

The Literary Turn: Comparative Literature as Deconstructive Pedagogy

Edebî Dönüş: Yapısökümcü Pedagoji Olarak Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat

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ABSTRACT

Deconstruction as a mode of thinking has long informed Comparative Literature studies, especially through the influence of the Yale School in the 1970s. Having always been exposed to criticism for performing unworldly readings, blurring real and political problems, and using theoretical jargon with no practical consequences, deconstruction is now considered an obsolete style of approaching literary texts. More than two decades after the death of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), the most prominent philosopher of deconstruction, this article questions the assumed tension between theory and *praxis* in the studies of Comparative Literature. It argues that problematizing the structure of representation, as Comparative Literature scholar Christopher Fynsk (b. 1952) suggested, has practical consequences in the long run. Departing from Fynsk's ideas and engaging in the relevant thoughts of Maurice Blanchot (1907-2003) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1940-2001), who inspired Fynsk considerably, the article aims to show that carrying the studies of different literatures beyond thematic analyses may constitute an important phase in the dislocation of common sense. The possibility of such a dislocation might enable Comparative Literature to dwell in the world with a renewed attention to the different meanings of the shared existence of the human. Therefore, the article suggests, deconstructive pedagogy, calling for a literary turn, with the emphasis on the conceptual thinking that undermines presuppositions, might still be an important component of Comparative Literature education.

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Introduction

Christopher Fynsk (b. 1952), a professor of modern Continental philosophy and literature, opens his book, *The Claim of Language: A Case for the Humanities*, with an anecdote on a student who realized her interest in literature and the arts while preparing for medical school in the USA. The student was originally from Afghanistan and wanted to open a medical clinic in her home country. In response to her inquiry about doing a major in Comparative Literature, in addition to her studies in the sciences, Fynsk volunteered to help her see how such a study would make her a better doctor.

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Fynsk had in his mind the student's possible encounters with questions about life, death, mortality, and the social construction of health during her medical profession. He believed she could question the presuppositions of medical knowledge and practice by thinking through literature (Fynsk, 2004, pp. vii-viii). The function Fynsk attributes to the study of the humanities and particularly literature makes a case for why deconstruction is a mode of *praxis* and is still relevant in the contemporary world. He holds that fundamental research in the humanities should question the "structure of representation" (Fynsk, 2004, p. 10), thereby offering a reading style with practical and theoretical consequences.

As anyone involved in literary studies would notice, there has been a strong tendency to turn away from deconstruction and gravitate towards so-called "vital" theories for the last few decades. The realities of life and the dangers our planet is exposed to have been foregrounded as legitimate objects of study, while the linguistic turn has been blamed for distancing literary studies from life, nature, and politics. Jean-Michel Rabaté, discussing the assumed tension between theory and *praxis* in *The Future of Theory*, underlines the role of deconstruction in the creation of endless alterities extending from ethnic minorities to various gender categories, which, he suggests, earned theory a bad reputation (Rabaté, 2002, p. 144). Rabaté points to the fragile relationship between deconstruction and identity politics. How can a theoretical approach blamed for its disengagement from life and politics be responsible for splintering alterities? This seemingly ambivalent situation, which is a consequence of questioning the structure of representation or resisting any central position, holds significance for reflecting on the relationship between deconstruction and *praxis*.

This article discusses how deconstructive approaches relate to the question of identity that has always been at stake in the studies of Comparative Literature due to its emphasis on difference and diversity. As Carolyn D'Cruz rightly states, "[D]econstructive strategies of reading and writing not merely expose but importantly *work otherwise* what is already there" (emphasis in original) (D'Cruz, 2008, p. 5). For that reason, she maintains, the transformative effect of deconstruction cannot be instantly noticed (D'Cruz, 2008, p. 4). Likewise, the article posits that the function of Comparative Literature is not limited to the study of identities—national, ethnic, cultural, sexual, etc.—that are "represented" by the texts. Yet moving beyond mere representations and putting the knowledge, structure, and origins of these identities into crisis requires a process of abstraction. For that reason, Fynsk's telling anecdote on the practical "use" of deconstructive reading should be better understood.

Hence, the article will engage in Fynsk's suggestion to turn to language in the humanities, which brings forth the ontological dimensions of poststructuralist thought. To better pose the problem in the context of Comparative Literature, it will first provide a framework on how the discipline has dealt with hegemonic sign systems, which inherently relate to the question of identity, by drawing especially on the scholars of Anglo-American universities like Susan Bassnett, Charles Bernheimer, Rey Chow, and Gayatri Spivak. Elucidating Fynsk's reconciliation of poststructuralist thought with ontology, it will devote a part to Maurice Blanchot's (1907-2003) placement of ambiguity in the core of literary activity, and Jean-Luc Nancy's (1940-2021) replacement of signification with senses.

The article does not aim to explicate Blanchot's and Nancy's philosophical universes extensively. Rather, it aims to illustrate how their manners of dislocating common sense inspired Fynsk to foreground an approach that values the deconstruction of the symbolic order's discursive foundations. It limits its interest in Blanchot's comprehension of literature as a "cooperative" activity that works through both signification and its negation, and Nancy's understanding of arts and literature as "shared experiences" that dwell in the world through the senses. Thus, the article aims to illustrate that carrying literary studies of different nations and identities beyond thematic analyses may constitute an important phase in the dislocation of common sense. These theoretical discussions are empowered in the final part by a deconstructive pedagogical approach to highlight

once again why conceptual and deconstructive education in Comparative Literature has practical consequences.

Comparatists on Hegemonic Sign Systems

Comparison has always been a source of anxiety for the scholars of the field, as Charles Bernheimer rightly posits. According to him, multiculturalism, which is “inherently pluralistic,” is expected to encourage comparison. Yet the comparatist has an anxiety related to the “issue of entitlement,” i.e., the problematized status of declaring ideas about a culture to which one does not belong (Bernheimer, 1995, p. 9). Bernheimer expresses this anxiety as follows:

Even though I am fascinated by African literatures, do I have any chance of getting a job to teach them if my skin is white? Is it not desirable these days to be able to offer the construction of one's own subjectivity as a particularly telling context through which to perform a reading of so-called foreign or ethnic texts? It seems that it is no longer enough for comparatists to speak different tongues: now they have to put on different skins as well. (Bernheimer, 1995, p. 9)

Following this provocative questioning, Bernheimer maintains that the scholars of Comparative Literature have diverse views on the issues of “multiculturalism,” “polyglossia,” and “intercultural understanding.” His edited book shows, for example, how Mary Louise Pratt welcomes these concepts, while Peter Brooks is worried about obfuscating the aesthetic domain when one invests too much in identity politics (Bernheimer, 1995, pp. 9-10). Although Comparative Literature has already developed along different schools and understandings since the nineteenth century, hardly reconcilable thoughts about intercultural dialogues became more visible with the influence of poststructuralism on the discipline.

The fact that the boundaries are getting blurry not only in geographical terms but also in the social sciences and scientific research has also led to the interdisciplinary exploration of Comparative Literature. Since interdisciplinarity, like comparison, might have easily restored the hierarchy that the discipline claimed to avoid, this change required reformulating the problem of “function,” i.e., the uses of the accumulated knowledge in Comparative Literature, in an innovative manner. Do the encounters and exchanges among the disciplines, promoted by the field, serve to create democratically motivated minds? Suppose the “simplest” definition of the discipline underlines its interest in intercultural and interdisciplinary study of the texts (Bassnett, 1993, p. 1). In that case, the creation of centers while establishing these relations proves to be unavoidable. From area studies to the studies of identity politics and gender, one has to confront the constructions that implicitly or explicitly determine some paradigms. This confrontation may well lead to an ethical responsibility that supposedly draws on the idea of collectivity. Gayatri Spivak's suggestion that Comparative Literature should make a “responsible effort” towards a “politics of friendship to come” is based on such an idea of collectivity (Spivak, 2003, p. 13).

Inspired by Jacques Derrida, Spivak's politics of friendship does not view literary studies as a means to understand society or decipher the codes of humanity, but as a field that should focus on “the undecidable figure.” According to her, the dis-figuration of the figure destroys the power of literature as a “cultural good” and brings forth the meaning of being human. If “to be human is to be intended toward the other,” then Comparative Literature should figure itself as “planetary” rather than “continental, global, or worldly” to underline the difference between “living” and “the possibility of thinking to control” (Spivak, 2003, pp. 72-73). In Spivak's view, it is in the “planetary” figuration of Comparative Literature that the discipline can move towards thinking of various dimensions of the human. The dis-figuration of the figure, a reminder of Paul de Man's conceptualization of the “allegory of reading,” leads Spivak to place reading itself in the heart of education (Spivak, 2003, p. 72). However, as often put on the agendas of Comparative Literature

meetings and conferences, the relationship between literature and the human inescapably raises the problem of language. Since there have been many languages across time and space, each of which has had its own cultural, linguistic, and symbolic formulations, different solutions have been offered for the studies of Comparative Literature.

Rey Chow's discussions in "In the Name of Comparative Literature" concisely cover many dimensions of the problem. In response to the 1993 Report on Standards by the ACLA (American Comparative Literature Association) committee, which recommends teaching languages and literatures other than central languages such as English, French, and German more widely, Chow expresses her concern that teaching these languages has an institutional history in the US (Chow, 1995, p. 108). The European notion of the nation-state as well as the study of the "masterpieces" of national literatures amounts to the restoration of Eurocentricism "in-the-name-of-the-other" (Chow, 1995, p. 109). Therefore, according to Chow, multilingualism may not simply remove the problems of power structures. She suggests that while the theory has also been viewed as dominated by Western philosophy, deconstruction and poststructuralist theory have the potential to inform cultural, ethnic, and gender studies. These study fields need to contain an implicit theoretical understanding "to critique hegemonic signs and sign systems from without as well as from within" (Chow, 1995, 111-112). To keep this understanding, Chow suggests that Comparative Literature should bring forth the limits of the concept of the nation and the power structures inherent in all languages. Hence, demonstrating the power structures within hegemonic sign systems becomes a function of Comparative Literature.

Although Spivak and Chow trace different paths that naturally shape some practical sensitivities, they share a belief in the power of literature. As exemplified by these two approaches, when literature ceases to be conceived mainly as an instrument of representing identities or exposing socio-political agendas, theory is kept "in" literature as an embedded component. Yet the arguments against theory revolve around the obscure status of "action" in such deconstructive reflections and ask how power structures in reality, or the material world, would be handled. Some feminists, for example, problematize deconstruction's engagement with the concept of identity. As Kate Nash summarizes, Derrida's concept of "undecidability" led them to think that deconstruction does not enable an "authentic or coherent women's voice" to be heard. They are concerned that the definition of identities as constructed in discourses may prevent people from seeing oppressed women. For this group of feminists, women's demands are undermined by a theory that centers on unstable identities (Nash, 1994, pp. 70-71). Similarly, as Simone Drichel points out, deconstructive postcolonial studies have trouble questioning sovereignty. Not only are they challenged by those who view the expansion of deconstruction beyond the Western world as a form of intellectual imperialism, but they also have difficulty figuring out what to do with Derridean conceptualization of unstable identities (Drichel, 2013, p. 47). The postcolonial resistance to domination and fight for freedom aims at what Drichel calls "the *autos*," i.e., the independent identity, which puts postcolonialism at odds with deconstruction (Drichel, 2013, p. 49). Although Drichel deems this reaction a defence mechanism originating from the traumatic experience caused by the colonial violence (Drichel, 2013, p. 49), her discussion provides us with examples of how the deconstructionist view of identity has been found questionable by some when it comes to practical concerns of the world.

Claims to differences, such as women's and subaltern's independent identities, are considered to have the power to change their oppressed status, whereas "theory," including deconstruction, is regarded as abstract and nihilistic. Yet the attempts to politicize identity under the umbrella term of "post-theory" have also drawn criticisms for reproducing grand narratives. Geoffrey Bennington, for example, argued that most of the time politicizing meant historicizing, which assigned a transcendental position to history (Bennington, 1999, p. 105). What is at stake here is to

comprehend the abstraction in deconstructive thinking not as an un-worlding activity but as a critical practice of all discourses. Fynsk's suggestion to turn to language at a fundamental level departs from this intrinsic relationship and opens to the possibility of a polyphonic sense of being in the world. Literature and its "world-ings" as ontological questions demonstrate how social, political, and ethical problems are inhabited by language itself.

Fynsk on Collectivity

Relating the human notions of life, death, and experience to the pedagogical engagement of the humanities with the grounds of being-together, Fynsk calls for a theory that brings forth difference rather than a theory that analyzes globalization without providing its communication with a thought of world and life. Since the questions of language and literature, as well as the issues of freedom and human rights, need to be defined and discussed at global and local levels, Fynsk underlines that his call for thought should target artistic and literary event rather than amounting to mere representation and thematization. Fynsk's anecdote about the medical student points out that the contribution of literary studies to medicine or that of the humanities to the sciences occurs in an "imminent fashion," placing language at the intersection of these fields. Considering language both in a linguistic sense and the languages of the visual image, body, and new technologies, he argues against an instrumental understanding of theory (Fynsk, 2004, pp. ix-xi). But how does *praxis* find a place in this abstraction? Will the response of the medical student "really" change after she practices reading deconstructively? It is indeed this kind of questioning that alerts Fynsk. The problem, he posits, is that "the very *sense* (direction and meaning) of the humanities as a discursive field is unavailable" (emphasis in original) (Fynsk, 2004, p. 51). To elucidate this point, Fynsk appeals to the 1998 "Report on the State of the Humanities at Cornell University" and observes that the report views theory as answerable to historical concerns in a transformative manner:

We may rightfully assume that the authors of the report are envisioning something more transformative than a sociology of knowledge that finds a new horizon of inquiry in "the emerging transnational context of cultural production and cultural critique." But how can a historicizing critique of the humanities be truly historical if it does not acknowledge the historicity of its object? (Fynsk, 2004, p. 54)

Fynsk's question is geared toward understanding forms of knowing and practicing in the humanities. He draws attention to the urgent need for "thinking" when responding to political issues and the newly emerging concerns of the global world.

Fynsk agrees with Spivak's claim that the task of the humanities is "to help us move beyond global political programs [...] toward a thinking that is more planetary in its opening to the many dimensions of human finitude" (Fynsk, 2004, p. 56). Then he draws our attention to the rare interest in the ontological dimension of language among the North American theorists and philosophers. He maintains that their demand to find a "political relevance" or a "real" referent shaped their agenda, leading to the fact that the humanities lost their object (Fynsk, 2004, p. 58). His suggestion is to start with an alternative reading of poststructuralist theory, which he believes will reveal "a thought of language that quite surpasses the simple formulas concerning 'the play of the signifier' or 'the linguistic construction of reality' that have been endlessly rehearsed in Anglo-American literary and cultural studies" (Fynsk, 2004, p. 60). According to him, identity theories and cultural analyses based on psychoanalysis and semiotics failed to render such a thought, while a second linguistic turn, this time with an ontological weight, might enable one to view the human in a new way (Fynsk, 2004, p. 60). Walter Benjamin, Maurice Blanchot, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Lacan are among the names Fynsk pronounces for such a second coming, which we might go ahead and suggest calling "the literary turn."

Among the thought-provoking works of these thinkers, Blanchot's seminal article "Literature and

Right to Death” is worth examining to better comprehend how the idea of “shared existence” relates to the problematization of the structure of signification. Fynsk reminds us of Blanchot’s investigation about the function of literature and the arts regarding “the discursive foundations of any institution and the symbolic order as a whole,” to which Fynsk’s response is crucial. According to him, the thought that such an existence calls for “does not lend itself immediately to representation and thematization” (Fynsk, 2004, 70). In fact, Blanchot’s understanding of literature amounts to a similar idea with a particular focus on the significance of conceptual thinking and an ambiguity that lies at the heart of literary activity.

Blanchot on Shared Existence

In “Literature and the Right to Death,” Blanchot opens up the possibility of scrutinizing literary creation as a unique conceptual operation making two seemingly uncompromising problems cooperate side by side: on the one hand, there is death as the topological awareness of the contours of the human world and on the other, there is the existence of a reality which is absolutely deprived of it. According to Blanchot, what commands literary activity is the ambiguity concerning the exact nature of this operation, which begins a pure negation, but later ends up in a network comprising every single thing. Therefore, logically speaking, what is at stake is an impossible operation having at its core an irresolvable dilemma: one can decide upon the ultimate condition either negatively or positively, depending upon the trajectory one follows.

That is to suggest that Blanchot considers work as a two-tiered concept which designates both the activity, that is, the act of producing, and the product that is a complex result of both this unique activity of negation and a certain negation in itself as a form of disappearing. Blanchot gives a compact form to this argument that builds relations among writer, work and the term “disappearing” as follows: “As we have seen, he [the writer] exists only in his work, but the work exists only when it has become this public, alien reality, made and unmade by colliding with other realities. So he really is inside the work, but the work itself is disappearing. This is a particularly critical moment in the experiment” (Blanchot, 1998, p. 364). Hence, the abode of writer in its pure self, that is work, undergoes in a becoming along with the movement of negation as a result of “colliding with other realities”. Blanchot, few lines later, names the realm of those other realities as the “shared existence” (Blanchot, 1998, p. 365). Thus we reach the critical point that he emphasized: the very site of the writer’s pure self dealing with the realization of unreality through literary creation becomes populated by that which lacks or is absent in the writer’s activity, that is, existence.

It seems that the writer leaves his status in the “marvelous force” of literature, or the force of creative negation, and overwhelmed by the disappearing work that moves towards the site of existence, the very movement Blanchot prefers to call the “truth of the work.” So, the proposed unity between the writer and what is written comes to a halt despite writer’s unwillingness to be away from the motion that the disappearing of the work brings up. Now, a different entity is produced and retains its own place among other things. The pure self in pursuit of participating in the work’s becoming has undergone a radical change itself by turning into that new thing, namely “the book.”

However, through the process of pure negation, the writer underestimates the condition of this obvious becoming and pretends to preserve his previous state in which he finds himself unlimited and unbounded from the world: “[H]e denies everything he is, in order to become everything he is not” (Blanchot, 1998, p. 372). In such periods when the literary mind cannot help continuing to negate everything, it turns out to be that every other thing, that is, everything again, becomes possible. This is basically the definition of revolution for Blanchot, in which action in a deconstructive reading is also crystallized. The revolutionary moments are nothing but “fabulous moments: in them fable speaks; in them the speech of fable becomes action” (Blanchot, 1998, p.

375). Fable makes history seem like a “void,” which means readiness for any kind of realization without resistance. At this point, if we remember that the present situation of a man who writes is closely related with the concept of literature, and that Blanchot made a lot of effort to pose them side by side, we anticipate he would explain the absence of existence in language with the act of naming that distracts things from their proper existence by turning them into mere generalities that are classified under the title “being”, of course, insofar as they partake of the circle of signification (Blanchot, 1998, p. 378).

The writer may have a goal to save the meaning that is a product of one of the imaginary worlds that the writer considers as a substitute for reality. Yet there is another slope caused by “the horror of existence deprived of the world” (Blanchot, 1998, p. 389). The writer at this slope deals with “things and beings” as if there were no world, the totality of which leads the literature of the whole to play with its contents, and to open them up to the process of an arbitrary bringing together. Blanchot does not conceal his reaction towards the stubbornness of the former type of literature, although, at the end, he recognizes it as one of the legitimate parties of the overall ambiguity that gives shape to the human condition. To be stuck in indifference to existence is the main peculiarity of both the ideal of literature and the status of the writer working in the imaginary realm.

Nevertheless, Blanchot realizes that there is another opportunity to summon the veiled or forgotten existence to appear, even if in an ambiguous manner: “Yes, happily language is a thing” (Blanchot, 1998, p. 384). The materiality of language paves the way for the disenchantment of literature by its own unreal presence and brings back the lost element in the imaginary, which is time. The concept of temporality makes it possible to ask the question of a *before* that precedes this vital material of language. At the end, a literary existence is put forward as a new site for literary creation: “The language of literature is a search for this moment which precedes literature. Literature usually calls it existence” (Blanchot, 1998, p. 383). This shared existence is another name for the writing process that produces a collective work (Blanchot, 1998, p. 371). Here, existence replaces signification while the right to death keeps producing the force of negation.

Blanchot’s thought, in all its complexity, highlights literary language as something with an ontological weight. This ambiguous co-existence of meaning and being in literary creation needs to be understood by the scholars and students of the humanities, to which Fynsk draws attention. What follows in the context of globalization and identity is a pedagogical stance that involves a “relational structure” engaging in the idea of “being-together” (Fynsk, 2004, p. 74). Fynsk does not mean that the analyses of globalization are useless, but he wants to add to them a discussion on the thought of “world” or “forms of life.” Hence, theory must “bring forth difference, *speak from difference*, making resonant the fact that *there* is a question of community, a question of freedom, a question of the human in the sites that call for response” (emphases in original) (Fynsk, 2004, 7, p. 6). In this polyphonic realm, questions and differences will resonate to make sense of the world shared with others. The sense of “being-together,” as a question of community or as it relates to the idea of collectivity, finds an inspiring form in Jean-Luc Nancy’s “Why are There Several Arts and Not Just One?”, the first essay of *The Muses*. Here, Nancy discusses the possible “world-ings” in language through his concept of “singular plural art” and ponders the shared affectivity intrinsic to the arts.

Nancy on Sharing

In his discussion on the hermeneutic circle, Heidegger, an important inspiration for Nancy, writes, “Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us” (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 191-192). Furthermore, any interpretation expected to contribute to understanding “must already have understood what is to be interpreted” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 194). Although this seems to be a vicious circle, Heidegger

maintains that “What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way. This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 195).

Although Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle begs much more attention to better understand Nancy and Fynsk, this condensed outline provides helpful clues as to the ontological dimension of interpretation. One confronts the essential presuppositions in the hermeneutic circle, including the existential ones. Similarly, Nancy considers touch as the essential sense. Referring to Aristotle, Plato, and Sigmund Freud in his discussion on the heterogeneity of senses, he defines touching as “the *corpus* of the senses” (Nancy, 1994b, p. 17). Thus, touch is considered a sense that “presents” something “as” something, but there are more than two something(s): feeling of feeling of feeling... When Nancy proposes that art touches on this sense, on the sense of touch, we have to consider all zones of touching, feeling, and sensing. That is why he would say, “Art does not deal with the ‘world’ understood as simple exteriority, milieu, or nature. It deals with being-in-the-world in its very springing forth” (Nancy, 1994b, p. 18). The entanglement of arts and senses occurs in a way that the arts relate to the world ontologically.

In *Listening*, Nancy underlines the difference between listening to something for “itself” and for “the message,” the former entailing being in the world (Nancy, 2007a, p. 5). He implies that there is a correlation between one’s existence and the resonance of what one listens to. Listening, he suggests, implicates a relationship to “self,” which is not a given subjectivity with a substantial essence (Nancy, 2007a, p. 12). Both the importance Nancy attributes to the plurality of arts in *The Muses* and the meaning he finds in resonances illustrate his desire to replace signification with senses.

According to Adrienne Janus, Nancy’s objection to the superior status of seeing in the hierarchy of senses warns us about some limitations of ocularcentrism, including its consideration of signification as the only way of viewing the world (Janus, 2011, pp. 188-189). Yet, one should add, Nancy nonetheless avoids portraying art as something that becomes “a sense,” whether it is a sense of seeing or hearing. Something “lived” marks this experience and exposes a world that is now “pictorial” or “musical” rather than “visual” or “sonorous” (Nancy, 1994b, p. 21). The unity of signification or representation is transformed into something else through the touch of another unity, but the result is a world of “equivalents, pitches, scales, harmonic relations, melodic sequences, tonalities, rhythms, timbres, and so forth” (Nancy, 1994b, p. 21). In a way, if senses are detached from signification through art, touching occurs in the infinity of zones where differences proliferate.

The singular plural Muses tells us both the sensuous and technical plurality of arts, through which occurs the “dis-location of common sense.” The dis-location of common sense through touching *ad infinitum* (Nancy, 1994b, pp. 22-27) may help us understand how Comparative Literature and the humanities can deal with the world and the human as a linguistic and artistic event. Carrying the problems of languages and literatures of different nations and identities beyond simple representation and thematization seems to be an important phase of this dis-location. As François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, translators of Nancy’s *The Creation of the World* suggest, the world, for Nancy, needs to free itself from *Weltanschauung* to come up as the world. If the world is viewed from a vantage point, it can be seen, represented, and thus neutralized. For that reason, they maintain, “Nancy insists on the fact that the world emerges as a world against the background of a historical withdrawal of the representation of the World” (Raffoul, 2007, p. 4). In other words, Nancy’s polyphonic senses posit themselves against representation or more generally against the understanding of the world as an exteriority.

The concepts of multiculturalism, multilingualism, and interdisciplinarity abound in the studies of Comparative Literature. Some scholars remain completely within the thematic and representative

realms and feel the anxieties of comparison because of their identity-oriented approach. Some others, on the other hand, emphasize the aesthetic dimension of a literary work, the necessity to think of the world as planetary, and the exigency to turn to language and theory. These approaches differ from each other in many ways and fundamentally in the way of problematizing how Comparative Literature should relate to the world. The *praxis* of coexistence, as discussed by Nancy, might guide literary studies as to the meaning of the world, whether it is the world of the text or the world in which one lives and dies. In both cases, it is the world that is seen, heard, smelled, and touched, and thus it is the space of shared affectivity.

Nancy describes the world as “the place of any taking-place” where “there is room for everyone [*tout le monde*]” (emphasis in original) (Nancy, 2007b, p. 42). The ethics of being-in-the-world is based on a *praxis* of coexistence that does not rely on any substantials. Explaining how coexistence occurs through the sharing of the inner resonances of the world, he refers to literature and the arts, and suggests that one recognizes “a short passage from Bach or from Varese—but also a fragment from Proust, a drawing from Matisse, or a Chinese landscape” through the resonances echoed by various elements of the World (Nancy, 2007b, p. 42). This movement, which integrates literary and theoretical thinking, may enable Comparative Literature to dwell in the world.

Humanities Beyond the Classroom

If the humanities lost their object of study while searching for concrete relevance to the real problems of the world, then one should also question the status of the classroom as an educational setting. Rethinking education in a deconstructive manner requires questioning the discourses of educational institutions and the mainstream roles assigned to teachers and students. This style would force the limits of existing worldviews and open a space for what has not yet been recognized. The ideas of collectivity, shared existence, and sharing, as envisaged by Fynsk, Blanchot, and Nancy, respectively, expose a world of differences.

Indeed, the linguistic turn produced effective pedagogical thoughts that highlight its practical consequences. The scholars of deconstructive education emphasize that Derrida taught how to subvert metaphysical assumptions of all kinds of texts, including political discourses. According to them, deconstruction does not take an apolitical stance, or disable scientific and analytic clarity as widely assumed (Peters and Biesta, 2009, p. 9). Gert Biesta, underlining Derrida’s exposition of the metaphysical desire for “fixed, self-present origins” which can present themselves only with the help of what is not present yet (Biesta, 2009, pp. 16-22), goes on to argue, in opposition to various claims, that deconstruction has an “ethicopolitical motivation” (Biesta, 2009, p. 15). This denotes the impossibility of signification, i.e., the impossibility of understanding the relation between the signifier and the signified in terms of representation (Biesta, 2009, p. 24). The illusion of identity as a “self-sufficient presence” is broken, and an otherness that has been suppressed to keep this illusion starts being recognized (Biesta, 2009, p. 27).

Although the otherness emphasized here is crucial for the education of every individual, it is particularly significant for a student of Comparative Literature, who is always exposed to the problem of comparison, i.e., the risk of restoring hierarchies among different languages, cultures, writers, and works. Theory, whose death is sporadically announced, and abstraction, which is frequently blamed for distancing people from worldly affairs, are critical for preventing these threats and for creating what Caputo calls “the spectral effect” of teaching (Caputo, 2016, p. 122). Accordingly, education is guided by a “hauntological principle” that considers the event as something to come. In Caputo’s words, “the event is what is going on in what happens, which we cannot get our hands on, cannot master or manipulate it, cannot make it happen, but only conjure up” (Caputo, 2016, p. 122). This Derridean hauntology carries education beyond the classroom and invites a rethinking of presumably self-sufficient identities.

Conceptual thinking is an important component of this hauntology as the literary realm has presented its vulnerability to the penetrations of the philosophical by gradually turning out to be a sacred site of a series of modern problems and respective questions. Nor is it impossible to change this intricate expression counter-clockwise and to say that modern reformations and differentiations taken place in the milieu of art and literature have contingently yielded to a reorientation of philosophical problem setting. In both ways, there is no reason to quarrel about the existence of a movement which resonates and establishes affinity both with philosopher's and artist's positions.

Trying to name the immediate effects of the modern condition on philosophical discourse, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari aver the new mise-en-scene of conceptual thinking, which reversed the roles of essential players on the stage. As they suggested in "Geophilosophy", the fourth chapter of their co-authored book called *What is Philosophy?*, modern thinker would have no difficulty getting at concepts to articulate on what is at stake in the discursive plane of his thought. Unlike ancient philosophers, modern men of thought find concepts in their minds almost taken for granted. However, this priority leads directly to a totally new form "in which communication, exchange, consensus, and opinion vanishes entirely." According to Deleuze and Guattari, this is because the so-called "new form" is "non propositional" in nature (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.99). Beginning with concepts instead of endeavoring to demarcate them and depict the corresponding limits has vouchsafed a considerable power to the elements of thought, which have gained the required elasticity to put concepts in new interrelations that have not even been imagined before.

Concepts getting closer and more interrelated to each other give rise to the very abstract nexus or a web whose threads are not composed of the material of the ancient syllogistic continuum of "logical" arguments but of a brand new logic that has got rid of the propositional form. Blanchot, as discussed above, pursues the possibilities of this new wave of thought by bringing forth the shared existence of the human. Fynsk's and Nancy's reflections on the co-existence of beings further emphasize the ontological and ethical dimensions of education. The world makes sense only when it is shared with others, yet the meanings of "world," "sense," and "other" are not predetermined. Thinking through literature and listening to artistic resonances, the world and the classroom appear to be the spaces of events where differences proliferate.

Conclusion

Derrida's avoidance of attributing to deconstruction any beginning and ending goes hand in hand with his avoidance of differentiating between theory and action. In his philosophy, it is the discourse that matters, whether one refers to a written or unwritten text or an ethical or political action. Discourse analysis requires close reading, which he defines not simply as spending time with the books but as criticizing all kinds of events and situations around and analyzing various rhetorics (Derrida, 1999, p. 67). Accordingly, a medical student who encounters the strategies of deconstructive reading will not learn how to read but will be transformed by being exposed to new modes of thinking and styles of teaching. In a space of undecidabilities, she will question the representation of structures such as bodies, medical discourses, and institutions. She will also be alert to the historically and politically constructed stories of illnesses and patients. In contrast to a subject who deems herself capable of deciphering the truth in a text, she will have the chance to encounter others. Reading, in her case, will be a mode of *praxis* not because it feeds her self-recognition but because it resists any presuppositions. Derrida, borrowing the term from de Man, writes that "[Reflexive structure] projects forward the advent of the self, of 'speaking' or 'writing' of itself as other, that is to say, what I call a trace" (Derrida, 1989, p. 29). The advent of the self as other denotes not only the dissemination of the text into traces but also the multiplicity of voices.

Taking a medical student's possible encounter with these traces and multiplicities as a practical

example, one may argue that the recent developments on a global scale have not obliterated the relevance of deconstruction. It is more so in Comparative Literature, which is a dynamic study field very much influenced by hegemonic power relations. At a time when migrations and neoliberal policies sweep the world, a mode of thinking that questions the structure of representation is still needed. Identity politics based on mere representation and its mimetic presentations in the literary and cultural worlds might easily restore self-recognition and presuppositions. Thus, the accusation against deconstruction that it is not interested in taking action and that it is not useful in this unequal and unjust world is not fair. Deconstructive modes of philosophers of different traditions, namely Fynsk, Blanchot, and Nancy, illustrate that the problematization of signification might open the door to challenging ideas. Although Derrida's ambivalent relationship with Heidegger (Derrida, 1999, p. 82), whose thought is traced in Fynsk, Blanchot, and Nancy, and his "uneasiness with Nancy's ontological claims" (Watkin, 2009, p. 137) are well-known, they converge on the dislocation of common sense. Fynsk's, Blanchot's, and Nancy's ideas on existence and co-existence might give a clue as to how action in deconstruction is performed. These seemingly abstract discussions may not urgently solve the problems of the contemporary world, but they present styles that teach in a performative manner how to work with traces.

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