
North-South Comparatism: New Worldism, Theories of Lack and Acclimatization

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Abstract: In this essay I will use the expression New Worldism to refer to a particular representation of the New World, developed in Europe. I will take some theories related to this expression (theories of lack and acclimatization) to provide a short introduction to them, taking into special consideration their connection to comparatism as it was developed in 19th-century Brazil.

Keywords: North-South Comparatism, New Worldism, theories of lack, theories of acclimatization

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The starting point of this essay is Antonio Candido's famous phrase: "to study Brazilian literature is to study comparative literature" (230). To establish the central arguments, I will inevitably have to go back to the 19th century, which was also the century of nationalities and of cosmopolitanism, as Ferdinand Brunetière (61) stated, to revisit what we could term New Worldism, which has developed from the 16th century onwards. I use the expression New Worldism here to refer to a particular representation of the New World. My line of reasoning also stems from the principle that comparisons are rooted in theories or ideas that give meaning to the comparable elements. By being seen as comparable, these elements are already invested with the meanings that those theories or ideas give them: consequently, the affinities, analogies, similarities or differences, contrasts or dissimilarities identified between them pay tribute to those theories or ideas, which become an integral part of the historical meanings of the comparisons. In the case of New Worldism, its theories and ideas were originally European.

If the 19th century was also the "century of nationalities" (63), as Brunetière has said, and if, in that era, "the first of the virtues demanded of an English or German writer was no longer to write well and to think well, but to think in a really 'Germanic' or 'Anglo-Saxon' way," this conceptualization would go on to be part of New Worldism, and be turned into a requirement and an assessment criterion, such that works and authors that did not comply with it would be disqualified. It should be

noted, for example, that the Portuguese critic Pinheiro Chagas, discussing literature in Brazil in 1867, makes a statement similar to Brunetière's:

Despite the many talents that are amassing in our former colony in the Americas, it cannot be said that Brazil has a literature. National literature is that which reflects the character of a people, that which gives life to their traditions and beliefs; it is the soaring harp on whose strings moans, like a breath of air, the soul of a nation, with all its pains and jubilations that, over the centuries, have retuned it. (212)

In Brunetière's view (62-63): criticism, authorized by the conclusions of scholars, philologists and grammarians, has taught us that in the 19th-century national literatures had tried to concentrate on themselves, transforming themselves into the expression of the spirit of their people and their consciousness, as well as their respective traditions. However, he also wonders whether this movement of nationalist concentration might not in itself be proof of the reciprocal interpenetration between different literatures and of the fear that they will thus lose their most "original" native qualities. This fear, he argues, is present not only in literature, but also in culture, in which interpenetration is active, continual and irresistible. Exaggeration in literary nationalism is thus, in his opinion, a way of resisting the trend towards cosmopolitanism (66).

After the term cosmopolitanism was pushed aside by globalization in the 20th century, and after having at the same time witnessed the emergence of xenophobic nationalisms in various parts of the world, it is interesting to note that this fear that Brunetière was talking about is still present to this day. The phrase coined by Candido, one of the most respected and influential critics and comparatists in the Americas in the 20th century illustrates that, in his view, cosmopolitan interpenetration is active, continual and irresistible in Brazilian literature. I believe that this also applies to other national literatures.

In fact, this connection between nationalism and cosmopolitanism existed in the very disciplinary origins of comparatism. As we know, even the first periodical dedicated to Comparative Literature, the *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum (ACLU)*, founded in Hungary in 1877 by Hugo Meltzl and Samuel Brassai, was seen locally as a vehicle to disseminate Hungarian national literature abroad, and not as a vehicle for transnational comparatism (Levente 47-61; Codău web). Its editors, in 1878, responded to the accusation of "foreignism" by stating that *ACLU* was, ultimately, a Hungarian periodical that emphasized content for the readers of Hungary (Levente 55).

Alexander Beecroft has already used Meltzl as an example, saying that the comparative literature project began in the peripheries, perhaps because inhabitants of peripheral or provincial cultures are forced to think comparatively (at least with regard to dominant cultures), while members of dominant cultures can more easily treat their cultures in isolation (17-32). In addition to Meltzl, Beecroft cites Hutcheson Macauley Posnett, Professor of Classics and English Literature at the University of Auckland and the author of *Comparative Literature* (1886), because both worked "on the peripheries of the Eurosphere." We could add to the list Tobias Barreto, the Brazilian author of "Traços de literatura comparada do século XIX" ("Outline of Comparative Literature in the 19th Century," 1877). According to Barreto, this essay would be a re-elaboration of lectures given in a private literature course, in 1876. As a basis for comparatism, Barreto believed in a European-based universalism, to be

conveyed in the literature of the 19th century:

Literature [...] tends in our days, more than at any other time, to universality, to the assimilation of that part of the intellectual heritage of different peoples, which is susceptible of being transmitted, as a tribute, to the common purse of civilization.

Through the rapid and constant exchange of ideas, customs, and wealth, the cultured nations, as if intermingled with one another, presently make Europe and a good portion of America a unique and enormously large people. The study of foreign languages and literatures is a characteristic feature of our time. No other historical period presents us with such vivid signs of mental unification, at least in the domain of letters and science. (103; my translation)

On the other hand, Posnett attributes the beginning of “our modern comparative science” to Dante’s *De vulgari eloquentia*, which would have dealt with “a literature written in a tongue whose decomposition had plainly gone to make up the elements of their own living speech” (74). For Posnett, the rise of European nationalities was creating new points of view, new materials for comparison in modern institutions. The New World entered his argument as the introduction of another, radically different world, much more different than the ones Europeans had already come across—and, as could be expected, more “primitive”: “The discovery of the New World brought this new European civilization face to face with primitive life, and awakened men to contrasts with their own associations, more striking than Byzantine or even Saracen could offer” (75).

In fact, Posnett’s position belongs to an ancient lineage of argumentation, which we call New Worldism, but Barreto reproduced a certain European cosmopolitanism, which in a way implied a Europeanizing universalization. It is not surprising in his work, therefore, that, although manifestations occasionally occur that seem to support the belief in an egalitarian cultural contribution between nations, these are soon discarded. In fact, even if Barreto argues that, as a consequence of the exchange of ideas the cultured nations make Europe and a good portion of America a unique people (103-104), this supposedly unique people is hierarchically presented. As the unique people is made up of diverse peoples, Barreto uses the classification of Henrique Klenke, to say that the “solar peoples, or the diurnal side of humanity” are what count:

It is only to the solar peoples that the cultural work of the human spirit belongs, seen above all from its intimate side, in the pure domain of ideas and feelings. They alone, therefore, have a literature, in the strict sense of the word, an immense circulating capital of ideal wealth, which fertilizes and gives life to the work of other peoples. (104)

According to Barreto, Brazilians would not be solar, they would be “peoples of transition,” the twilight side of humanity, which in turn would be subdivided into “peoples that rise and peoples that decay” (104). Thus, at that historical moment (that Barreto saw as, at the same time, cosmopolitan and nationalist) citizens of different countries, “strangers by the language and strangers to each other” would have as “the best means of spiritual approximation, the most effective means to inspire them the feeling of neighbors and brothers, ... precisely the study of foreign literatures” (104-105):

However, it is not understood that this study of foreign letters ... is a simple matter of memory, a work of mere nomenclature and books by authors. ... It has its scientific side and also its adequate method, which is the comparative method.

What the latter has been for languages and religions, whose most surprising findings pay tribute to it alone, can be equally true for literatures (Barreto 105).

On the basis of this comparative perspective, Barreto certainly meets the criteria of crossing borders, with the comparison of works and authors from different countries. Nevertheless, today critical analyses of the beginnings of Comparative Literature have already pointed out that it focused on European authors and works, showing a preference for France, England, and Germany, followed by Italy and Spain. And Barreto's essay seems to be a perfect target for these criticisms:

In the present century, only four nations, Germany, France, England, and Italy, have been at the head of the literary movement, and only their literatures deserve the title of *Weltliteraturen*, as the Germans say, or universal literatures. Everything that is good, useful and has been thought, written and spoken in any other place, in this or that epigone country, has always been a repercussion of the original thinking of the four main countries. (106)

However, it is necessary to say that Barreto was also producing a justification for the work he had undertaken:

Having in mind here to write a short study in comparative literature, it was natural that I should seek my subject among the most learned nations: and so I did. My work thus encompasses a comparative assessment of German, French and Italian letters, not throughout the course of their development, but in a specific period of the literary history of this century. (106-107)

Interestingly, although he announces that he will make this comparative assessment, he also produces an argument against comparative judgments that aim to decide which work is the best:

Many people still assume, when they hear about comparative literature, that this is just a process of confrontation and assessment of the different authors, to determine which ones are the most meritorious. ...

But this is a misconception. Comparative literature is simply a historical survey of reciprocal influences, metachemical actions and reactions, which shake the minds, in one of the vast domains of international life. And that was the only way it could take on a scientific face and become truly worthy of being cultivated. (107)

It is important to point out here that, although Barreto is a Brazilian author, his pioneering essay on Comparative Literature can also be considered a result of the adoption of dominant European perspectives at that time. The criterion of relevance used for the literatures he compares is even more exclusive than that of Hugo Meltzl, but it would be difficult to accuse him of having adopted the New Worldist point of view, because he does not even deal with the literature of his own country in this work.

New Worldism, Theories of Lack and Acclimatization

Among the legacies of New Worldism are the theories of lack. These theories are derived from the production of European meanings about the “dominions” incorporated via the process of colonization. Since they were initially formulated, they have been widely disseminated in countries with European colonial heritage, like Brazil. They implied a structuring of knowledge that, directed at these “dominions” and claiming to illustrate a “new reality” contained within them, in fact created representations of the dominated territories and peoples based on perspectives rooted in the Old World. Therefore, via a comparative perspective, in which the evaluation criterion used in the comparison was basically European, judgements were formed about the New World in which Europe was used as an instrument to evaluate or measure what was found there. If something considered relevant in the Old World was not found in the New World, this absence was considered a lack.

Theories of lack have existed since the initial observations of the colonizers in Brazil, who considered the indigenous language as without faith, without law, without king (*fê*, *lei* and *rei* respectively in Portuguese) because it did not contain the phonemes /f/, /l/, and /r/. They concluded that the lack of these phonemes implied the lack of referents that were indispensable in the Europe of the time: faith, law, and king (Mariani 79-133). These theories of lack persisted in the 19th century, even in the works of authors who overtly embraced the New World, like the Frenchman Ferdinand Denis, who not only developed comparisons between Europe and Brazil, but also ruled on how to produce literature in the Americas, from the starting point of local color. Theories of lack presumed that a given element, considered important in the European country of origin, should also be part of the new dominion. The absence of this element was seen as a lack, either because it was considered relevant in the European world or because it simply existed in that world, which was used as a basis for comparatism.

Those who advocated these theories believed that the absence of what should exist constituted a lack not a difference. Even the new elements, which they came across in the New World, were evaluated in comparison with those that already existed in Europe and took on a meaning derived from this comparison.

There are of course variants of these theories of lack, which can also be employed to make comparisons at intra or supra national levels. At an intranational level, for instance, we know that the regional divisions within Brazil are not only an exercise in intellectual abstraction, since they are used by the federal government as a parameter for public policies, amongst other things. At a supranational level, for example, the ideas put forward by Ana Pizarro and Angel Rama are well-known in South America: the former considers Amazonia as a transnational region, embracing not only Brazil but also other countries in the north of South America; the latter considers the pampas as a cultural region whose borders extend beyond the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, encompassing parts of the territories of Argentina and Uruguay.

To consider a specific case of intranational comparatism, let us recall the words of Roberto Mibielli with regards to Amazonia in general and the Brazilian state of Roraima in particular. According to him, the Amazon region contains a multiplicity of cultural components that, nevertheless, do not form a “recognisable cultural facet,” that is, cultural components that correspond to what is found and recognized in other more populous regions with a greater volume of cultural production.

This leads to the interpretation that in this region there is a cultural void, in parallel to a demographic void. It is as if there is a lack of people and a lack of culture in Amazonia. It could be argued that this is a kind of variation of the theory of lack, since those who use the expression cultural void are in some way creating a comparison based on the regions presumed to be more “central” (regions with “more people” and “more culture”). They compare these regions with the Amazon region, where, they claim, there is a void, in other words, a lack (of “more people” and “more culture”). In other words, in comparison with other places seen as “full,” Amazonia will be the “void,” and the “plenitude” of those other places will be the model of how and with what that “void” should be filled, although the realities of the region itself are very different.¹

This type of comparatism, in which the elements of the Amazon are evaluated in contrast with those found in the more “central” regions of Brazil, resulting in an evaluation based on this comparison, also leads us to conclude that inter-national comparatist practices can in some way be correlated with inter-regional ones, or with others at a more local level.

However, in addition to theories of lack, other theories have been developed from the 19th century onwards, which have led in other directions. Especially important for literary studies in the Americas are the theories of acclimatization, that take into consideration the fact that the “external” elements, when they arrived in the New World, were modified. I have borrowed the term acclimatization from Machado de Assis, in tribute to his talent as a literary critic.

As we know, between 1883 and 1886 Machado, under the pseudonym Lelio, published in the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias*, in the section “Balas de estalo,” a series of short texts. According to Lelio, even something in Brazil that seems to be the same as something in the place of origin can be turned into something else as a result of acclimatization:

Note that everything has its name; but the same name may not correspond to similar things or people. Kiosk, for example. Abroad a kiosk is occupied by a woman who sells newspapers. Here it is the place where a gentleman sells lottery tickets and cigarettes made from national straw. The identical name, different things, the law of acclimatisation. (Assis 228)

Theories of acclimatization do not assume that a term or a referent “from outside” remain the same when they are internalized, but that there is a transformation that begins when they are acclimatized in a new context. As we know, since the 20th century there have also been generations of Latin American writers, from Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Fernando Ortiz Fernández to Angel Rama, Antonio Candido, Roberto Schwarz, Silviano Santiago, Benjamin Abdala Jr., and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, who have developed different theories of acclimatization, responding in some way to the question: “How does a given literary or cultural element, with supposed origins in one place, insert itself into another?” This means that literary and cultural circulation and the way we think about it are also at play here.

In the case of Comparative Literature, among other things, we know that this discipline is also linked to the crossing of borders, because in its early years of existence it entailed the comparison of works and authors from different countries, as well as the presence of values to justify this comparison. As a result, criticisms of Comparative Literature have included the following: a) it concentrated on European authors and works; b) even within Europe there was a preference for France, England, and Germany, followed by Italy and Spain; c) the values and parameters that underpinned comparisons,

since they responded to the same preferences, in some way tended to be presented as having universal validity, although they were basically European if not simply “national”; d) Eurocentrism also applied to the issue of languages, which were hierarchized explicitly or implicitly, via various means (Jobim, *Literatura* 16).

The comparatist Theo D’haen has drawn attention to the way that literary systems are structured regionally, forming “constellations” that also inherit from national constructions a notion of shared cultural space, spatial-temporal unity, and formation of a past seen as a common legacy in a territorialized form of linguistic, artistic and legal expression, which also gains effective meanings in museums, newspapers and magazines, publishing houses and radio stations, thematic websites and insertions within the internet, schools and universities, cultural centers, literary and artistic circles, and so on.

Generally speaking, when we refer to literature, we can use the term to distinguish those works that, in accordance with criteria of national literature, are considered of national importance, even if the very criteria of evaluation are inter- or transnational, at least in the sense of being inspired by the values of wider cultural/regional complexes, that could encompass constellations, varying from a group of countries or cultures linked together linguistically or religiously, to a construct like “Europe”, whose precise definition or geographical reach can in fact depend precisely on such groups or constructs. (D’haen and Slauerhoff 143)

It is certainly possible to see regional “constellations” as in some way fostering the potential for synergies that Nation States created as their very core, but the reality of South American literary systems makes it more difficult for these systems to begin working together, which would undoubtedly help bolster them all, as has been the case, according to D’haen, of Scandinavian literature. In the case of the literatures of the Southern Cone, however, a mutual regional support mechanism has not been created between Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay, even though its creation could be mutually beneficial for everyone. Of course, this does not mean there are no commonalities among those systems.

On the contrary, in the literary systems of the Southern Cone, there are many commonalities: 1) “local” works co-exist with a large quantity of translated “foreign” works; 2) “local” works are almost exclusively written in the South American variants of Spanish or Portuguese; 3) the publication of “local” works in other countries is used as a (not always explicit) criterion for valorization; 4) former colonial practices are mimicked, in the sense that greater importance has been given to connections with European models than to those with neighboring colonies, and ways of evaluating works based on the perspective of former colonial powers are internalized (Jobim, “Comparatism” n. p.).

The Geopolitics of Languages

The first Comparative Literature journal, referred to above, *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, founded by Meltzl and Brassai in 1877, focused on polyglotism and incorporated ten working languages, including Portuguese. The issue of a “national language” was a relevant one for literary debates in the 19th century. Brunetière himself believed that the national spirit (*génie*

national) depended on a language, the evolution of which, determined by “airs, waters and places” (69), reflected in its trajectory the images of the native land; on a language spoken by ancestral inhabitants, and thus blessed by them with a traditional meaning that would not be understood by those who did not utter their first words in this language (or hear it before doing so as babies); on a language, in short, illustrated by its masters and, based on their models, available to be emulated by all those who try to write according to those models.

This conceptualization was problematic, and led to much discussion because, among other things, it foregrounded what Antonio Houaiss called the “language of culture,” with its written monuments, and relegated to the background the preliterate languages of the native populations of the Americas. The presence of orality in these indigenous cultures, instead of being examined on its own terms, came to be seen as a lack of a written form. In the 19th century, even an author sympathetic to indigenous people, such as Joaquim Norberto de Sousa Silva, believed that, although there was a “tendency among the Brazilian savages towards poetry,”² the end-product was marred by failing to invest in a written form, or by being written down by the Jesuits, but not having been preserved by them. Silva also points out that this poetry was replaced by “religious chants”:

These uses, these customs, these traditions, these beliefs, these myths must have contributed to the wonder of their poetry and given it the stamp of originality. The highly poetic language of the Tupi people must have contributed to the harmony of their verses and the variety of rhymes. The Jesuits, however, who replaced these warfare chants, these epics of tradition and these love poems with religious chants, either neglected to preserve them, or, if they did preserve them, they lie forgotten under the dust of monastery libraries, if they haven't yet gone astray. (193)

As I have previously stated (“Introduction” 1-22), in the case of the Americas, among other things, there have been various ways in which the traditions of indigenous peoples have been positioned in relation to acclimatized European culture. The difference between orality (predominant to this day in Amerindian cultures—in which even the introduction of a grammar and a written form for their languages was a consequence of contact with Europeans) and the European written tradition also implies different means of evaluation in relation to literary and cultural circulation. I remember learning from Coco Manto (the indigenous pseudonym of the Bolivian writer Jorge Mansilla Torres), when we spent time together in Cuba as judges of the Casa de las Américas prize in 2008, that the government of the then Bolivian president, the indigenous Evo Morales—at the time the target of harsh critical opposition in the local print media (in Spanish)—did not pay much attention to that sector of the press. He was more concerned about the radio, especially the programs broadcast in Amerindian languages, since the print newspapers were predominantly read by the white elite who were not political supporters of Morales, and the radio programs were listened to by the indigenous population, the president's political and electoral base. We should therefore pay attention not only to what circulates, but to the way it does so.

In 2016, when I was in La Paz, I attended the Jornadas Andinas de Literatura Latinoamericana (Andean Conference on Latin American Literature) and a session entitled “Poesía indígena. Criadoras y creadores de poesía quechua y aymara” (“Indigenous Poetry. Creators of Quechua and Aymara Poetry”). The participants referred to themselves as “oralitores” (“oralitors”) rather than writers, to

signal their position in relation to the oral circulation of their poetry. This did not mean that they had abdicated from the world of the written word, as evidenced by the fact that at the event I bought a bilingual book by Clemente Mamani Laruta in Spanish and his native language, Aymara.

In the contemporary Brazilian case, even the production of an indigenous literature by authors who make a point of asserting their belonging to native ethnic groups takes place in a context in which they express themselves in the Portuguese language in their works, even though these ethnic groups originally spoke other languages (Jobim, “Comparatism” n. p.). Therefore, although contemporary indigenous literature is basically written in Portuguese, it aims, as Fábio Almeida de Carvalho points out, to make explicit and valorize indigenous knowledge, affirming “the mutual presence of different cultures, in a world in which we can and must recognise multiplicity and diversity.” This situation, Carvalho argues, “extends the possibilities both so that history/stories can be told from other angles of understanding and comprehending reality, and so that we can learn to tell stories in other ways.” The appropriation of writing by indigenous subjects, adding this to their ancestral oral tradition, “also contributes to the existence of a certain degree of convergence between indigenous traditions and western tradition,” in Carvalho’s opinion (76).

However, it is not just indigenous languages that are interpellated by Europeans. Even the use of languages from the Old World by writers in the Americas is called into question, because they supposedly lack something. This lack can be configured in various ways, like the lack of a local written tradition that supposedly exists in the colonial nation and is part of its heritage and that of its writers. Or as a lack of correct usage of the language (with the “correct” model always being the European one). In a review of the work of José de Alencar, the Portuguese critic Chagas, although he says that the novel *Iracema* “is launching in Brazil the bases of a truly national literature” (224), argues that he will exploit “the opportunity to speak truths that had weighed heavily on his conscience for a long time” (223):

[T]he defect that I see in this legend [*Iracema*], the defect I see in all Brazilian books, and against which I will not cease to intrepidly speak out, is the *lack* of correct usage of the Portuguese language, or rather *the vice of turning Brazilian into a different language from old Portuguese*, by means of daring and unjustifiable neologisms, and grammatical insubordinations. . . . (221; my emphasis)

It is interesting to underline that Pinheiro Chagas, to try to substantiate his arguments, attributes a uniformity to the use of language by North American and English writers,³ and by Spanish and Hispano-Americans, to compare them with Brazilians, who supposedly sought to be different:

Why would a Brazilian book differentiate itself in terms of language from a Portuguese book, when the books of the American Prescott do not differentiate themselves from the books of Macauley, when Ticknor and Southey, Cooper and Walter Scott, Washington Irving and Charles Dickens write exactly the same correct English? When Arboleda and Zorrilla, Mármol and Espronceda deliver their inimitable verses in the same sonorous and lofty Spanish? (222)

Chagas maintains that the “differences” indicate errors on the part of “our overseas brothers,” because

the Portuguese follow the “old rules,” “whereas the Brazilians take delight in following some crooked paths, along which the language of Camões stumbles” (223). Therefore, he accuses Brazilian writers of disfiguring and sullyng a beautiful, harmonious and opulent language. This is thus a comparison in which one of the elements (the language used in Portugal) is held up as a model to be compared with another (the language used in Brazil): the former is seen as “correct” and the latter is judged on the basis of this so-called “correct” form. Everything in the latter variant that does not correspond to the former is designated as a lack of correctness.

Representations and Circulations

Nowadays perhaps we could say that it is no longer seen as academically acceptable to state that a given territory, people, landscape, or literature is this or that, in other words, that it has permanent characteristics or constitutive elements, with a single, shared essence that is supposedly reiterated indefinitely. This is because now it is presumed that it is not simply a question of supposedly essential qualities, but of ways of becoming familiar with and giving meaning to these territories, peoples, landscapes, or literatures. When a way of becoming familiar with and giving meaning to these referents is designated as a representation, this signifies a move away from absolute ontological claims, a distancing from the essentialism that believed in permanent, inherent characteristics. Instead of imagining that an all-encompassing, essentialist description of a given territory, people or landscape, or of its literature and culture, is possible, there has been a recent shift towards associating descriptions with the assumptions on which they are based, and to designating this association as a representation. To put it another way, instead of saying that a certain territory, people, landscape, or literature is this or that, supposing an atemporal essentialism, it is now said that it is represented as being this or that, in a given historical context.

Regarding the circulation of literature and culture, I emphasize here what I have already argued elsewhere (“Introduction” 1-22). Even when circulation occurs in places where there is an analogous context of circulating works, as well as parameters for making judgements about value and models for the production of other works, there may be differences stemming from temporality and spatiality:

When we talk about the circulation of literary works and of other cultural goods (films, songs, paintings etc.) attention is not always also given to the factors involved in this process. Even when the greater or lesser value of a work is attached to it because it circulates beyond its place of origin, there are few critics who admit the fact that the circulation of a work beyond its place of origin depends not only on its supposed intrinsic value, that is supposedly “recognised” in the other places where it has circulated, but also on a series of other factors, such as: the relative importance of the subject matter of the work for its new places of insertion; the proximity or distance—real or imagined—between the place of origin and that of reinsertion; the prevailing interests in the place where the work is reappropriated, according to which it may be considered relevant or not; the obstacles to, or facilitation of the comparative cultural analysis of the local, regional, national and international literary and cultural systems, with their respective hierarchies and practices etc. (Jobim, *Literatura* 4-5)

Consequently, the degree to which works circulate can relate to the way that their insertion contexts view them. Obviously, the same work may generate different judgements, depending on how the context in which it circulates is structured, whether locally or internationally.

Finally, it can be said that comparatism involving the Americas and Europe was marked by New Worldism, a European way of comparing things, in which the valued element in the comparison was basically the European one, even when this did not exist in the New World, because the absence was signified as a lack and not as a difference. If that European element existed, the comparison between it and the American equivalent would take the former as the model. Everything that was not a reiteration of the European model, everything that was present in the European context but not in the Americas, was seen as a lack. Of course, this is not something new even in the Old World, since this kind of ethnocentrism was identified by one of the great masters of European thinking itself, Montaigne, who, in his *Essays*, said that the country where we are becomes the model based on which we judge all other countries: “There at home is always the perfect religion, the perfect political system—the perfect and most accomplished way of doing everything” (101).

Nevertheless, if the reiteration of what existed in Europe is valorized in theories of lack, in theories of acclimatization the contrast is valorized, because they draw attention to the “local” modifications sustained by the elements coming from abroad, under the influence of the new environment and adapting to this new context.

The foundations of comparatist practices between national literatures, with the necessary adaptations, were also used for regional and local literary systems, based on the most varied suppositions, which leads us to conclude that there is still a lot to be done regarding comparatism, chiefly in its correlation with national literatures and their intra- and supranational variants.

Notes

1. “As can be noted, there is no symmetry in terms of actions and movements in Amazonia itself. The diverse social roles and actors involved in the process of producing textualities and identities for the region are in fact profoundly heterogeneous, although there exists (and there existed at that time) the illusion of a single Amazonia, of an immense void that is identical in all senses and in all locations within the vast and inscrutable forest. This merely reinforces the need to get to know and explore the fundamentals of the literature produced in this region so that there can be a search for, in addition to a geopolitical common denominator, other elements that could enable the joining up of texts produced in the west and the east of this vast region.” (Mibielli 242)
2. This is the title of the second chapter of volume 2 of his *História da literatura brasileira (History of Brazilian Literature)*.
3. This brings to mind the famous phrase, which I have seen attributed to both Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw: “The United States and England are two countries separated by a common language.”

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