary studies are being undermined. In order for literary studies to be a viable force for democratic empowerment requires a conceptual framework of global political agency and a serious critical engagement with the students' needs for instrumental/vocational training and education.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, Neoliberalism, Globalization, Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Under the political-economic conditions of neoliberalism, higher education's traditional civic role of producing citizens and leaders for the nation-state is being overwhelmed by a market-oriented model that functions, however indirectly, to serve global corporate business interests. This development is sometimes represented as a democratic response to student demand for training that will lead to secure careers, and sometimes characterized as an inevitable response to a world shrunk by technological advances in communication and transportation. But

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neoliberal ideology packages consumer choice as democratic agency, and substitutes a kind of “corporate cosmopolitanism” in place of a richly-informed global citizenship.

I add the qualifier “corporate” to the neoliberal version of cosmopolitan sensibility in order to distinguish it from the snobbish and Eurocentric associations of traditional cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and from the efforts of contemporary thinkers to articulate a non-elitist and non-Eurocentric “critical cosmopolitanism” on the other hand. Corporate cosmopolitanism naturally evolves as a shared set of experiential reference points and values among the professional-managerial class of workers involved in transnational business. This corporate cosmopolitanism may be globally aware and more or less non-Eurocentric, but it has no particular stake in egalitarianism or democracy. By contrast, scholars such as Walter Mignolo, Ulrich Beck and Gerard Delanty have argued for a new “cosmopolitanism from below” or a “critical cosmopolitanism” in non-elitist and non-Eurocentric terms. This kind of critical cosmopolitanism can advance democratic agency in a post national world order, and it can be nurtured by a global Anglophone literary studies that systematically relates local and national cultures to transnational contexts without subsuming the local under the global.

2. NEOLIBERALISM AND GLOBALIZATION

In various ways, economic globalization weakens the nation-state as a framework for democratic agency as national structures are subordinated to the needs of corporate business. For example, late capitalism depends upon the control of labor migration regulated by the borders of nation-states. A loosely coordinated array of institutions and governmental bodies functions to encourage migration of workers in some cases, and restrict migration in others. In some instances global capital takes advantage of local constraints on wages and working conditions to suppress labor costs. In other instances highly-educated workers are encouraged to migrate, causing brain-drain problems in developing economies and yielding a wind-fall benefit to highly-developed economies that under-invest in their own educational systems. What is consistent in all of this is that the system privileges property rights over human rights and capital development over human development, and, in many cases, even over national development.

Neoliberal vocationalism in higher education poses challenges to traditional literary studies, but neoliberalism and globalization depend upon some version of cultural studies, at least, if not upon traditional literary studies, as preparation for jobs that require high levels of critical awareness, cosmopolitan perspective, and communicative competence. So, there are clear opportunities for a critical engagement between literary studies and the “vocational

imperative” of neoliberal higher education. What is needed is a framework of Anglophone literary studies that could nurture a "democracy of the multitude” as envisioned by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (*Commonwealth* viii). A democracy of the multitude would be based on a citizenship of the global "common" that confers the right to live anywhere, to work anywhere, and to work as creatively and productively as one’s capabilities allow. "A democracy of the multitude is imaginable and possible," Negri and Hardt argue, "only because we all share and participate in the common." And by the “common” they mean not merely the "common wealth of the material world" as understood by classical European political theory, but, more significantly:

those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects and so forth.

(*Commonwealth* viii)

These resources of the common are precisely the educational purview of literary studies.

It is clear that, absent the grounding framework of national cultures, the project of literary studies will be overwhelmed by the force of transnational corporate culture, reduced to a mechanism for developing the skills and attributes required for global commerce and industry without a critical perspective. On the other hand, these terms describing a global “common” that could serve as a foundation for the political empowerment of a transnational multitude correlate closely to those skills and attributes that global business seeks to develop in students. So, ironically, as Negri and Hardt imply, global capitalism finds itself in a double bind; the system itself provides the opening for a new kind of democratic political empowerment even as it tends to overwhelm existing structures of democratic power. In this historical context, we can develop a global Anglophone literary studies as a framework for civic humanist agency that, like global capitalism, selectively deploys but is not bound by ideologies of nationalism and institutional structures of the nation-state.

3. NATION-STATES AND NATIONAL LITERATURES

The traditional civic humanist role of literary studies in modern universities is indebted to two important concepts that I associate with the thought of Immanuel Kant, and hence specifically with the inception of the epoch of modernity. One of these is derived from Kant’s notion of the aesthetic, as described in his *Critique of Judgment*. For Kant, aesthetic judgment is a spontaneous recognition of that which is agreeable, beautiful, and sublime or good that will evoke universal and necessary assent among right-minded members of a community.

Traditional literary studies aim to nurture and cultivate this sensibility among students, notwithstanding the irony implied in a spontaneous recognition that must be taught as a discipline. The other concept, drawn from Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties*, is the idea of the university as an institution in the service of the nation-state but which at the same time must retain some degree of autonomy from direct governmental control in order to perform that service. That is, modern democracy requires, and, I would add, robust capitalism also requires, a safe space within the social order for scientific, political, cultural and economic experimentation and innovation outside of direct governmental control.

As many scholars have pointed out, the study of literature in schools and universities dates only from the nineteenth century. It is often associated with a fear—expressed by Matthew Arnold—that in modern society the ideological power of the Church could no longer guarantee the conservative values necessary to maintain social order. In studying English literature, it was hoped, the masses would gain enough appreciation for traditional values to prevent society from dissolving into chaos. According to Gauri Viswanathan, this strategy actually originated in British India, as a provision for “native education” in the East India Company's Charter Act of 1813 (1987, p. 376).

During the twentieth century, in Great Britain and the United States, growing numbers of students from middle-class and working-class families attended universities, and literary studies performed both ideological and practical functions in preparing them for citizenship and careers. Meanwhile, as English became the global *lingua franca* of science, business and politics, universities around the world adopted curricula and textbooks from English and American publishers. Students of English literature in Africa, Asia, and South America study some version of the Anglo-American canon as determined by the (mostly) British and American university professors who edit textbook anthologies. In an essay published in this journal in 2014, Ravindra Tasildar noted that the syllabus for the English Literature section of the 2013 Indian Civil Service Examination was made up almost completely of British writers, with only two exceptions—Henrik Ibsen and Mark Twain. In a random survey of bachelor's and master's programs in English in 50 Indian universities, Tasildar found a similar pattern (2014, pp. 60-65).

When, in the aftermath of independence, the Kenyan writer and scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argued for the abolition of the English department at the University of Nairobi, his logic was absolutely compelling—why should university students in the newly independent nation-state of Kenya continue to study the national literature of their former colonizer, Great Britain, rather than to cultivate their own national literature, in their own indigenous languages?

Ngũgĩ was right to recognize that the development of an aesthetic sensibility in an atmosphere that is relatively autonomous from direct external political control is a core function of literary studies.

Still, from our current vantage point, and perhaps even from the perspective of 1970s *realpolitik*, Ngũgĩ's logic was self-defeating. His argument was embedded in the logic of high modernity, the logic of discrete nation-states and national cultures, the logic of a moment before the postmodern advances in transportation and communication made the world a smaller place. In the 1970s it may have been possible to imagine that some nations could navigate the currents of the bi-polar cold war between East and West so that their national cultures might be protected from outside influences. But in the post-cold-war age of cell phones and social media we can no longer close our borders, and globalization doesn't disappear when we close our eyes. A global Anglophone literature curriculum must be transnational, and it must disrupt the unquestioned centrality of Anglo-American literature. Of course, this project is already well under way. In response to the challenges of postmodern theory, identity politics and globalization, the Anglo-American literary curriculum has been supplemented by writings from postcolonial, subaltern and nonwestern writers. Writing on "The Burden of English" in a postcolonial setting, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has suggested that English literature should be taught in such a way that it is "intimately yoked to the teaching of the literary or cultural production in the mother tongues" (2012, p. 52). The point is not for all students to become fluent or expert in all of the languages at play in the encounter, though some participants will be competent users of the multiple languages, and that will be a benefit to all. Rather, the strategy is "inter-literary" as opposed to "comparative." "In the presence of long-established institutional divides and examination requirements," she writes, it is important to see the alien texts of the metropole and the familiar texts of the mother tongue each as a product of an "epistemic system," and to stage collisions, for example, between writers like Kipling and Tagore.

Nonetheless, it would constitute a self-defeating retreat from globalization simply to replace the Anglo-American canon with a local or subaltern literary canon. As Spivak has stated, emphatically, on another occasion:

Unfortunately, material reasons as well as a not-unconnected devotion to English have produced a lowering of interest in the production and consumption, indeed in the quality, of work in the regional languages of India. On the other hand, I think we cannot undermine our current excellence in the study of English—throw away something that we have developed over the last few centuries—because of this

situation. The real solution would be to find ways of supporting a Comparative Literature of Indian languages, rather than jettison the exquisite literature of global English today.

(2014, p. 4)

4. CRITICAL COSMOPOLITANISM

If the study of literature and culture is justified in Matthew Arnold's terms of introducing students to the best that has been thought and said in the world, then the very fact that these values and ideals have to be "taught," the very act of indoctrination, becomes the occasion for deconstructing their supposedly self-evident authority. The good news is that the necessity of "teaching" literature means the study of literature sometimes disrupts the smooth surface of ruling-class hegemony. The study of literature often transcends or escapes prescribed functions of cultural indoctrination. And good students get it "wrong" in productive and sometimes transformative ways. Most students seeking to enter the global job market, either from the metropole or from the periphery, will not pursue majors in the Humanities. But most students will be studying English, either as a second language or as a process of improving their critical thinking and communication skills, and under the best circumstances they will be exposed to Anglophone literatures and cultures. This is an opening for a progressive democratic teaching of literature focused on articulating and fostering a critical "cosmopolitan imagination." Unlike traditional cosmopolitanism, critical cosmopolitanism is neither elitist nor Eurocentric. Gerard Delanty has described four dimensions of the "social" that constitute this critical cosmopolitan imagination. First, he writes, critical cosmopolitanism emphasizes cultural difference and pluralization as a positive ideal for social policy, as opposed to the normative and homogenizing tendencies of traditional literary studies focused on cultivating national cultural traditions. Second, Delanty's account of critical cosmopolitanism emphasizes the importance of dispersed centers of authority and power—"cosmopolitanism is not reducible to globalization but refers to the interaction of global and local forces." Third, Delanty calls attention to the disruption of traditional hierarchies by digital telecommunications and advanced transportation systems:

Territorial space has been displaced by new kinds of space, of which transnational space is the most significant. In this reconfiguration of borders, local and global forces are played out and borders in part lose their significance and take forms in which no clear lines can be drawn between inside and outside, the internal and the external. A cosmopolitan perspective on the social world gives a central place to

the resulting condition of ambivalence in which boundaries are being transcended and new ones established. Thinking beyond the established forms of borders is an essential dimension of the cosmopolitan imagination.

Finally, along the lines of Negri and Hardt's "global common," Delanty calls for a "reinvention of political community around global ethics and especially around notions of care, rights and hospitality." At the current stage of economic globalization, he argues, "the social cannot be separated from cosmopolitan principles and the aspiration to establish a new kind of political community in which national interests have to be balanced with other kinds of interests" (2006, p. 7).

5. THE VOCATIONAL IMPERATIVE

In the early 1990s, after visiting several universities in the Persian Gulf region, Edward Said described an ambivalent situation. On the one hand, more students were studying English than any other subject. But the demand for English studies was prompted by purely instrumental goals: "many students proposed to end up working for airlines, or banks in which English was the world *lingua franca*." This pragmatic, vocationally-motivated demand for English studies, Said concludes, "*all but terminally consigned English to the level of a technical language stripped of expressive and aesthetic characteristics and denuded of any critical or self-conscious dimension*" (1993, p. 305).

There has always been an instrumental/vocational role for English studies in promoting patriotic sentiments as well as critical thinking and communication skills among a cadre of students who will become mid-level managers in government bureaucracies and private corporations. Throughout the twentieth century literary studies also had some progressive political effects. Literary studies helped to prepare growing numbers of citizens for democratic participation in the public sphere of the modern nation-state. In the latter half of the century, literary studies became closely linked with cultural identity politics and politically-oriented modes of critique. At the same time, literary studies continued to fulfill instrumental and vocational goals, whether the indirect function of promoting advanced literacy skills that would be useful, somehow, in the workplace, or the more direct function of training secondary-school teachers. But in the current moment of neoliberal globalization, all of these social functions of literary studies are being undermined—partly a symptom of the postmodern redundancy of those modern nationalist and colonialist projects and partly a symptom of the neoliberal imperative to subject all social functions of government to the logic of the marketplace. There is a traditional hierarchy of prestige in which vocationally-oriented projects within the academy

are viewed as beneath the interest of literature professors, and there is a temptation for progressive teachers of English to deplore this situation while ignoring the pragmatic motivations of students. While it is easy to associate traditional literary studies with various forms of reactionary politics, there is still an argument to be made for literary studies as a progressive force. It requires a conceptual framework of global political agency and a serious critical engagement with students' needs for instrumental/vocational training and education in addition to their need to develop critical consciousness and aesthetic sensibility.

6. EMPATHY AS A VOCATIONAL SKILL?

In today's job market, according to Bruna Martinuzzi writing in a 2013 post on American Express's internet forum, English majors are "the hot new hires." English majors, she argues, are highly-sought employees, because English majors excel in four specific skills: they have oral communication skills, writing skills, researching skills, and critical thinking skills. These are familiar vocationally-oriented goals of English studies. But then Martinuzzi adds to these skills a distinctively "avocational" attribute of the English major—"empathy":

There are numerous studies that correlate empathy with increased sales, with the best performing managers of product development teams and with greater efficiency in an increasingly diverse workforce. Empathy is indeed the oil that keeps relationships running smoothly. . . .

Citing a study showing that frequent readers of fiction "have higher levels of cognitive empathy"—or "the ability to understand how another person feels"—Martinuzzi concludes that "when you hire an English major, you're likely hiring someone who brings cognitive empathy to the table."

(Bruna Martinuzzi, "Why English Majors are the Hot New Hires")

Admittedly, Martinuzzi's rather strained argument is not likely to persuade students who are anxious about post-graduate employment prospects to enroll as English majors. And reducing the cultivation of "empathy" through English studies to such specifically practical, instrumental and commercial terms may strike the humanist reader as a degrading description of literary studies, a rude violation of the uneasy compromise between vocational and political goals of English, and an insidious instance of the neoliberal tendency to reduce all value to market value. Still, even a back-handed compliment is welcome. And Martinuzzi's unconvincing attempt to appropriate the development of "empathy"—a decidedly avocational trait—for neoliberal vocational ends invites a deconstructive reading. Is it the case that, unavoidably, along with skills of oral communication, writing, researching and critical

thinking, English majors will develop heightened capacities for empathy? Is this a potential threat to the vocational imperative of neoliberal higher education? Is it a threat that business interests need to contain by claiming empathy as their own agenda, by guiding the empathy in a certain direction? Terry Eagleton once observed that modernist literary studies taught students to be “sensitive, receptive, imaginative and so on... *about nothing in particular*” (italics in original; Eagleton, p. 98). Martinuzzi and readers of the American Express internet forum would probably approve of this function, but the dominant trend for the past four decades has been in the opposite direction—toward a politically self-conscious and progressive literary studies. Martinuzzi’s attempt to claim cognitive empathy for vocational ends is a signal that literary studies can be a site for democratic agency against the grain and from within the structures of neoliberal globalization. The study of literature will continue to be a problematically (in a good sense) avocational pursuit in the neoliberal university.

7. THE GLOBAL ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE CURRICULUM

In order for literary studies in English to be an effective force for democratic empowerment under conditions of neoliberal globalization the curriculum needs to privilege certain works that can speak to the commonwealth, the civic polity of the global multitude. And in order for the curriculum to be coherent, the works need to be in dialogue with each other. Traditionally, it was argued, or at least assumed, that the Anglo-American canon consisted of works that should evoke a common human response from competent readers regardless of race, gender, national origin, class background, etc. This assumption was discredited, in the 1980s, by the post-structural critique of Enlightenment universalism and the related critiques of race, class, gender and colonial privilege in canonical texts. Nonetheless, some common framework must serve as the foundation of a curriculum. In my view, what remains valid as a broad, even global, framework for literary study would be a critical discourse analysis that is historically situated in relation to the evolving conditions of modernity.

‘Literature’ as I am using the term in this essay, is a distinctly ‘modern’ phenomenon, and every society that participates in economic globalization has some relation to the experience of modernity. Therefore, a self-conscious recognition of the role of literary texts and literary studies in modernity should be able to provide a broad framework for a literary curriculum in lieu of criteria such as nationality of authors or presumed aesthetic value abstracted from political and historical considerations. Further, from a generic perspective, the novel is a specifically modern art form. Novels are made possible by the material conditions and mode of social organization of modernity. They require mass literacy, industrial production

and distribution of printed texts, and, typically, urban, bourgeois reading audiences. Novels and short stories also engage some of the recurring issues of subject formation in modernity. For example, psychological novels develop interiorization as an art form, and portray typically modern struggles of individual subjects such as alienation and isolation. The *Bildungsroman*, or novel of the formation of a young person into an adult, is an invention of modernity that resonates across different cultures, but is not a typical form of artistic expression or concern in pre-modern narrative. Issues of subject-formation, class consciousness, race and gender identity, are modern themes, as are narratives of colonial encounters and anti-colonial struggle.

But this is not to say that the global Anglophone literature curriculum must have a particular prescribed conceptual focus—the point is simply that the works studied should be in dialogue with each other in the context of a community that is not bound by the traditional hierarchy of center and periphery. I think that community is emerging as a consequence of economic globalization, and I think it will have to flourish if global capitalism continues to evolve. This presents both an advantage and a challenge for my project. On the one hand, economic globalization is producing a community of educated, cosmopolitan subjects who might become citizens of a global democratic political order—the “multitude” of Negri and Hardt. On the other hand, this community is decidedly bourgeois. At the current moment and for the foreseeable future, it leaves out the larger proportion of the world’s population. In the global cosmopolitan bourgeoisie one finds a ready-made transnational community, but that population is formed by a global capitalist order that has no articulated stake in democracy. If this community is to become a force for expanding human liberation, it will have to develop a vision that goes beyond the traditional nationalist cultural boundaries of modernity.

Ironically, as a practical matter, the economic, and specifically consumerist, constitution of the global Anglophone professional-managerial class, provides another element of the framework for building a global Anglophone literary curriculum. Given the problems of teaching literature in a ‘post-literate’ epoch, in which reading for pleasure is no longer widespread and valorized, an effective canon would prominently consist of works of recognized literary merit that have been adapted into films and other digital formats for wide global distribution. Such works are already transnational and already have demonstrated relevance to popular audiences. There is some danger that such an approach would lapse into a consumerist popularity contest of ‘lowest-common-denominator’ standards, but this tendency would be mitigated by the inevitable inclusion existing canonical works from the Anglo-American, post-colonial and non-western Anglophone traditions that have been adapted for broad distribution through film and other media forms. While this curriculum doesn’t

foreground questions of form and aesthetic quality, it doesn't preclude such questions. And the opportunity to examine literary works across different media platforms—print, film, video, perhaps video games—invites consideration of form and aesthetic quality.

At this point, it will be useful to present some tentative examples. What comes quickly to mind are the literary texts written from the periphery that critique or texts that perform a 'detournement'- a 'high-jacking'- of canonical metropolitan texts. Examples would include Jean Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, which can be read as a postcolonial response to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, or Aime Césaire's *A Tempest* (in French originally *Une Tempête*), which demands to be read as an anti-colonialist riposte to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. These texts have become so prominent in their own right that by now it seems almost irresponsible to teach *Jane Eyre* or Shakespeare's *Tempest* without reference to Rhys or Césaire. There is also a critical movement of 'Transatlantic Literary Studies'; in the introduction to a volume of essays under that title, editors Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor propose that the "transatlantic paradigm offers renewed potential for literary study that for too long has been tied to the ideological and political requirements of the nation-state" (Manning and Taylor, p. 2).

So, in the choice of which traditional canonical works to teach, as well as in the ways we approach them, we need not be bound by the national traditions. Strategically, some works don't travel as well as others, and this has nothing to do with literary quality. Consider, for example, two novels that are widely taught in English literature courses around the world-- Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. As I mentioned earlier, Mark Twain was one of only two non-British writers on English Literature section of the 2013 Indian Civil Service Examination. *Huckleberry Finn* is one of the pillars of the American literary canon. The book has lasting popularity, and it has had a formative influence on subsequent American literature. It treats the theme of racism, a socio-political issue that threads through American history from the colonial era to the present day. Furthermore, the text is a model *Bildungsroman*, and it is recognized for its achievement of formal stylistic innovation, for its liberal use of slang and for its first-person limited-perspective narration by a child protagonist. For all of these reasons, it would seem to be an obvious choice for inclusion in a literature curriculum. On the other hand, the book's centrality to the American experience comes at the expense of making it less accessible to an international audience. The colloquial style is difficult. The theme of late nineteenth-century American racism is distinct enough that it doesn't automatically resonate with readers from other cultures. And, while there have been film adaptations of the book, none of these has gained critical favor or widespread popular success. In fact, the book is rather difficult to teach outside of the United States, and

increasingly difficult, as time goes on, to teach within the United States. So, despite its obvious importance in the history of American literature, *Huckleberry Finn* might be better left out of a global Anglophone literary curriculum, or at least left for advanced students.

Now, let me contrast the choice of *Huckleberry Finn* with another novel from roughly the same historical moment - Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, coincidentally, shares much in common with *Huckleberry Finn*. Structurally, both novels employ the narrative of adventure as a plot device, even to the point of featuring river voyages prominently. Both novels develop an ironic critique of modern society through the perspective of an ostensibly naïve narrator. Both novels invoke the tradition of *Bildungsroman*; although Marlowe, the protagonist of *Heart of Darkness* is no longer young, the novel documents his loss of innocence as he encounters the corrupt ethics of the modern business world. Thematically, both novels treat the issue of racism, though neither text is as much concerned with the liberation and/or fair treatment and understanding of black people as it is with a critique of the cancerous effects of racism on European and American societies. But *Huckleberry Finn* treats the issue from a narrow, distinctly American perspective, while *Heart of Darkness* embeds it in the contexts of capitalism and colonialism, both of which are more central issues than race in the novel. *Heart of Darkness* threads the analysis of acquisitive territorial expansion, conquest, exploitation, colonialism and capitalism over two millennia to ancient Rome's conquest of Britain, then across geographical space from England to Belgium, along the coast of North Africa and finally to the Congo. So, if I were considering which of these two novels to include in a curriculum or on a syllabus for global Anglophone literature, based on thematic considerations, my choice would be *Heart of Darkness*, simply because it has a more global, cosmopolitan frame of reference.

Aside from thematic considerations, I would also take into account practical considerations such as access and currency. Here, again *Heart of Darkness* has an edge. Twain's use of colloquial slang in *Huckleberry Finn* was an important aesthetic innovation, and it is powerfully effective as a formal strategy in the novel. But the colloquial dialogue makes the novel difficult to read even for contemporary American students, and no doubt much more difficult for non-Americans. So here again, with its elegant standard English prose, *Heart of Darkness* has an edge. But, by access and currency I mean something more than how easy it is to decode literary prose. It is more important that a prior awareness of the text is relatively widespread. This may be manifest through film adaptations, for example, but also through the text's influence upon or participation in a cultural meme that has wide global currency. Although *Huckleberry Finn* has been adapted on film, the adaptations have not been notable,

and have not had wide distribution. *Heart of Darkness*, on the other hand, was adapted as the basis for one of the most widely acclaimed films of the twentieth century, *Apocalypse Now*. This gives the novel greater potential currency among a transnational audience, and the fact that *Apocalypse Now* re-locates the narrative from European intrusion into Africa to American intrusion into Southeast Asia actually enhances this aspect of the discursive ensemble with which to engage students.

Critical controversy can also factor into the decision of which text will be most relevant for a global Anglophone literature curriculum. In this comparison, both texts have been the subject of controversy around the issues of racism. *Huckleberry Finn* has been banned from many high schools in the United States because of the stereotypically condescending representation of the African American character, Jim, who is somewhat infantilized in the representation of his relationship with the adolescent Huck. On the other hand, *Heart of Darkness* was the subject of a landmark anti-racist critique by the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe. Whether or not we agree with Achebe's critique, it opens a dialogue that expands the transnational and transhistorical reach of *Heart of Darkness*.

8. CONCLUSION

Much more could be said about these examples, and about other similar pairings and ensembles. My point here is not to make a definitive claim about canonical boundaries, but to suggest the kinds of premises and questions that should guide the development of a global Anglophone literary studies. As Brazilian educator Cielo Festino has observed, the teaching of foreign literature is always a “transcultural phenomenon” that “acquires new value when it crosses cultural borders, depending on the relationship among the different cultural loci of origin and destination,” but this is not an innocent, peaceful process:

The texts included in the syllabus do not necessarily exist in multicultural harmony as there will always be a collusion between knowledge and power, when the trans experience is enacted, that has to do with the fact that mainstream literary texts are generally associated with a concept of culture that is taken as universal, while so-called marginal traditions are associated with an ethnic (local, less valued) concept of culture.

(Festino, p. 5)

With its claim to represent, in Matthew Arnold's words, “the best which has been thought and said” and its structural division into chronological periods, the traditional Anglo-American curriculum evades questions of power and affirms the imbalance between so-called

“mainstream” and “marginal” texts. By contrast, a global Anglophone literary studies should disrupt this residual power imbalance, and reject its implicit claim to self-evident status.

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