“NOT THE TRUTH BUT THE WAY”:
THE ETHICS OF IRONY IN WORLD LITERATURE

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ELISABETH GRANQUIST ALDERKS

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Blaine, for his endless support and patience.

Abstract

Scholars have dismissed literary irony for many reasons; two common objections contend that the device facilitates social disengagement disguised as textual play and that it requires of the reader such extensive social, historical, and linguistic knowledge that it cannot be fully appreciated outside its context of production. In "'Not the truth but the way': The Ethics of Irony in World Literature" I refute these myths and demonstrate that the device's social engagement facilitates readers' understanding of both irony and the socio-historical context that the author describes in the work. I first tackle claims about the device's capacity for ethical social engagement. In contradiction to Anglo-American formalism and its resonances in subsequent schools of literary theory, Søren Kierkegaard's concept of controlled irony provides a framework for understanding how it operates as a mode of social critique. The fact that the device can function in this socially engaged way both challenges the assertion that irony is always apolitical and signals to the reader the author's socio-political concerns. In analyzing a moment of indirect critique, readers learn about the defining concerns of the author's context; in this way, irony can function as an *Ansatzpunkt*, Erich Auerbach's term for a point of departure, through which readers learn about different nations, cultures, and eras. I analyze three world literary texts—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* and two twentieth-century adaptations of it, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*—to illustrate this idea. Not only can irony be socially engaged and be understood outside its original context, the device also facilitates the circulation of world literature in the global marketplace. Irony thus

contributes to cross-cultural understanding, an ethical stage necessary to the process of historical development.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Immortal Indirection:

Irony's Lives and Afterlives

By all accounts, irony *should* be dead. Critics proclaim many events and individuals to be the final nail in irony's coffin, including the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001; the Iraq War; novels by David Foster Wallace and Dave Eggers, nonfiction by Jedidiah Purdy and Christy Wampole, and philosophical tracts by Judith Butler, Peter Sloterdijk, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential election and, for entirely different reasons, Donald Trump's 2016 Presidential election; Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway musical *Hamilton*; and the ubiquity of social media.[1] As novelist Colson Whitehead quipped to *The New York Times*, "[s]omething bad happens, like 9/11, it's the death of irony … Something good happens, like Obama's win, it's the death of irony. When will someone proclaim the death of iceberg lettuce? I'm sick of it making my salads boring" (qtd. in Newman). Regardless of the number of times it has supposedly died, irony has never truly lost its prominence in the pantheon of literary devices. In some senses, irony is the hydra of literary devices, not only refusing to die when its head is chopped off but also reasserting its dominance with greater force than ever.

Irony, more than many literary devices, has sparked vociferous debate about its relevance to and appropriateness in public discourse.[2] Defining irony might allow us to better appreciate the stakes in these perpetual debates, but even the act of defining the

device has sparked disagreement.[3] While studies of irony tend to begin with the disclaimer that there are too many possible definitions to enumerate them all, its most fundamental definition is that what is said is the opposite of what is meant; according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite" (1a). When a friend exclaims, "lovely day, isn't it?" during a downpour, or a colleague enthuses "that went well" after a particularly difficult meeting, we as interlocutors understand we cannot take these utterances at face value but rather must invert their meaning. In *Irony and the Ironic* D.C. Muecke identifies some of irony's common features present in most iterations: in crafting an ironic utterance the speaker contrasts what is said with what is meant and assumes his message will be understood, both conversational partners play active roles in constructing the utterance's meaning, and the interlocutor gains a sense of pleasure from recognizing this double meaning (35). In short, Muecke writes, irony has a corrective function in that it stabilizes the unstable and destabilizes the stable elements of society (4). I suggest that this contradiction of explicit and intended meaning also applies to written works as well: the reader must recognize that the author's message is the opposite of what he writes.

The third *OED* definition, "a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what was or might be expected," is perhaps more popular in contemporary popular culture and in literary studies. It mobilizes this the first sense of the term: the "utterance" unfolds over time, either through a novelistic description or in lived experience, and the reader gradually discovers that her expectations have been not just

violated but contradicted. The reader must then acknowledge the situation's unexpected outcome and reconcile her mistaken assumptions.

Satire is related to but distinct from irony. Northrop Frye writes in *The Anatomy of Criticism* that satire is militant irony because it is directed at an explicit target, includes invective, and requires humor (222). Irony is not necessarily funny (although it may be) and its "signals" are subtler than invective tends to be.[4] Parody is a distinct but related category, as it involves the exaggeration of a work's formal qualities not out of enthusiasm but out of a critique of the form itself, and like satire, parody is often funny. Humor thus factors into this conversation—Søren Kierkegaard posits that it is "irony taken to its maximum vibration," connecting them by degree rather than by kind (DD: 36 *KJN* 225). Given the overt signals to satire, parody, and humor, these devices have been analyzed more frequently than irony in world literature.

One of the most prominent disagreements about irony hinges on its tendency toward social disengagement: does an ironic standpoint enable the ironist to isolate himself from the society in which he lives? In other words, in using irony does he divest himself of social responsibility? This assertion is answered affirmatively by the fact that irony is a two-way process of communication or, as Linda Hutcheon notes in *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, that irony does not exist independently of communication but rather "happens" in shared "discursive communities" (Hutcheon 18). If the ironist assumes his reader understands him but the ironist does not ensure the reader's comprehension, in Hutcheon's view, then the ironist assumes an elitist position. Furthermore, the assumption establishes a hierarchy of listeners: in saying the opposite

of what he means, the ironist divides his readers into an "in-group" that recognizes the ironic utterance as such, and an "out-group" that does not grasp the intended meaning and thus is the ironist's victim. This perspective, frequently associated with German Romanticism and American modernism, valorizes the figure of the isolated ironist detached from his social milieu. Of course, while critics blame irony as an inherently solipsistic and hierarchical perspective, Hutcheon reminds us that people, not devices, are exclusionary, and thus that there is nothing inherently inclusive or exclusive about irony. That being said, many scholars, especially detractors of irony like Purdy and Wallace, view the device as one that enables anti-social and elitist attitudes.

A related debate centers on irony's intelligibility when an utterance circulates beyond the immediate context of its production to other cultures, languages, and eras. If irony "happens" in discursive communities, can it be adequately understood outside of the text's intended community of readers? Many scholars insist that in order for the message to be fully understood in its complexity, it must be confined to the context in which the author wrote; as Katharina Barbe writes in *Irony in Context*, "[t]he recognition of irony is culturally dependent and not globally unified. Sweeping statements are out of place … One important feature in the description or definition of irony is shared background knowledge or common experience" (5). At best, according to Barbe and others, readers grasp an academic appreciation of its meaning; at worst, they entirely miss a work's point. Removing native language fluency, shared historical references, and cultural idiosyncrasies decreases the likelihood that the ironic message will be understood and inhibits the distant reader's independent analysis of that

message. In this respect, irony's capacity for social engagement is limited because of its geographic and temporal specificity.

Despite its numerous death notices, irony is a vital if underrecognized device in works of world literature. Texts including, for example, Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q," Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, José Rizal's *Noli me Tángere*, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*, among others, highlight irony. Moreover, in most of these works the authors deploy the device to critique the society in which they live, suggesting its capacity for social engagement. If contemporary critics of irony are correct that the device is elitist, disengaged, and dying, what accounts for its enduring popularity in works of world literature? Furthermore, if irony can only be understood by the author's contemporaries, what accounts for its perennial popularity in the canon of world literature?

In this dissertation I reorient discussions of irony toward studies of world literature to better understand both its potential for social engagement and its intelligibility in circulation. Ultimately, I contend that controlled irony—Søren Kierkegaard's term for an ironic utterance in a literary work used to reveal an unrecognized contradiction what is said about a society and its actual values—is an ethical, socially engaged strategy present in many literary works. Moreover, this controlled irony is a device by which authors highlight their own cultural specificities to their readers; in this way, by reading works of world literature that contain such

moments, a reader can learn about the author's socio-historical concerns. I build on scholarly work by Yoon Sun Lee and Benedict Anderson, who propose that irony is a fundamental technique of national literatures, and Gloria Nne Onyeoziri and Nicole Simek, who explore irony's prominence in postcolonial literatures. I extend this analysis by demonstrating how this interrelationship between irony and socio-historical context can be both socially engaged and intelligible in the global marketplace. In short, my argument is that irony is a socially engaged literary device that facilitates inter-cultural understanding in literary texts as they are translated into different languages and published in different nations—in short, as they circulate in the global marketplace.

I divide the following chapters into two sections. The first is a theoretical examination of irony in twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary criticism in which I demonstrate the need to reorient our understanding of irony as a socially engaged device, despite past efforts that fell short of this goal. I begin, in Chapter One, with an analysis of previous attempts to characterize irony as an ethical perspective. Critics placed literary irony—which they conflated with paradox and ambivalence—at the heart of New Criticism and other Anglo-American schools of literary analysis, asserting that the device was integral to all "good" works of literature. In the next generation, deconstructionists attempted to refute formalist elitism by instead embracing the polyvalence of all language, foregrounding irony as a democratic device. Postcolonial theory and world literary analysis similarly celebrate linguistic indeterminacy, a strategy they deem "irony," as it resists claims of linguistic and cultural mastery

essential to imperialistic literature. However, these supposed reinventions of irony as an ethical device recapitulate formalist assumptions that the device is inherently hierarchical and thus negate claims about irony's ethics. These otherwise disparate theorists assert that a reader must have an adequate knowledge of the work's linguistic, cultural, and historical context to unravel the indirect utterance's meaning; those who do not have this information cannot fully understand the text. Moreover, this unspoken emphasis on the imperative for the reader's erudition forecloses the possibility of world literature. Previous attempts to reinvent irony have not only limited our understanding of the device, but also unnecessarily constrict the corpus of world literature.

An engaged definition of irony, I posit in Chapter Two, can be found instead in Søren Kierkegaard's magister dissertation *On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*. Based on my reading of this work in the original Danish, as well as his journals and other archival materials housed at St. Olaf College's Kierkegaard library, I contend that Kierkegaard proposes "controlled irony" as a literary device selectively deployed in a literary work to critique a society's unwillingness to confront the truth about its values. He alleges that people in some places and times, like his own Golden Age Copenhagen, are not honest about the society in which they live, but rather cling to comforting narratives that contradict their lived reality. Controlled ironic critique is uniquely capable of illuminating this dishonesty and is accessible to the reader through "clues," as Kierkegaard proposes. Drawing on a robust body of scholarship about irony's engagement in the social sphere—by Angelique Haugerud, John Evan Seery, Ross Chambers, Jennifer Bajorek, and others—I argue that irony's

reflection of contemporary socio-political concerns is an engaged approach, one that facilitates the author's contemporaries' social participation and can be intelligible in circulating works of literature. I develop Kierkegaard's theory of irony by demonstrating how these textual clues can foreground the socio-historical situation in which the author wrote, signaling to readers in different contexts the author's contemporary concerns. In this way, I propose that irony is not only intelligible in circulation, but also facilitates readers' understanding of a different context as the work circulates in the global marketplace.

The second section analyzes three case studies of controlled irony in world literature to demonstrate not only its engaged focus but also the device's intelligibility in circulation. In Chapter Three, I analyze Goethe's *Faust*, a text central to the canon of world literature in the field's current incarnation. In his epic verse-drama, Goethe uses controlled irony to reveal the inadequacies of German Lutheran doctrine in the late eighteenth century. Signaling his use of irony through the bawdy form of *Knittelvers* and through a distortion of the famous first verse of the gospel of John, the poet demonstrates the detrimental effects wrought by both emotionalism and intellectualism in the Lutheran Church.

While it is difficult to prove irony's intelligibility as a work circulates outside of its language, culture, and era of production, I argue that adaptation offers a clear indication of the way controlled irony is preserved as a formal strategy in the text. In Chapter Four, I examine how authors of world literature have adapted Goethe's source text, complete with its moments of controlled ironic critique. The fact that this specific

type of irony is preserved in adaptations suggests that the adapting authors understand controlled irony *as* social critique. Additionally, as in many meaningful adaptations, these authors alter the source text to differentiate their work, rather than merely retell the original. In adaptations of *Faust*, I contend that authors use Goethe's form of ironic critique and adapt the content to reflect their own socio-historical concerns. I then turn to an in-depth reading of two such adaptations, beginning with Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, in which the Russian dissident excoriates the Soviet state, to illustrate my claims. This fantastical novel rejects official literary culture and reveals the fictional nature of State-sponsored historical narratives and exposes the punishments for challenging official accounts. By creating a narrative in which Muscovites' daily lives are more fantastical than the biblical account of Jesus' crucifixion, the author indirectly calls into question Soviets' expectations about the veracity of State-sponsored history.

In Chapter Five, I offer another case study to support my claims: Harris's 1986 novel *The Infinite Rehearsal*, another adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, which positions controlled ironic critique in a postcolonial context. Like Bulgakov, Harris employs the formal framework of Goethe's text but alters its content to address the persistent myth of El Dorado in twentieth-century Guyanese politics. The storyline of Faust seeking salvation in the heart of the Mount of Folly ironically exposes the country's hopes, in the 1980s, that foreign investment in gold mining would reinvigorate the declining economy. Despite the vast cultural, linguistic, and historical differences separating each of these authors, their works use the framework of controlled irony to confront readers with disjunctures between social rhetorics and social realities, and in so doing these

works demonstrate not only irony's social engagement but also their intelligibility as they circulate in the global marketplace.

Several of these works are canonical texts of Western literature, which could be interpreted as my perpetuation of the Western bias of world literature. While I agree with this critique, I want to push back against it by acknowledging the liminal national positions from which Kierkegaard and Goethe wrote. First, while they lived in Western European countries (Denmark and Germany, respectively), neither country played a significant role in global politics or culture in the early nineteenth century. In his writings on world literature, Goethe laments the backwardness of the German states and asserts that German writers would benefit from learning about other national literary traditions ("Some Passages Pertaining to the Concept of World Literature" 6).[5] Moreover, in the mid-nineteenth century Denmark suffered military defeats by Sweden and Germany and was regarded as a cultural backwater of sorts (Kirmmse 21–22). In other words, neither Goethe's Germany nor Kierkegaard's Denmark were dominant in global politics or aesthetics, and we must recognize their works as coming from the margins of Europe. The contexts of Soviet Russia and postcolonial Guyana are (arguably) peripheral to Western hegemony in the mid-twentieth century.[6] Ultimately, I argue that all these texts, written in nationally and culturally peripheral spaces, complicate the field's Western focus.

This dissertation is, admittedly, comparative in its engagement with world literature, which I understand to be a mode of studying texts in circulation that attends to local particularities while simultaneously acknowledging cross-cultural themes. The

project, however, is harder to place in a "traditional" department of English literature, especially given the strict geographic and temporal categories by which most jobs are presently categorized. Therefore, I feel compelled to defend my choice of topic for a project in an English department. First, my analysis of irony is not limited to the context of world literature; while it offers an important mode of understanding how and why works circulate, reexamining irony's capacity for social engagement can help scholars better understand the device in other texts more traditionally associated with English-language literary canons. Put simply, my proposed reorientation of irony can apply to many different contexts and offers a more robust understanding of literature's socio-political engagement regardless of the language in which the work was written. Irony can also act as a potential point of departure—to use Erich Auerbach's term, an *Ansatzpunkt* (as I explore in depth in Chapter Two)—to literatures beyond English and in a diverse array of Englishes, thereby helping non-specialist readers, especially at the undergraduate level, begin to comprehend texts that are otherwise inaccessible to them.

Additionally, in the era of globalization it is difficult to argue for the "purity" of the global Anglophone canon. Given the frequency with which texts are translated and ideas transmitted across linguistic and national boundaries, scholars cannot continue to maintain that American or British texts are somehow independent of all other literary traditions. In this sense, acknowledging how works of literature circulate and influence others, and putting non-English texts into conversation with a canonical work of postcolonial literature written in English, articulates a view of the English department that more comprehensively captures the interrelation of literary traditions than does an

exclusively Anglophone canonical approach. Finally, and perhaps most pragmatically, in the assault on higher education, departments of comparative literature, languages, and area studies routinely have their budgets, FTE faculty lines, and required courses slashed, if not eliminated entirely. World literature is increasingly being assigned to departments of English literature, as the places where non-English texts would be taught are overextended, if operating at all. If we, as scholars of English literature, teach only texts originally written in English we are denying student access to fundamental works of literature. Practically speaking, world literature must feature more prominently in departments of English literature, and in this dissertation I hope to begin to show the mutual enrichment that can arise from seeing Anglophone and non-Anglophone works as complementary, not incommensurate, literatures.

Chapter One

The Ironic Enterprise:

Formalisms, Paradox, and Sedentary Canons

Irony has long been associated with literary modernism and formalist criticism (especially New Criticism); the entry on irony in M. H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms* ends by noting that the device is a central concern of many New Critics.[1] Later attempts to revolutionize literary interpretation, especially by scholars working in deconstruction and postcolonial theory, rejected formalism's empiricism, claims to objectivity, and closed system.[2] These subsequent theorists allege that formalist depictions of irony best represent this insularity, positing that this interpretation of the device enabled readers to stay within the text's system and not engage with the "outside world." Paul de Man sneers that formalist criticism is not attuned to lived realities but remains within the text: "because such patient and delicate attention was paid to the reading of forms, the critics pragmatically entered into the hermeneutic circle of interpretation, mistaking it for the organic circularity of natural processes" (29).[3] Formalist conceptions of irony are not genuinely ambiguous, in his understanding, but rather project an artificial indeterminacy on to the closed system of the text. De Man tries to reposition irony as an ethical device that facilitates readers' engagement with paradoxical ideas. Postcolonial critics extend deconstruction's claims by asserting that recognizing these paradoxes is a way to acknowledge the reality of life in postcolonial societies. Homi Bhabha, for example, argues in *The Location of Culture* that authors'

rejections of binary divisions, especially through literary irony, legitimize marginalized peoples and communities by troubling the totalizing rhetoric upon which colonial regimes rely.

Despite these attempts to reinvent literary irony as an engaged device, however, many theorists working in the deconstructive and postcolonial traditions recapitulate formalists' assumptions about irony that they claim to disavow. In making this argument I build on previous work by scholars who propose that formalisms have more in common with later schools of literary theory than is traditionally acknowledged, and I suggest that irony can illuminate these similarities.[4] According to both formalist critics and their ostensible antagonists, literary irony is ethical because it raises questions about a writer's ability to construct an objective depiction of reality. Through literary irony, authors (according to these critics) represent the full scope of human experience and acknowledge the importance of subjectivity in determining meaning, and in so doing democratizes the process of literary interpretation.

Tracing the persistence of formalist irony in these politically engaged approaches reveals that these ostensibly ethical literary critics perpetuate the same hierarchies as do the formalist critics against whom they write. In other words, the device is not accessible or democratic, but in each of these approaches its meaning can only be unraveled by the truly erudite reader. Ironic works thus create hierarchies of readers, with the all-knowing author at the apex, followed by those readers "in the know," and the "out-group" of readers with a limited understanding of these texts' indirect message. Rather than rejecting formalism outright, deconstructive and

postcolonial theorists depict irony in a way that reinforces the hierarchical and insular modes of reading they claim to destroy. In so doing, theorists from each of these traditions limit the number and type of works readers are able to adequately understand, making a genre like world literature all but impossible for the "average" reader, and thereby muting the ethical potential of literary irony.

This chapter traces the lineage of formalist irony in its various permutations in literary criticism, showing that any claims to radically remake of irony are overstated. I begin with a detailed examination of the features of formalist irony and explore its resonances in deconstruction and postcolonial and world literary theory.[5] The persistence of formalist conceptions of irony in subsequent schools of literary analysis, especially the continued equation of irony and ambiguity, paradoxically closes the literary worlds accessible to readers and perpetuates the elitist nature of literary analysis. Deconstruction and postcolonial theory not only failed to revolutionize the hierarchies of formalist irony, but also built its hierarchies into their fundamental assumptions about literary analysis. Irony is thus not revitalized as a democratic device of social engagement; it continues to function as an elitist, self-contained system throughout much of twentieth century Anglo-American literary criticism.

The Paradoxes of Anglo-American Formalism

In literary criticism, irony is frequently discussed in conjunction with modernism and its theoretical branch, New Criticism.[6] Indeed, irony (broadly defined) is a central device in Anglo-American formalist criticism in the mid-twentieth century,

even in scholarship by formalists who do not consider themselves New Critics, including the Chicago School Neo-Aristotelians, Wayne Booth, and Northrop Frye.[7] Given their similarities, especially irony's centrality to their modes of analysis, this chapter will discuss together these diverse thinkers and subgroups as "Anglo-American formalist criticism." Formalists held that the only way to articulate a meaningful view of modern life was through the juxtaposition of (often unresolvable) opposites, which they describe variously as "ambiguity," "tension," "paradox," and "irony." These theorists privilege irony in many different registers of a literary text—linguistic pluripotentiality, conceptual paradox, and depiction of a complex, often contradictory socio-historical context—and contend that irony must be included in all "good" works of literature. However, their overriding emphasis on irony, far from being a democratizing gesture that encourages readers' active engagement with a text, requires them to have great deal of cultural, historical, and linguistic knowledge to fully grasp a text.

Below I isolate each of these characteristics to better understand how they will later be preserved by deconstructive and postcolonial theorists, and how all of these seemingly disparate theoretical schools perpetuate irony as an elitist, opaque strategy that limits readers' literary horizons.

While formalists refer to the device by several different names, they describe its function in the same way: it preserves multiple meanings within one term or phrase.[8] Allen Tate, for example, uses the term "tension" to refer to the conflict between, and mutual dependence of, literal and metaphorical meaning that gives each word its

significance, while William Empson labels this same conflict "ambiguity," suggesting that multiple meanings are reconciled in different ways by the reader. Formalists also offered different understandings of *how* irony should function within a text. For example, while I. A. Richards and John Crowe Ransom argue that irony balances "complementary impulses" in the text without resolving them, Tate, Kenneth Burke, and Cleanth Brooks contend that these opposites are united under one poetic world-view.[9] Despite these differences, later critics unify these views about linguistic and conceptual ambiguity under the term "irony," as Frank Lentricchia explains in the preface to *After the New Criticism* (xiii).

Formalists contend that every word has many possible meanings beyond those intended by the author himself: they are tied to historical, etymological, and generic connotations or are discovered by the reader. W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley explain the pluripotentiality of language in their article "The Intentional Fallacy," a key text of New Criticism; they propose that multiple meanings can be gleaned through dictionary definitions (which can be contradictory), historically and societally specifically usages, and incidental juxtapositions. They laud this approach as a democratic one that makes literature accessible to all readers despite a reader's previous literary or historical knowledge.[10] In *The Structure of Complex Words* Empson notes that ambiguity, a property inherent in much language, "gives room for alternate reaction to the same piece of language … The fundamental situation … is that a word or grammatical structure is effective in several ways at once" (1, 2). For example, he explains, "delicate" can alternately be defined as "'delightful,' 'voluptuous,' 'self-

indulgent,' 'innocent,' 'effeminate,' 'fastidious,' … 'not coarse, not robust,' … and 'endowed with fineness of appreciation or execution'" (76). Moreover, Yvor Winters claims in "Preliminary Problems" that a term's associations "are affected by connotations due to various and curious accidents," including those on the page and those engendered by readers (*Praising It New* 79). Once the reader acknowledges these multiple meanings, she must determine which ones she feels are most appropriate in the given text. She could choose one meaning, through a subconscious process Empson describes as "reconciling" (240). Alternatively, she could refuse to restrict herself to one meaning and instead embrace the word's indeterminacy. Empson suggests that all these possible meanings come together "as if with an explosion, to make sense and accept the main meaning of a connection of phrases" (*Structure* 240). In this sense the word's multiple meanings, contradictory and similar alike, cohere in the word: the unity of these disparate meanings is ironic, in that one definitive term belies the existence of multiple meanings; ambiguous, in that many meanings are valid; and paradoxical, in that many of these meanings contradict one another.

Irony extends linguistic ambiguity to the text's conceptual level; the pluripotentiality of meaning is present in a literary work in each word, sentence, and theme.[11] Irony is uniquely capable of uniting many different ideas, individuals, and phenomena. As Richards contends in *Principles of Literary Criticism*, "[i]rony in this sense consists in the bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses" (250), and in *The Well Wrought Urn* Brooks explains that "irony is our most general term for indicating that the recognition of incongruities—which, again, pervades all poetry to a

degree far beyond what our conventional criticism has been heretofore willing to allow" (209–210).[12] In this sense, the Anglo-American formalists connect irony with conceptual ambiguity and paradox as they all incorporate opposing viewpoints in their very structures.[13] As with linguistic indeterminacy, Richards and other formalist critics do not require these opposing perspectives to be resolved, either by synthesizing them dialectically or by choosing one over another. Rather, they encourage the continued coexistence of opposites within the same sphere, idea, or work. As the "equilibrium of opposed impulses," in Richards's words, or an unresolved "human conflict" in Northrop Frye's definition, irony allows for, and encourages, divergent ideas to coexist without the explicit need for authorial resolution.[14]

Irony is valuable in formalist criticism for two reasons, one aesthetic and one societal. First, many formalist critics esteem implicit over explicit meaning; Wimsatt contends that figurative language, including irony, is more descriptive than concrete language (*The Verbal Icon* 133).[15] Booth similarly proposes that the reader's awareness of these multiple meanings evokes a sense of pleasure in the reader (128). In this account, this understanding of meaning-making as an aesthetically valuable process of sifting through many possible meanings is a key premise of Anglo-American formalism. Indeed, in "Irony as a Principle of Structure" Brooks contends that "direct statement leads to abstraction and threatens to take us out of poetry altogether" (1). Indirect communication is a subtler, more artistic mode of expression that allows the reader to stay immersed in the world of the text.

Second, many formalists suggest that the representation of unresolved opposites is a more faithful depiction of the contradictions, nuances, and paradoxes of daily life than is direct description. In this way, irony connects formalist texts to their socio-historical contexts, a perspective that contradicts postcolonial critics' assertions that New Criticism jettisons the outside world. Brooks believes this view of irony to be true because the poet's task is "finally to unify experience. He must return to us the unity of the experience itself as man knows it in his own experience. The poem, if it be a true poem is a simulacrum of reality … by *being* an experience rather than any mere statement about experience or any mere abstraction from experience" (212–13). Each text is a microcosm of reality and must encompass diverging experiences in an "organically related whole" to adequately reflect lived reality. Additionally, Burke explains in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* that contradiction is fundamental to "human psychology, not merely as error but for sound biological reasons" (244). These reasons include, and are particularly influenced by, the contradictions of life in twentieth-century capitalist societies; if the poet is shaped by his environment, his output will necessarily be influenced by the inherent contradictions of capitalism, including the tension between the aesthetic (vocational) and practical (vocational) spheres (244, 248).[16] Furthermore, Tate proposes that "[p]oetry makes us [as readers] more conscious of the complexity and meaning of our experience" (24). Readers are better able to appreciate the full scope of the society in which they live by reading an ironic text. To put it differently, as Burke notes in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, "true knowledge can only be attained through the battle" of analyzing different

meanings and attempting to navigate contradictory meanings (149). The alternative to such multifaceted depictions, according to Empson, is propaganda, not art.

To adequately understand these linguistic ambivalences and conceptual paradoxes, however, readers must have a thorough knowledge of the language and context in which the text was written. To use Empson's example, understanding the term "delicate" as used in a novel requires the reader to not only understand the dictionary definitions but also to possess a culturally and historically specific awareness of the term's uses. A contemporary example might be the term "meme": it certainly encompasses its dictionary definitions, Richard Dawkin's term for a gene expression that adapts over time, and the digital mode of communication involving images and interchangeable pithy phrases. Deeper understanding of this word requires knowledge of democratic digital platforms like Reddit, on which memes flourish; the use and transformation of a specific set of images overlaid with different phrases; and the appropriation of certain images for political purposes.

In emphasizing ambiguity and paradox, formalist criticism, despite its emphasis on democratic access to texts, ignores that readers must have substantial contextual knowledge to interpret a work of literature, especially familiarity with the socio-historical context in which the work was written. These unspoken prerequisites inhibit readers' meaningful engagement with texts written in other languages, places, and times. Many readers cannot access this information on the scale necessary to adequately access and assess ambiguity in works from these different contexts. In short, formalists' focus on irony, ambiguity, and paradox restricts readers' access even

to texts written in their own cultural milieu. Works composed outside of those parameters, then, are all but indecipherable to non-specialist readers under these conditions.

Reconstructed Irony: Formalism, Deconstruction, and Paradox

Despite its avowed differences from formal criticism, literary deconstruction preserves many components of New Criticism's version of irony; this persistence, despite claims to the contrary, solidifies formalistic elitism and hermeticism, and narrows the available corpus of texts to which readers have access. Surveying all literary deconstruction to show the full extent of irony's influence is beyond the confines of this chapter, so I use two examples to demonstrate my argument: Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida, who shaped the development of the field and continue to influence contemporary literary theory. Both contend that irony, paradox, and the juxtaposition of opposites are inherent to language and to literature, and propose that it is the critic's task to uncover and unravel these ironies.

De Man describes his approach to literary analysis in opposition to formalism. In his essay "The Dead-End of Formalist Criticism," he explains his opposition to the earlier generation of literary critics, contending that the intentional fallacy, combined with "the totalizing principle of the guiding impulse of the critical process," leads to paralysis (32). This paralysis is not a reflection of the natural world but rather the creation of "a discontinuous world of reflective irony and ambiguity" that vacillates into infinity (28). De Man's problem is not with the inward, reflexive turn, but with the fact

that this reflexivity cannot offer the reader the opportunity to create meaning from her experience with the text.[17] But even as de Man claims to reject formalism and revolutionize literary criticism, his view of irony as literary device and worldview shares many characteristics with Anglo-American formalism.

Like formalist criticism, deconstruction emphasizes the indeterminacy of language. In some ways, the deconstructive view of language amplifies the formalists' position on linguistic ambiguity, a contention most clearly illustrated in de Man's *Blindness and Insight*. He proposes that all "social language" is necessarily indirect as human desires "are, in the fullest sense of the term, unnameable" and further contends that "unmediated expression is a philosophical impossibility" (9). Human expression of all kinds, and especially written expression, is, paradoxically, an attempt to voice ineffable desires; literature is the combination of truth (those desires) and falsehood (the impossibility of accurately conveying them) (ix). The paradoxical nature of human expression, inescapable but unresolved, shares many of the same underlying ideas of formalist critics' claims that irony, as the combination of unresolved opposites, is the most faithful way to represent reality.

For de Man, the only way to gain insight into language is to empty language of inherent meaning and instead to focus on incidental meanings created in and through discourse (106, 141).[18] This meaning is created in two distinct ways, within language itself and as a product of the reader's subjectivity and contextuality.[19] First, he holds that all words contain within themselves multiple meanings, so all words and texts contain within themselves the ambiguities necessary to deconstruct themselves, a

contention analogous to Empson's claims in *The Structure of Complex Words* and Wimsatt and Beardsley's assertions about the pluripotentiality of language in "The Intentional Fallacy." In this emphasis on the inherent ambiguities of each word and text, de Man agrees with formalist critics that each text holds multiple contradictory meanings that can only be deciphered through context. Stable meaning is impossible; any attempts to discern one is "based on a duplicity within the self that willfully creates a confusion between literal and symbolic action in order to achieve self-transcendence as well as self-preservation" (113).

De Man's understanding of linguistic ambiguity is, as in formalist criticism, closely related to irony and paradox. In his essay "The Concept of Irony," he proposes that literary irony is a mobilization of paradox, the process of endlessly vacillating between two opposing poles of meaning. He illustrates this idea with the example of Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*, particularly the chapter "*Eine Reflexion*." This chapter is depicted as a philosophical treatise, but as de Man notes, "it doesn't take a very perverse mind, only a slightly perverse one, to see that what is actually being described is … a reflection on the very physical questions involved in sexual intercourse" (168). These readings are not just different but, as he claims, are "radically incompatible with each other. They interrupt, they disrupt, each other in such a fundamental way that this very possibility of disruption represents a threat to all assumptions one has about what a text should be" (169). Juxtaposing these two paradoxical scripts rejects all claims to totality and instead demonstrates, "by the undoing of the work, the absolute toward which the work is under way" (183). Put differently, if paradox is the recognition and

unification of two antithetical concepts, irony is the process of vacillating between the two poles in a "permanent parabasis" (179).

To offer a more concrete example, de Man suggests that defining irony depends on the tension between the possibility and impossibility of comprehension. He explains: "If indeed irony is tied with the possibility of understanding, then [any] project of understanding irony is doomed from the start because, if irony is of understanding, … what is at stake in irony is the possibility of understanding, the possibility of reading, the readability of texts, the possibility of deciding on *a* meaning or on a multiple set of meanings or on a controlled polysemy of meaning" (166–167, emphasis de Man's). De Man amplifies the stakes of his formalist predecessors' views of linguistic ambiguity and paradox: while the formalists see the coexistence of opposing ideas as an accurate representation of social totality, de Man instead suggests that this opposition negates the possibility of totality in the first place.

Derrida also emphasizes irony as linguistic ambiguity and paradox, similarly to de Man and to the Anglo-American formalists. Linguistic indeterminacy is a central component of Derridean deconstruction theory, especially evident in the unraveling of the "ordered polysemy" of *pharmakon* in "Plato's Pharmacy." For Derrida, *pharmakon* is a term that resists stable definition and encapsulates a "malleable unity" of various meanings (71), including paradoxical ideas like "remedy" and "poison," "petrification" and "vivification," and "nonidentity-within-itself" (71, 119).[20] Readers do not choose between these meanings; rather, Derrida asserts that all these terms coexist

simultaneously. In unearthing and unraveling these paradoxical pairings, the reader enriches her experience of the text.

The idea that multiple paradoxes are encapsulated within one term parallels de Man's description of linguistic ambivalence and formalist conceptions of the pluripotentiality of language, especially because Derrida also rejects the idea of authorial intent (as *pharmakon*, like all terms, is "caught in a chain of significations" beyond the author's intended meaning [*Dissemination* 95]). In her "Translator's Preface" to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak begrudgingly notes the similarities between Derrida's approach and that of formalist criticism:

> [T]he text belongs to language, not to the sovereign and generating author. (New Criticism, although it vigorously argued the self-enclosure and 'organic unity' of the text, and indulged in practice in the adulation of the author, had a sense of this last insight in its critique of the 'intentional fallacy.') Derrida, questioning the unity of language itself … radically opens up textuality. (xcvii)

While Derrida and Spivak emphasize the radicality of Derrida's thought, particularly the way he grants the reader power to navigate liminal, paradoxical spaces, his view on linguistic indeterminacy, like formalist criticism, challenges the intentional fallacy and celebrates the reader's negotiation of opposing meanings.

These ideas complicate a term's, and a text's, very existence; the paradox inherent in *pharmakon* is the play of presence and absence, the necessity of keeping out that which is identical to itself (128). The term itself is a paradoxical unity of existence

and impossibility. For Derrida, the multiple meanings of each term are important only when they are allowed to coexist with, and threaten, one another. Choosing any one meaning over the others forecloses the possibilities of other meanings and makes impossible any significant discussion of a term or text. In this way Derrida claims that interpretive translations of *pharmakon* are inadequate because they "violently destroy" the ambiguities of the term, and the chosen interpretive term "forbids itself access to" other meanings of *pharmakon* (99). For example, translating *pharmakon* as *remedy*

> … erases, in going outside the Greek language, the other pole reserved in the word *pharmakon*. It cancels out the resources of ambiguity and makes more difficult, if not impossible, an understanding of the context. As opposed to "drug" or even "medicine," remedy says the transparent rationality of science, technique, and therapeutic causality, thus excluding from the text any leaning toward the magic virtues of a force whose effects are hard to master, a dynamic that constantly surprises the one who tries to manipulate it as master and as subject. (97)

Interpretive translations limit the possibilities of a word's signification and its connections to human experiences and thus can never capture the complexities of the original word. They impoverish the text and, with it, the reader's experience.

Irony, according to Derrida, is the process of reading paradoxical meanings in contact with one another:

> Irony does not consist in the dissolution of a sophistic charm or in the dismantling of an occult substance or power through analysis and

> questioning. It does not consist in undoing the charlatanesque confidence of a *pharmakeus* from the vantage point of some obstinate insistence of transparent reason or innocent *logos*. Socratic irony precipitates out one *pharmakon* by bringing it in contact with another *pharmakon*. Or rather, it reverses the *pharmakon's* powers and turns *its* surface over—thus taking effect, being recorded and dated, in the act of *classing* the *pharmakon*, through the fact that the *pharmakon* properly consists in a certain inconsistency, a certain impropriety, this nonidentity-within-itself always allowing it to be turned against itself. (119, emphasis Derrida's)

These paradoxes, unraveled in the process of literary interpretation, do not nullify but rather enrich one another.

These paradoxical unities are predicated on *différance*, Derrida's neologism referring to both the deferring and the differing of meaning. The first element of *différance* is the disappearance of an originating force ("Plato's Pharmacy" 167), which allows all possible meanings of a word to coexist at the same level of importance and significance. Additionally, these meanings are united and mutually constituting. As Derrida writes in "Plato's Pharmacy":

> *Différance*, the disappearance of any originary presence, is *at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of the impossibility of truth. At once. "At once" means that the being-present (*on*) in its truth, in the presence of its identity and in the identity of its presence, *is doubled* as

> soon as it appears, as soon as it presents itself. *It appears, in its essence, as* the possibility of its own most proper non-truth, of its pseudo-truth reflected in the icon, the phantasm, or the simulacrum. (168, emphasis Derrida's)

This unity of opposing meanings, of their mutual constitution, extends and amplifies the formalist insistence that all language and literature necessarily hold in tension opposing elements.

Derrida further claims that it is impossible to mediate between or reconcile paradoxical terms; rather, the act of moving between two extremes is the essential component of knowledge production. Derrida's writings on untranslatability emphasize the reader's active role in constituting meaning, a further commonality with formalist criticism and its rejection of the intentional fallacy. The notion of "untranslatable" words or sentences does not refer solely to linguistic translation, although that could be one element of a text's untranslatability; rather, it refers to the fact that a text could possibly mean several different things, even if it is interpreted by a linguistically and culturally fluent reader. One example Derrida provides in *Aporias* is the phrase *Il y va d'un certain pas*, which could mean several different things: it could emphasize the subject of the sentence (*il*), the gait at which he is going to a place (*d'un certain pas*), or the double play of *pas* as both "way/gait" and "not" (9–10). The point, for Derrida, is not to choose between possible meanings, but to recognize that the sentence rejects one-to-one equivalences between a term and its signifier and instead embraces the ambiguity of all meaning. The reader's task is then to navigate and negotiate between these

possible meanings, gleaning sense from the phrase's context but also analyzing the meanings that arise in the juxtaposition of these opposing translations. In other words, while the phrase is inherently ambiguous, the reader must find meanings that arise from the text.

In *Aporias* Derrida further illustrates this idea in lived experience, using the example of national border lines. A nation needs to acknowledge, welcome, and assimilate immigrants, but also to distinguish those native-born citizens from more recent arrivals (18). He offers the example of European nations' position of welcoming others as both an altruistic and self-serving gesture. Many European nations invite foreigners "in order not only to integrate them but also to recognize and accept their alterity: two concepts of hospitality that today divide our European and national consciousness" (qtd. in *Aporias* 18). Derrida contends that it is in and through this paradox that we, as nations (and as selves) articulate how we are distinct from, yet dependent upon, our others for our continued existence. In his view, borders symbolize the unresolvable opposition between the self and other, as the self depends on the other for its very existence and thus no longer can be opposed to the other.

Deconstruction, particularly in de Man's and Derrida's writings, perpetuates the same hierarchical approach to literary analysis it purports to reject in Anglo-American formalist criticism. De Man and Derrida proclaim their emphases on paradox to differ from the totalizing claims to representation celebrated by the formalist critics, instead jettisoning the notion that human life can be fully represented. Despite these claims to

innovation, they unwittingly solidify formalistic claims about linguistic, and lived, contradictions.

Much of the analysis de Man and Derrida advocate requires the reader to have extensive background knowledge of etymology, history, language, and culture. For example, Derrida's reading of *pharmakon* relies on his reading of the term in Greek in the historical context of Socrates' execution by the state. If the reader does not possess his knowledge of the linguistic and historical context, her engagement with the text will be much more limited or, perhaps, almost entirely stymied. Thus de Man's and Derrida's modes of literary analysis reject the possibility that non-specialists can adequately understand texts that circulate outside of their context of production. As with formalist criticism, thorough analysis of a text is reserved for readers with knowledge of the language, culture, and era in which the text was written, making a category like world literature impossible at best.

Global Unintelligibility: Irony and the Ethics of Paradox in World Literature

Postcolonial and world literary critics emphasize literature's contextuality and social engagement, analyze how writers represent formerly colonized nations, and argue for the importance of discussing works written by marginalized peoples. Their analyses, as Fredric Jameson notes in *The Political Unconscious*, are bound up in community identity and politics and seem to have little in common with formalist criticism.[21] While postcolonial and world literary theorists foreground the impulse of social engagement in their work, their reliance on formalist and deconstructive irony

inhibits the fulfillment of that engagement. Many foreground irony as paradox as a central mode of literary expression, a focus that connects postcolonial theory to formalism; in this way, irony continues to circumscribe interpretive practice. Adequately interpreting irony, especially in translated texts, and often are politically and socially engaged, requires the reader to have the necessary linguistic and cultural fluency to unpack ironic expressions. The conditions for fulfilling the social engagement for which these works call are reserved for the elite few who can adequately interpret works of world literature.

While postcolonial theory and world literary theory are two distinct modes of interpretation, sometimes opposed to one another, they share some crucial similarities. I do not minimize the substantial differences between the two approaches, especially given the antagonism between postcolonial theory and historical discussions of world literature. Many critics of world literature argue that *Weltliteratur*, especially as Goethe described it in *Über Kunst und Alterthum* and his personal correspondence, is Eurocentric and excludes texts from the "global periphery." Even in his sympathetic description of Goethe's fragments on *Weltliteratur*, Christopher Prendergast acknowledges the relevance of these critiques: "While it would be absurd to accuse Goethe of a kind of blind Eurocentrism (given the extraordinary sensitivity with which he entered into the spirit of Persian and Chinese literatures), in several of the fragments there is what appears to be a virtual identification of world literature with European literature" ("World Republic of Letters" 3). These critiques are certainly valid but tend to refer to the field's focus in the past rather than the possibilities it affords to future

criticism. Goethe's comments about world literature emphasize the possibilities for intercultural understanding and appreciation made possible through the circulation of texts. As he proposes in *Über Kunst und Alterthum*, the circulation of texts in other languages and nations offers a better understanding of its nation and culture of origin: "the idea is not that the nations shall think alike, but that they shall learn how to understand each other, and, if they do not care to love one another, at least that they will learn to tolerate one another" (*Comparative Literature: The Early Years* 8). Moreover, as a work re-circulates back to the location in which it was written and first published, the culture of origin learns more about itself through understanding how it was received in other cultures and languages (8).

While idealistic, Goethe's view of world literature as a vehicle for mutual respect and understanding between different cultures aligns with postcolonial theory's stated goals of making legible the experiences of individuals and nations in the formerly colonized world. As Simon Gikandi notes in "Realism, Romance, and the Problem of African Literary History," postcolonial literary works—Gikandi specifically mentions those written during the Bengali Renaissance and African decolonization—aim to authentically represent people's lived experiences in the former colonies, reclaiming a sense of legitimacy for their own experiences and conveying them to readers unfamiliar with that context. In this sense, postcolonial literature and criticism embodies Goethe's hopes for world literature; taken at their best, both foster a sense of cross-cultural understanding and encourage respect for a nation on its own terms. In this chapter I take together these theoretical approaches as a means of comparing postcolonial and

world literatures' emphasis on social, cultural, and historical context with formalism's insularity.

In his seminal monograph *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha purports to reinvent irony as an ethical mode of marginal expression, but his description of the device shares many characteristics with formalist irony's elitism. All knowledge is the process and product of constructing meaning out of two opposing ideas. Rather than synthesizing this knowledge, choosing one option, or compromising between them, Bhabha echoes de Man in his assertion that that the process of vacillation is the meaningful moment of human life. He writes: "The 'true' is always marked and informed by the ambivalence of the process of emergence itself, the productivity of meanings that construct counter-knowledges *in medias res*, in the very act of agonism, within the terms of a negotiation (rather than a negation) of oppositional and antagonistic elements" (33). Bhabha contends that the paradoxes of human experience do not need to be resolved, and indeed they cannot be resolved; put differently, the point of human experience is the struggle to make meaning, rather than the product of that struggle.

Bhabha illustrates the ethical potential of these unresolvable paradoxes by showing its relevance to, and importance for, writers in formerly colonized nations. For Bhabha, irony and paradox pervade all works of literature, both at the semantic and structural levels, and he argues that the ambivalence and liminality of all forms of postcolonial expression complicate the false binaries of contemporary Western culture, including the juxtaposition of the private and public spheres and the past and the present

(14, 19). Bhahba asserts that recognizing ambiguity in lived experience is a political strategy. As writers navigate between two opposed categories of lived existence—public and private, truth and falsehood, past and present, familiar and foreign, inside and outside—they resist binary logic. For example, in an interpretation of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story*, Bhabha asserts that an "intimacy" exists between juxtaposed poles that "represents a hybridity, a difference 'within,' a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality" (19). This hybridity "contests the terms and territories of both" opposed stable categories (41). Rejecting binaries and acknowledging multiple possibilities is an ethical process, according to Bhabha, because it encourages an empathy and cross-cultural understanding not possible in identity politics: "To live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and splitting performed in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity: 'I am looking for the join … I want to join … I want to join'" (26–27). The rejection of binaries is an important way to recognize, and develop solidarity with, marginalized cultures. Bhabha contends that depicting these interstitial places, especially in the so-called "third world," has ethical ramifications in politics and cross-cultural understanding.

Some theories of world literature are similarly founded on a belief in linguistic ambiguity and in the importance of preserving paradox in literature. Emily Apter's writings, both in *The Dictionary of Untranslatables* and in *Against World Literature*, illustrate this approach. Where Bhabha emphasizes the cultural paradoxes of postcolonial expression, Apter analyzes the linguistic ambiguities that are produced and

imperiled by the process of literary circulation and translation. She argues that all meaning is linguistically, culturally, and historically contextual, a contention with which I do not disagree; however, following Derrida, she contends that some terms are untranslatable because they have been imbued with multiple meanings that cannot be captured by one translated term.[22] *The Dictionary of Untranslatables,* Apter's adapted translation of Barbara Cassin's *Le Vocabulaire européens des philosophies: dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, assembles many different definitions and connotations of each entry in the same place, not giving primacy to any meaning but instead showing how one term encapsulates very different, sometimes paradoxical, ideas. Apter emphasizes the importance of recognizing these many possible meanings and holding them in tension with one another.[23]

For example, Apter explores of the title of Immanuel Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* ("Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project"), parsing the meaning of *ewig* as both "perpetual" and "eternal," to show how a term can incorporate multiple meanings. *Ewig* has political and religious connotations, and Apter explains how each meaning alters Kant's argument. In one sense, *ewig* "sounds a distinctly ecclesiastic note typical of liturgical expressions … *Ewig* in this sense is a word destined to culminate in the Christian belief in eternal bliss (*Seligkeit*)" (132–133). In another sense, the phrase has secular connotations: "If we go back to the standard translation of *ewiger Friede* as 'perpetual peace,' the word peace is framed from the perspective of property … To have peace in perpetuity would then be comparable to possessing a right to own some piece of peace; to have a stake in it, as

one might in a trust, or testate, or commodity future" (134). To complicate matters further, Apter suggests that "peace is valued as a form of negative liberty—freedom from conflict, a mode of stasis," particularly the absence of unbalanced political fights (135). These multiple connotations offer different lenses through which readers interpret the essay: attending to these meanings "frames the word 'peace' in relation to ongoing debates around stasis, faction, and civil war. It highlights temporal and cosmological dimensions of what peace might mean (a politics of eternity or infinitude?), and it raises the question of what peace-brokering aims to achieve if its purview is restricted to the world of humans" (131–132). This one term can include various connotations, and recognizing these multiple possibilities enriches and complicates the meaning of the term and of Kant's text as a whole.

Attempting to translate untranslatable words reveals the futility of expressing multiple connotations with one equivalent term in translation. According to Apter, an untranslatable term is "an incorruptible or intransigent nub of meaning that triggers endless translating in response to its resistant singularity" (235). Choosing one meaning simultaneously forecloses and opens up the possibility of meaning itself. While this approach is Derridean in inspiration, her emphasis on the pluripotentiality of language, especially the encapsulation of unresolvable opposites in a term, shares much with Anglo-American formalism, particularly Empson's, Tate's, and others' argument that one word signifies several ideas at once. Like Bhabha, Apter distinguishes her approach from formalist criticism by emphasizing the socio-historical embeddedness of each term. That being said, she (like her formalist predecessors) contends that

understanding the full range of potential meanings is vastly more important than the choice between them.

Moreover, Apter's idea of "world literature" is paradoxical in its goal of negotiating the binary categories of global and national literatures. For example, Cassin posits that world literature depends upon linguistic idiosyncrasies only possible through national production and the "global culture" made possible through global capitalism (39).[24] In other words, Cassin and Apter propose that world literature is not possible without distinctive local literatures, but simultaneously depends upon the market's homogenization of culture and literature through globalization.[25] This approach to world literature includes the same type of paradox as do formalist descriptions of literary irony in that contradictory elements are preserved, rather than sublated. Although Apter's reliance on the concept of Untranslatability purports resists the "bulimic" drive of world literature to encapsulate all texts, at the same time it paradoxically incorporates a variation of this bulimic impulse in its recognition of global literary culture and simultaneous preservation of national difference (3).[26]

To adequately understand Bhabha's examples of ambivalence, or Apter's untranslatable terms, a reader must once again have a great deal of cultural, political, historical, and linguistic knowledge. In other words, for a reader to fully appreciate the ethical valences of Gordimer's *My Son's Story* she must be aware of the colonial history of South Africa, the development of Apartheid, the anti-Apartheid movement, and the contested role of the English language in South Africa, among other social contexts. In this account, Gordimer's novel can only truly resonate for South African readers or

those who are intimately knowledgeable about the culture. That is not to say that readers without this knowledge cannot appreciate Gordimer's text, but rather that an awareness of the work's socio-political relevance is exclusive to specialists. Apter's and Bhabha's continued insistence on ambivalence undercuts their understanding of the purposes of literary irony; put differently, when full understandings of textual ambiguities are reserved for an elite few, fewer readers can develop social solidarity. To use Bhabha's phrase, while we can look for the join, we cannot find it. Although they attempt to emphasize a text's socio-politial and historical context, Apter and Bhabha carry forward the same types of literary analysis proposed by the formalists, albeit in a different guise—rather than examining the ambiguity of a word in a closed system, the reader of postcolonial texts is required to unravel its semantic and thematic ambiguities in a specific historical, linguistic, and social context.

Unethical Irony

Irony, together with linguistic ambivalence and conceptual paradox, is the central device in the otherwise divergent schools of formalism, deconstruction, and postcolonial and world literary theory. The device's similar role in each of these approaches is compelling not because later theorists consciously echo these formalist tenets, but rather because these ostensibly different schools articulate similar understandings of irony's definition and function. The notion that irony reflects the ambiguities of lived experience hinders the device's potential for social engagement. If irony passively mirrors the contradictions of human experience, rather than critiquing

them or offering alternatives, ironic literary works simply look down upon society from a superior position and are unable to do anything other than reproduce social totality. This position is succinctly articulated in Ezra Pound's charge against Jules Laforgue's writing: the "delicate irony" in his work is "the citadel of the intelligent" ("Irony, Laforgue, and Some Satire" 94). Put differently, the great Modernist (contradictorily enough, especially given his reliance on irony in his own works) lambastes Laforgue's irony for its elitist conception of knowledge and the limited access thereto. As irony continues to be characterized in the same manner in subsequent schools of literary criticism, it will continue to be a disengaged device.

This view of irony has serious implications for the scope and methods of literary analysis, more broadly speaking. First, the ambivalence of language limits the number and type of literary texts to which a reader has meaningful access. In order to have full philological, etymological, social, and historical knowledge of any term, the reader must be well educated in the language in which the author wrote, as well as in the philosophy and literary history with which its author is familiar. As the entry on *Geist* in *The Dictionary of Untranslatables* shows, to properly understand the nuances of the term a reader would have to have knowledge of German, to be able to distinguish between *Geist* and other synonyms, to be aware of other words traditionally associated with *Geist,* and so on, to be able to arrive at the level of knowledge Apter contends is necessary for meaningful literary interpretation. Such knowledge is not always, or fully, available to non-specialist readers.

Translations pose a related problem. While Apter, Lawrence Venuti (in his foundational work *The Scandals of Translation*), Spivak, and others hold that translation can provide some level of intelligibility from which analysis or interpretation can occur, they insist that translation simultaneously closes off the work's original pluripotentiality, especially if translation is understood as direct duplication rather than the creation of a different literary work. Derrida's understanding of linguistic and conceptual translation also requires of the reader a thorough knowledge of the language of composition and of etymology or philosophical history in order to properly understand a text. Few readers can properly recognize and interpret these ambiguities, meaning that the full scope of literary analysis is only available to erudite readers. We can see how easily irony gains the reputation of being insular and hierarchical.

Not only is linguistic and philological knowledge essential to literary interpretation, so too is cultural knowledge. While few would deny that a reader should learn about a text's historical and cultural context, linguistic ambivalence and conceptual paradox require a reader to be fluent in the history, norms, and customs of the author's "home" culture. Recognizing the presence of cultural paradoxes requires a high level of cultural fluency, an argument especially clear in Bhabha's essay "DissemiNation." His understanding of collective identity as a "people" describes the emergence of an identity

> … within a range of discourses as a double narrative movement … the people are historical "objects" of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted

> historical origin *in the past*; the people are also the "subjects" of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process. (209, emphasis Bhabha's)

Recognizing these constituting factors of national identity, both as lived experience and as past representation, requires more than a base level of cultural knowledge; it demands of the reader a deep understanding of colonial history, nationalist movements, and their associated rhetorics. Readers without this broad and deep knowledge would not only miss the nuances of a text that purports to represent the life of a people, they would also negate the political and social impact of postcolonial works. Bhabha's description of hybridity and postcolonial agency, engendered from paradox, means that these works are all but inaccessible to many readers. Works could only be interpreted by the author's temporal, cultural, and linguistic peers if they are to retain their full social and political impact. Bhabha's understanding of irony and the agency of ambiguous expression, then, further limits the type of works to which readers have access.

The reliance on paradox and unresolved opposition in formalism, deconstruction, and postcolonial criticism limits the possibility of world literature, as defined in its current Goethean incarnation. As David Damrosch explains in *What Is World Literature?* the term can refer to a number of different things: a body of texts

(emphasized in earlier descriptions of the field, the "great books" approach), a mode of reading (typically associated with Franco Moretti), and a process of literary circulation (as described in Pascale Casanova's *World Republic of Letters*). Damrosch attempts to incorporate the various facets of this definition, and he explains the three tenets he sees as integral to the field: world literature is "an elliptical refraction of national literatures … writing that gains in translation, … and not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time" (281). While Damrosch's description of world literature may lead to oversimplification, particularly on the emphasis he places on "universal values" throughout the text, he does emphasize that world literature is culturally and temporally specific and that through circulation readers gain a nuanced understanding of the world described in the text. All three components of his definition are made extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, if examined through the above discussions of irony. Readers, ranging from undergraduates to scholars trained in departments of English literature, would likely not have the level of knowledge required by these theories to understand a work in translation and circulation, much less analyze it. In this sense, the emphasis all three theoretical approaches place on irony as paradox perpetuates the elitism of literary criticism and further ossifies the hierarchies the formalists were trying to escape, between erudite and uneducated readers, those who are able to comprehend and interpret paradox and those who are not. This approach limits the possibility of world literature and further precludes irony's social engagement.

In literary theory, irony is restricted to one definition, that of linguistic ambivalence and the juxtaposition of opposites, that resonates in different schools of literary theory from the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This monolithic understanding of what irony is and how it functions in literary expression limits the number and types of texts to which readers have access—in this understanding readers can only adequately interpret those works produced in their own cultural, historical, and linguistic context, which means that works cannot be meaningfully read in translation or circulation. However, it is not necessary to limit irony in this way. Indeed, in the next chapter I argue for a redefinition of irony as a socially engaged mode of ethical critique during specific historical moments and as a literary device that is essential to world-historical development. Reorienting the definition of irony opens the process of literary analysis to a much broader audience and even makes possible the idea of irony in translation and circulation. In short, irony's restriction to the formalist definition is an arbitrary one; alternate descriptions of the device show how it makes literature accessible and how it plays a role in socio-historical development.

Chapter Two

Earnest Eirons:

Ethical Indirection in World Literature

Given the fact that irony, despite the many professed reinventions of the device, continues to refer to a paradoxical and disengaged stance, theorists of world literature and postcolonial literature would be forgiven for dismissing irony out of hand as a meaningful trope and perspective for world literature. If a reader needs extensive linguistic, cultural, and historical knowledge to exactly decipher the twentieth-century ironies described in Chapter One, claims to this extensive knowledge dangerously approach the notion of mastery. Any reader's claims of mastery are highly contentious in world literature, evoking imperialist rhetorics of the "civilized" colonizers' ability to comprehend the rudimentary literary output of colonized peoples, regardless of the author's or reader's nationality. Through this lens, Timothy Brennan's assertion that modernist irony is antithetical to the values of world literature makes perfect sense. This type of irony, as Brennan defines it, is an aesthetic position "firmly convinced, dismissive of its opponents, and eager to mock them" that further celebrates "an ethics of reading opposed to all literary interpretation" ("The case against irony" 383). As a world view it is duplicitous, "fragmentary," novel, complex, and subjective, and its esteem in the contemporary global market prevents recognition of literary works that are "repetiti[ve], sincer[e]," and personal (381). Under these conditions—which are later recapitulated by deconstructive and postcolonial theorists, as I argued in Chapter

One—I wholeheartedly agree that modernist irony cannot be a central device of world literature.

In contrast to the modernist irony currently *en vogue* in texts circulating in the global marketplace, I assert that a different mode of irony—controlled irony—can be, and has been, a device of social engagement in works of world literature. In his magister dissertation *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, Søren Kierkegaard defines controlled irony in a way that highlights its ethical potential, especially when the ironist's overarching world-view is harnessed and selectively deployed in discrete moments of critique in a literary work. Unlike Brennan, I do not hold Kierkegaard's work to be a precursor to this modernist, aesthetic irony, nor do I see it as an elaborate defense of Romantic irony.[1] I argue that this particular text refutes the subjective vacillations Kierkegaard is said to support (and which he does support in later works); instead, he describes irony as a device central to the process of world-historical development and is therefore ethical. As I will show below, Kierkegaard proposes that irony has the unique ability to illuminate social contradictions under conditions in which earnest critiques are ineffective, thus paving the way for social reevaluation, an essential component of world-historical development.

Additionally, I argue that Kierkegaard's controlled irony is fundamental to the project of world literature. Many literary signals denote irony—the "clues" to "stable irony," Wayne C. Booth's term for indirection where the author's message is easily discernible—and draw the reader's attention not just to the ironic passage but also point readers toward the author's concerns for the society in which the work was written.

Controlled irony is not hierarchical or unintelligible in different contexts, but rather offers the opportunity for readers to learn more about the depicted context. Controlled irony acts as an *Ansatzpunkt* in a work of world literature, to use Erich Auerbach's term for a point of departure from which the reader can begin to more fully comprehend the text, as I will examine in depth below. These "clues" signal to the readers that irony is being employed, encouraging them to further investigate the relationship between what is said and what is meant; in many cases the clues are accessible to culturally, linguistically, nationally, temporally, or otherwise distant readers, prompting them to further analyze the work and its socio-historical context.[2] In this way irony, in world literature is recognizable as such, stimulates deeper understanding of a work's context, and thus serves an ethical function in world literature.

This argument does not mean I believe that *all* ironies are intelligible for *all* readers, nor do I hold that all ironies (even when controlled, as I will explain below) are ethical. Many authors have written, and continue to write, ironic works from a position of aesthetic superiority; James Joyce comes to mind here. I do, however, reject the notion that all ironies are *necessarily* unintelligible in world literature. Perhaps it might be more appropriate to say that I am arguing for an acknowledgment that while irony *can* be accessible in world literature, theoretically speaking, there are degrees of intelligibility in the author's depiction and reader's interpretation of ironic commentaries. Additionally, controlled irony can, and has, served a conservative function that upholds social order, but here too I assert that irony does not by definition

work in this way.[3] When skillfully employed, literary clues to ironic critique facilitate social evaluation as the work circulates.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, I analyze Kierkegaard's (frequently misinterpreted) comments on controlled irony and contend that controlled irony fulfills an ethical role in world-historical development. In the second section, using Johann Gottfried Herder's theory of world literature and world-historical development as a framework, I argue that irony can circulate across national boundaries, can be intelligible when translated into different languages, and can be adequately understood across historical eras. To contrast claims about the unintelligibility of world literature, I turn to translation theory in the third section to explore the circumstances under which readers can learn to interpret irony in translation. Galvanizing Kierkegaardian irony in the service of Herderian world literature, I contend that moments of controlled ironic critique in world literature can foster a sense of cross-cultural respect and facilitate world-historical development.

Beyond "Absolute, Infinite Negativity": Kierkegaardian Irony as Social Engagement

Literary scholars often cite Kierkegaardian irony as a mode of aesthetic disengagement, a perspective that facilitates the author's and reader's isolation from society to mock its failings from a position of authority. Indeed, Kierkegaard advocates that position in his later works, including *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), and in many of his pseudonymous writings he enacts this brand of sneering critique.

However, to restrict Kierkegaardian irony to this perspective impoverishes both his work and literary understandings about how the device functions. Attending to his definitions in *The Concept of Irony* (1841), I argue that he offers a vision of irony that allows authors to use it as a mode of social engagement; moreover, this reinterpretation, and especially his view of controlled irony, better reflects how authors use the device in works of world literature.

One of the biggest impediments to understanding Kierkegaardian irony is the opacity and protracted structure of *The Concept of Irony*.[4] In the long first part, he summarizes depictions of Socrates and Socrates' *daimon* and analyzes the Greek philosopher's significance in world history. After this extended exegesis he turns to irony—and then as a lengthy refutation of German Romantic irony. Only in a few sections of the second part, roughly 10% of the whole dissertation, does Kierkegaard offer an explicit definition of the device.[5] He proposes that irony is an expression or orientation in which the phenomenon does not correspond to the essence, the ironist is negatively free regarding what he says and to whom he speaks, the message has a self-cancelling nature, the ironic message adopts an attitude of superiority, negativity is absolute and infinite, and the standpoint is subjective.[6] The following paragraphs isolate each element to analyze them; only after looking at each component part can we synthesize them into a cohesive definition.

Three of these characteristics resemble, in many respects, the formalist ironies discussed in Chapter One: the opposition of phenomenon and essence, the subject's negative freedom, and the ironist's sense of superiority toward his interlocutor. First,

the phenomenon does not correspond to the essence, but instead is "the opposite of the essence" (247).[7] Kierkegaard explains: "When I am speaking, the thought, the meaning, is the essence, and the word is the phenomenon … Now, truth demands identity, for if I had the thought without the word, then I would not have had the thought; and if I had the word without the thought, then I would not have the word, either" (247). Truthful communication requires the phenomenon (the spoken message) and the essence (the intended message) to be identical. In ironic communication, however, what is said is the antithesis of what is meant. While Kierkegaard's description of the juxtaposition between explicit and intended meaning differs from formalism's emphasis on the role of the interpreter in deciphering ironic communication, this first quality does share with formalism the idea that this non-identity holds paradoxical ideas in suspension.

Second, since what the ironist says is not what he means, the speaker is negatively free in relation to what is said and to whom he speaks.[8] Kierkegaard writes: "If … what I said is not my meaning or the opposite of my meaning, then I am free in relation to others and myself" (247–248). Once the ironist conveys his message in which word(s) and meaning(s) do not correspond, he divests himself of responsibility, for both the words themselves and for his interlocutor's ability to comprehend them.[9]

Third, this negative freedom endows the ironic expression with a sense of its own superiority, which "derive[s] from its not wanting to be understood … with the result that this figure looks down, as it were, on plain and simple talk that everyone can promptly understand; it travels around, so to speak, in an exclusive incognito and looks

down pitying from this high position on ordinary, prosaic talk" (248). This claim shares some similarities with the formalist critics' assertion that irony is the highest form of expression. But the ironist does not necessarily assume the same aloof posture that modernist authors do; while irony embraces its superiority and unintelligibility, the ironist does not necessarily do so. Kierkegaard rejects hierarchical irony that is used by "the higher circles" in which individuals "speak ironically so that people will not be able to understand them" (249).

However, the next characteristic diverges from formalist irony and instead focuses on how irony can be understood. Kierkegaard asserts that irony has a self-cancelling nature, which facilitates its capacity for social critique. He notes that "[t]he ironic figure of speech cancels itself, however, inasmuch as the one who is speaking assumes that his hearers understand him, and thus, through a negation of the immediate phenomenon, the essence becomes identical with the phenomenon" (248). The ironist's assumption reunites what is said with what is meant, and in this respect, Kierkegaard holds, irony wants to be decoded. Ironic communication therefore reestablishes a connection of sorts between speaker and listener as well as phenomenon and essence. This reorientation is made possible, in some respects, by Kierkegaard's rejection of the ironist's superiority. That being said, the ironist is not responsible for ensuring that his interlocutor is able to interpret this indirect communication properly; that task he leaves for the interlocutor. This ironic communication is not intentionally obfuscating because, Kierkegaard posits, irony includes clues that enable the listener to discern the true relationship between phenomenon and essence: "it is like a riddle to which one at

the same time has the solution" (248). His understanding of irony differs from dissimulation, duplicity, and insincerity, because the ironist does want his message to be understood as irony and is not trying to mislead or misinform his interlocutor.

Kierkegaard does not explain *how* irony contains those clues to facilitate comprehension, but I propose that the ironist employs specific rhetorical devices to signal to readers the presence of irony. Booth explains this practice in his seminal monograph *A Rhetoric of Irony* when he suggests that a number of literary techniques convey to the reader that what is meant is the opposite of what is said, including litotes, hyperbole, parabasis, antiphrasis, peripeteia, logical or argumentative fallacies, and other contextual clues. In *Irony's Edge*, Linda Hutcheon proposes that structural clues include a change in register, incongruity, and repetition (156). To cite one example of "clues" to irony, Jonathan Swift uses hyperbole in his essay "A Modest Proposal" to signal to his readers that the explicit message must be interpreted ironically.[10] He presents the idea of selling children from poor Irish families as food for wealthy English people to critique the British government's ludicrous suggestions to Irish peasants on how to improve their lives. Swift and other writers insert clues to show their audience that what is being written is not meant to be taken literally, and that the reader must delve into the text more deeply to discern its intended meaning. In this way, Kierkegaard's definition of irony hinges on the author's inclusion of keys to decipher the text's meaning, clues that the reader learns to identify in reading the text.

Kierkegaard asserts that irony is socially engaged because it illuminates a gap between what is said about a society and its reality, and when unrecognized that gap

impedes world-historical development. The ironist negates a specific social context and its claims to validity:

> Irony *sensu eminentiori* is directed not against this or that particular existing entity but against the entire given actuality at a certain time and under certain conditions. Thus it has an intrinsic apriority, and it is not by successively destroying one portion of actuality after another that it arrives at its total view, but it is by virtue of this that it destroys the particular instance. It is not this or that phenomenon but the totality of existence that it contemplates *sub specie ironiae* (under the aspect of irony). (254)

Rather than selectively critiquing a society, he suggests, an ironist begins by rejecting the whole actuality. The key phrase in the above passage is "against the entire given actuality at a certain time and under certain conditions." Irony rejects a *specific* actuality in its entirety, but not the possibility of all actualities, a position for which he critiques German Romantic irony which, he claims, "was not in the service of the world spirit. It was not an element of the given actuality that must be negated and superseded by a new element, but it was all of historical actuality that it negated in order to make room for a self-created actuality" (275).[11] The ironist rejects one specific actuality in its entirety because it is "no longer valid."[12] For example, Kierkegaard rejects his own society because it is inauthentic: "Our age demands more; it demands, if not lofty pathos then at least loud pathos, if not speculation then at least conclusions, if not truth then at least persuasion, if not integrity then at least protestations of integrity, if not

feeling then at least a verbosity about feelings" (246).[13] Irony only negates the actuality; it does not offer a positive critique of the ironist's actuality, nor does it construct an alternative actuality to replace the invalid one. The ironist can only illuminate this gap when members of that society do not recognize it and do not respond to earnest critique.[14]

This negation does not lead to the ironist's further retreat from society, but rather enmeshes him further in that actuality. In Kierkegaard's view, ironists necessarily exist in a social context; while they are alienated from their actualities, they cannot function without them. This dependence is reciprocal, as the society, broadly speaking, cannot progress without the ironist's assistance. The ironist's task is to converse with individuals in his actuality, using irony "to mystify the surrounding world, seeking not so much to remain in hiding itself as to get others to disclose themselves" (251). The ironist points out the disjuncture of what is said about society and its lived realities, making it possible for his interlocutors to realign their perception. As Mark C. Taylor notes in *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship*, this "dialectical method of indirect communication is constantly saying to the reader, 'Your move!' It prepares the way for personal commitment by helping the reader to clarify his situation through illustrating an individual's possibilities" (62).[15] In this way, Kierkegaard's interlocutor is not an *alazon*, a figure to be fooled by the ironist; rather, through ironic critique the interlocutor is empowered to view her actuality more clearly and to change it. As Alastair Hannay notes in *Kierkegaard: A Biography*, "here, in the dissertation, irony is presented as a leveling process, creating a clearing in which the world can

reappear as a gift and a task, and with it the possibility of a reconciliation between subject and object" (147). Put differently, Kierkegaard's engaged irony facilitates the realignment of essence and phenomenon, a process in which the ironist plays the pivotal role of leading all his interlocutors to see that their perception of their shared actuality is inaccurate.[16]

This vital realignment of essence and phenomenon, both in the text and in the material world, restarts the process of world-historical development. In Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's concept of dialectical development, which Kierkegaard reiterates in *The Concept of Irony*, phenomenon and essence must correspond for sublation to occur.[17] If individuals in a specific actuality are unable to recognize its essence (true values), or if the essence and phenomenon (lived reality) do not correspond, then history cannot progress. Kierkegaard illustrates this abstract claim with the example of the Reformation's reorientation of essence and phenomenon. Martin Luther objected to the practice of selling indulgences, in which Christians paid a priest to absolve them of their sins; while church officials touted this practice as eminently Christian, Luther pointed out in his *Ninety-Five Theses* that it contradicted Biblical teachings that humans receive salvation through grace. Individuals must restart this process for ethical reasons; Kierkegaard, like Hegel, sees in world-historical development the unfolding of consciousness and freedom. As Hegel writes in *The Philosophy of History*, "Universal history … shows the development of the consciousness of Freedom on the part of Spirit, and of the consequent realization of that Freedom. This development implies a gradation—a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of Freedom,

which result from its Idea" (63).[18] In other words, in each stage of historical development, the universal Spirit becomes increasingly more perfect in its understanding of itself and "its religion, its polity, its ethics, its legislation, and even its science, art, and mechanical skill" (64).

Similarly, as Kierkegaard argues in the final pages of *The Concept of Irony*, actuality is valid

> as history in which consciousness successively matures, yet in such a way that salvation consists not in forgetting all this [each progressive stage of development] but in becoming present in it. Actuality, therefore, will not be rejected, and longing [for world-historical perfection] will be a sound and healthy love, not a … wanting to have the perfect prematurely. Therefore actuality acquires its validity through action." (328–329)

In both Hegel's and Kierkegaard's understanding of historical development, if a society remains stagnant then its ethics and social structures will stagnate as well, providing no opportunities for individual or collective improvement. Kierkegaard's understanding of irony facilitates the development of ethical consciousness, as well as artistic expression and human freedom. If the dialectical process stagnates, humans suffer individually and collectively.[19]

Kierkegaard considered literature—and especially poetry—to be an ideal vehicle through which the ironist critiques his society, doing so not through a complete rejection of actuality but rather through discrete moments of ironic critique.[20] These

ironists harness their "absolute, infinite negativity," their rejection of the entire actuality in which they live, and interject pointed ironic critiques in their literary works, to demonstrate to their readers the most pressing incongruity the authors see in their societies. In other words, authors present their irony as a discrete literary device, not as an overarching world view, and deploy it at meaningful moments throughout their text. This limited irony—what he calls "controlled irony" or irony as a "mastered moment"—is effective because it is harnessed and used sparingly for maximum effect. He also contends controlled irony is an effective way to critique social actualities because it does not provide an ultimate truth, but rather helps readers find their own path to the truth. As he writes, "[e]ven though one must warn against irony as against a seducer, so must one also commend it as a guide … woe to him who cannot bear to have irony seek to balance the accounts. Irony as the negative is the way; it is not the truth but the way" (327).[21] Ironic critiques can illuminate the contradictions the author believes are hindering historical development and facilitate necessary change(s).[22]

I do not wish to overstate the political implications of this approach; Kierkegaard was not a liberal thinker, despite his seemingly radical vision of irony's ethical potential. Kierkegaard was politically conservative, a monarchist, and an aristocrat by birth; after his father's death he was able to live comfortably on his inheritance, as Bruce Kirmmse explains (*Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* 26).[23] Throughout his life he remained in the aristocratic circles of Copenhagen's elite, an insular community of some 3,000 to 4,000 people (Kirmmse 79). Clearly, Kierkegaard's understanding of irony's ethics was not populist, and in that sense

scholars rightly criticize his work for its elitism.[24] However, the world-historical development made possible through his description of ironic reorientation is one that would, in time, benefit everyone in that actuality, given the fact that these readers were often clergymen, government officials, and the educated elite—those individuals who possessed the power to alter political policy and social norms. Additionally, reading Kierkegaard's description of irony in this way does not foreclose the possibility that literary controlled irony could be understood by a wider audience; he seems to suggest that anyone able to read these texts has the ability to interpret the ethical critiques within the works.

My argument hinges on a serious reading of *The Concept of Irony*, which contradicts prominent Kierkegaard scholars' arguments that the work is a satire of Hegelian philosophy, and as such I must digress to explain my reasoning before returning to my thesis about controlled irony and social critique. In his influential monograph *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, Niels Thulstrup famously advocated the position that Kierkegaard wrote the work as a critique of Hegel, a position now called the "ironic hypothesis."[25] Later scholars follow Thulstrup's critique and ridicule the work's Hegelian themes: John Vignaux Smyth deems *The Concept of Irony* a "parody of Hegelianese" (146), Roger Poole asserts that Kierkegaard empties all Hegelian terms of all substance and therefore subverts Hegelian philosophy internally (3), and others contend that Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelian writings in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* act as a litmus test against which all his works must be understood.[26] I argue against the ironic hypothesis for several reasons, predominantly because the Hegelian themes of the

dissertation are not exaggerated or distorted in any way, as one might expect in an ironic work.[27] In other words, Kierkegaard's magister dissertation contains no "clues" that signal an ironic message. Following Jon Stewart's argument in *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, I contend that *The Concept of Irony* was a work written during Kierkegaard's Hegelian phase and as such should not be viewed as the opening salvo of Kierkegaard's existentialist thought.[28] Additionally, while some scholars propose that the work was written ironically to appease certain dissertation committee members, recent scholarship by Stewart, Bruce Kirmmse, and Robert J. Wiedenmann convincingly refutes this argument.[29] Of course, I do not dismiss the tensions between Hegelian dialectics and Kierkegaardian irony, but rather propose that these tensions are not central to the work.[30]

In fact, Kierkegaard's discussions of Hegelian ideas are nuanced and demonstrate a careful distinction of his own ideas from Hegelian philosophy.[31] For example, as Stewart explains, the discussion of Socrates in Kierkegaard's work shares many similarities with Hegel's discussions in *The History of Philosophy*, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, and *Philosophy of Right* (Stewart 150–157).[32] After several pages of exposition about Hegel's understanding of Socrates' *daimon*, Kierkegaard indicates his point of divergence: "This concludes my exposition of Hegel's presentation, and, here as always when one has Hegel along …, I have thereby acquired a footing from which I can safely start out on an excursion to see whether there might be some particular worthy of note to which I can safely return whether or not I have found anything" (165).[33] Notably, Kierkegaard does not accept Hegel's ideas wholesale

but rather critiques what he perceives to be an error in Hegel's description: Kierkegaard accuses Hegel of not paying sufficient attention to the individual figure of Socrates and instead of focusing too much on "the historical concept [*Begriff*] that is represented by the Greek world or in irony as a concept in a general theory of aesthetics" (Stewart 153). Kierkegaard insists that his approach and analysis of Socrates constitute a return to the individual level of history.[34] This nuanced engagement with Hegel's thought does not suggest an ironic perspective; if Kierkegaard was trying to show the ridiculousness of Hegelian thought, he would not spend such time showing its failings.

Kierkegaard's journals further confirm his seriousness about irony. We can, and should, regard these journals as a "neutral" text that might help us to detect irony within Kierkegaard's authorship, suggest Hannay, Taylor, and Maria Mikulová Thulstrup. Many journal entries written before 1841, the year he defended his magister dissertation, are tonally consistent with *The Concept of Irony*. One entry written in 1837 discusses irony's ability to purify the world: "When in its polemic irony (humor) has placed the whole world, heaven and earth, under water … when it is ready to be reconciled with the world again, it lets a raven fly off, and then a dove, which then returns with an olive leaf" (DD: 83). This aphoristic entry, I argue, prefigures his later arguments about irony's social engagement. In both this entry and the dissertation, he suggests that irony negates the validity of an entire actuality—placing it "under water," in his phrase—not in order to submerge it eternally, but rather to prepare that actuality for much-needed reform. He uses the metaphor of the biblical story of Noah's ark, in which God punished the world for its lawlessness not by destroying the earth but rather

by making possible a better, more authentic (and more faithful) society. Irony, in a similar way, rejects the current actuality to facilitate a more earnest society.

In later journal entries Kierkegaard despairs of his previous allegiance to Hegelian philosophy:

> Influenced as I was by Hegel and whatever was modern, without the maturity really to comprehend greatness, I could not resist pointing out somewhere in my dissertation that it was a defect on the part of Socrates to disregard the whole and only consider individuals numerically. What a Hegelian fool I was! It is precisely this that powerfully demonstrates what a great ethicist Socrates was. (JP 4: 4281, qtd. in Stewart 142)

If Kierkegaard had written the dissertation as an ironic critique of Hegelian philosophy, then there would be no need to recant his theoretical positions in his earlier works.[35]

Kierkegaard's understanding of controlled irony—again, his term for the limited deployment of the ironist's negative world-view, as one device among many in a work of literature, to illuminate these social disjunctures—as a facilitator of world-historical development makes it an ethical approach to both interpersonal communication and literature. He rejects irony's isolation and hierarchy and instead emphasizes the device's capacity for social engagement. However, his definition still leaves unanswered how such irony can be used effectively in world literature. If irony can be identified and decoded through the "clues" left by the ironist, it does not necessarily follow that readers can understand an ironic work written in different time, place, or language. In the next section, I examine the idea of world literature in greater depth to

show how returning to the original articulation of world literature in the works of Herder and examining how texts circulate across national, cultural, linguistic, and historical boundaries provides a framework within which irony can be understood outside of the context in which the text was written.

Irony on the Move: Accessible Indirection in World Literature

Like "irony," "world literature" (*Weltliteratur*) is a notoriously slippery term and scholars have debated its definition and appropriateness since the early nineteenth century.[36] Franco Moretti, Djelal Kadir, and Pascale Casanova, among others, renewed scholarly interest in world literature in the 1990s, and in the ensuing decades a great deal has been published on this topic from a variety of theoretical perspectives.[37] Definitions of world literature are especially contested, and it seems as if each scholar uses her own criteria to define it. One of the only consistent definitions actually comes from arguments *against* world literature; its detractors, like Emily Apter, Stephen Owen, Françoise Lionnet, and the editors of *n + 1*'s "Evil Issue" (in an article entitled "World Lite") allege that it represents a naïve belief in universal human values accessible throughout space and time and conveyed intelligibly in translation.[38] Furthermore, in *Forget English!* Aamir Mufti argues that world literature is "a *plane of equivalence*" that renders possible "comparison, classification, and evaluation. World literature is therefore fundamentally a concept of exchange or, in other words, a concept of bourgeois society" (Mufti 11). World literature is thus Orientalist in its predication on and perpetuation of Otherness, exacerbated by current Anglo-American-centered

publishing practices that prize English-language novels above those written in other languages (Mufti 19).

While arguments in favor of world literature vary wildly in terms of their definition of the concept, they can be assigned to three overarching categories: that world literature is a method of reading a wide range of texts from a distance; a body of texts that contrasts works written in colonialist "centers" and the global (formerly colonial) "periphery"; and a mode of literary circulation, to use the phrase favored by Pascale Casanova and David Damrosch.[39] While each category has its own strengths and weaknesses, all these often fall back on formalist modes of interpretation, especially a belief in an ideal reader who is fluent in the text's language of composition, is an expert in the historical context, and has a full understanding of the text's significance in literary history, as demonstrated in the first chapter. For many scholars, world literature is only available only to the intellectual elite.

I do find some merit in these claims; however, I contend that they obscure Johann Gottfried Herder's definition of world literature, which emphasizes the importance and ethics of world literature in circulation. He defines world literature as a body of texts in international circulation and translation that can be understood as they cross national, linguistic, and temporal boundaries.[40] Even though he was the first to propose a theory of world literature, he is largely omitted from narratives about the development of the field, perhaps because the Nazis appropriated his thought, as Robert Reinhold Ergang asserts in *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism*. When Herder is mentioned, it is often in a negative sense. Postcolonial theorists have been

relentlessly hostile to him: Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Aamir Mufti, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and others oversimplify Herder's position, arguing that he xenophobically promotes imperial practices.[41] Instead, I argue that Herder's philosophy of literature and world-historical development respects other nations in a deeply contextual way, more so than many formulations of the field. Prominent scholars of world literature have adapted his theory in their own definitions of world literature, progressing from Goethe (Herder's former student and one-time friend), Fritz Strich, Erich Auerbach, Edward and Maire Said (especially their translation of Auerbach's essay "Philology and *Weltliteratur*"), and Leo Spitzer to Pascale Casanova and David Damrosch, among others. Returning to Herder's articulation, and only then interrogating these later iterations, gives me the opportunity to examine what I hold to be the least muddled definition of world literature.[42] Furthermore, his writings have the most to say about how literature responds to, and acts upon, the society in which it is produced as well as the society in which it is received. In the following paragraphs I explore the facets of Herder's definition of world literature and its relationship to historical progress before connecting this definition to Kierkegaardian controlled irony.

Herder's understanding of world literature is intimately tied to world-historical development; only after interrogating the way cross-cultural respect facilitates historical progress can we understand literature's role in fostering respect for different nations and eras. As do Kierkegaard and Hegel, Herder views world-historical development as an ethical process; when each nation recognizes how it fits in the progression of

development, it contributes to the development of human civilization.[43] Historical development is thus a cumulative process that requires learning from other nations as well as contributing to the development of one's own nation, facilitated by the cross-cultural circulation of literature.[44] *Humanität* (humanity) is the universal human value, which Herder describes as a perpetually unfolding quality essential to human nature and present in all nations (Knoll 11). As Hans Adler, Robert T. Clark, and other scholars have noted, nowhere does Herder define this term or list its characteristics, but scattered references throughout his works suggest that it includes a capacity for happiness, nobility of spirit, ability to reason, freedom, self-awareness, a sense of responsibility, and good health (*Philosophical Writings* 335; Adler 99–100).[45]

In examining the way a culture describes these characteristics, according to Herder, readers learn more about that culture's social, linguistic, and temporal context.[46] Many factors alter the expression of these values, including climate, historical circumstance, language, and prevailing scientific and philosophical ideas. In *Fragments on Recent German Literature*, Herder explains that language is influenced by geography and social circumstance (*Philosophical Writings* 60). Furthermore, the nation's language influences what topics can be described in literature:

> As long as a language shapes itself as the language of necessity, notwithstanding all discomforts that come with insufficiency, vigor is its advantage. As long as the language is not yet a book language, but the language of song, it has a wealth of images and the most exalted harmony. As it becomes the language of civilized people, it gains a

> greater wealth of political expression, but the exalted harmony and the fullness of the images are toned down. As a *book language* it becomes richer in concepts, but the poetic harmony turns to prose; the image becomes parable, the vivid, *ringing* bywords disappear. As a *philosophical language* it becomes precise, but impoverished; it loses its synonyms and does not esteem images and harmony. ("Conclusion, on the Ideal of Language," *Selected Early Works* 160, emphasis Herder's)[47]

All these contextual factors impact a nation's literary output, both in form and content.[48] Carefully attending to the language an author uses can signal to the reader the forces that shaped the author's prose, so in reading a work of world literature and analyzing its form, the reader learns more about the context in which the work was written.

Moreover, according to Herder, the content of each work reflects the major concerns of the nation in which the author wrote. In other words, he regards each literary work as a representation of national values; these values are specific not just to the nation in which each work was written but also to the era and culture in which the author lived. As he famously writes at the beginning of "Results of a Comparison," "[p]oetry is a Proteus among the peoples; it changes form according to the peoples' language, customs, habits, according to their temperament, the climate, even according to their accent" (*Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature* 4). For example, he celebrates Shakespeare for representing his nation in his works: each play is "History in the broadest sense … in the end each play remains and must remain what it is: History!

A history play bringing to life the fortunes of the nation during the middle ages!" (*Aesthetics* 307)[49] He writes more generally:

> In every era [poetry] has been the embodiment of a given nation's faults and perfections, a mirror of its dispositions, the expression of its highest ideal (*oratio sensitive anima perfecta*). Juxtaposing these pictures (ideals more and less accomplished, true and false) yields an informative pleasure. In this gallery of various ways of thinking, inclinations, and wishes we are sure to get to know eras and nations more deeply than we would by treading the deceiving, desolate path of their political and military history. In the latter we rarely learn more of a people than how it was governed and destroyed; in the former we learn about its way of thinking, what it wished and what it wanted, how it rejoiced and how it was guided by its teachers or inclinations. (6)[50]

Literary works more truthfully convey these contextually created values than do political treatises. That is not to say that Herder insists on a united or unchanging national character; he acknowledges that there is diversity within unity, but that the diversity does not threaten or invalidate that unity.[51]

Moreover, readers must appreciate each work according to the aesthetic tastes of the time and place in which it was written.[52] Using a botanical analogy, Herder writes that readers must "leave every flower in place and … scrutinize it there just as it is, according to era and form, from the root to the crown … Lichen, moss, fern and the richest spice plant: each flourishes in its own position in the divine order" (7). To

dismiss or devalue a work based on the reader's own aesthetic preferences reinforces a linear view of history, expressly the sentiment against which Herder argues.

Expanding on Herder's notion of the writer's expression of national character in literature, I contend that analyzing ironic expressions can teach readers, who are encountering a given text in different nations and eras, about an author's socio-historical concerns. Put differently, if (as Kierkegaard suggests) controlled irony illuminates contradictions between what is said about a society and individuals' lived reality, then if readers attend to these expressions in works of world literature they can learn about the author's major concerns for that society. In this way, controlled ironic critique offers readers a window on the specific social, historical, and political forces shaping the nation being described in the text, which facilitates Herder's goal of literature fostering cross-cultural understanding. If readers do not adequately understand or appreciate that context or judge it by the standards of their own nation, they cannot understand the depicted nation, which impedes the next step of Herderian world-historical development: uptake.

If the reader truly understands another nation or era, Herder suggests, she has a duty to integrate useful ideas from that culture into her own socio-historical context. In other words, the point of circulating world literature is not just to facilitate intercultural understanding, but to refine one's own ideas and institutions.[53] He writes that this type of development is impossible if the reader believes in her own superiority: "Indeed, our very enjoyment of the things we boast of [in our own culture] may cut us off from experiences which might have proved superior" (*Herder on Social and Political Culture*

213–214).[54] The process of learning must be a thoughtful one in the sense that readers should not uncritically import cultural ideals or customs into their society; imitation without reflection can be dangerous.[55] Readers must process information, evaluate its relevance to their national context, and import, adapt, or reject that information as appropriate. Herder calls this process assimilation or organic education; it is only through this process of assimilation that *Humanität* develops.[56] For example, in *This Too a Philosophy of History* he suggests that "proper" assimilation would allow a nation to develop skilled doctors who also have a "human heart," suggesting that eighteenth-century medical advances would benefit from doctors' bedside manner of earlier times (*Philosophical Writings* 344).

I propose that his notion of uptake encourages readers to reflect on their social realities, a process in which controlled irony can participate. As readers learn more about the author's concerns for his nation, as expressed through controlled irony, they must also consider whether a similar critique could be offered of their own nation(s). Put colloquially, in reading works of world literature readers may recognize when history is repeating itself. These moments of controlled irony, deployed discretely in world literary texts, not only speak to the context in which the text was written but also can highlight the need for change in other nations and eras as well.

In this sense human history is a continually developing process; he writes that "one day teaches another, one century instructs another century; tradition is enriched" (Churchill 458).[57] Put differently, the reader uses these texts to "become what they [the predecessors] could not be. Perhaps we will make up in fruit from our poor show of

flowers; perhaps we shall achieve by permanence and pervasiveness what they attained by vitality and fervour" (*Herder on Social and Political Culture* 252).[58] Since readers, from their positions, can see the trajectory of historical development, trace the development of human civilization to that point, and judge each era on its own terms, they can see that differences in enlightenment are by degree and not by kind (*Herder on Social and Political Culture* 313).[59] Herder's understanding of historical development links all times and nations. He writes in *This Too a Philosophy of History*: "The Egyptian was not able to exist without the Oriental, the Greek built upon them, the Roman raised himself onto the back of the whole world—truly *progress, progressive development*, even if no individual won in the process!" (*Philosophical Writings* 209, emphasis Herder's).[60]

Herder illustrates this concept by arguing that proper assimilation of older texts in Enlightenment Europe might lead intellectuals back to an embodied approach to logic and reason. He dislikes Enlightenment rationalism because it deepened the opposition between mind and body and in so doing distanced people from the truth accessible through sense perception.[61] Karl Menges explains that Herder's writings promote the belief that during the Enlightenment "[p]rogress ha[d] obliterated cultural traditions and collective memories, leaving behind a sophisticated but anemic 'culture of writing' that contrasts sharply with the natural wisdom of ancient peoples" (Adler 193). Rationalist writers no longer relied on their surroundings and did not reflect their nations in their works. Herder argued that authors should instead incorporate more strategies used by

their ancestors, especially those grounded in sense perception; only then would literature reflect the nation and facilitate world historical development.[62]

It does not necessarily follow, however, that irony can circulate and be understood within the framework put forth in Herder's writings. But pairing Kierkegaard's concept of controlled irony with Herderian world literature offers a framework to explain how an ironic work might circulate outside of its source culture and language. That many texts that use this type of controlled irony have longevity and geographic reach is evident in contemporary pedagogical practices—the fact that *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* includes works by Shakespeare, Cervantes, Tayeb Salih, Lu Xun, and Nikolai Gogol, to name a few, suggests that works of literary irony can be deciphered even when the reader interprets a text written in another nation, era, or language. I contend that irony's clues—its "wanting to be found out," to use Kierkegaard's phrase—facilitate readers' ability to comprehend a work of world literature. Far from being unintelligible, these clues—which include hyperbole, anaphrasis, repetition, and other thematic and formal clues—function as an *Ansatzpunkt*, or point of departure, to a literary work.

In his essay "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," Erich Auerbach explains how, given the wide range of texts in the corpus of world literature, readers can comprehend a text written in a different time and place. Auerbach posits that a reader can only comprehend a "foreign" work by identifying an *Ansatzpunkt*, a point of departure is a theme or device familiar to the reader, identified through intuition, "a comparatively modest general knowledge and … advice" (14). Good points of departure are

circumscribed, concrete, precise, and inherent in the works themselves, rather than foisted upon the work by the interpreter. Possible points of departure include "[a] semantic interpretation, a rhetorical trope, a syntactic sequence, the interpretation of one sentence, or a set of remarks made at a given time and in a given place …" (15).[63] While Auerbach presents this mode of analysis as a general approach to literature, I propose that the clues so critical to Kierkegaardian controlled irony can serve as an *Ansatzpunkt* for an individual work: recognizing an ironic signal can help the reader decipher the text's intended meaning.

Moreover, the reader learns these clues in her process of reading the work of literature, learning about the cultural conventions that the text both adheres to and subverts. In short, as she better understands the conventions of a device or behavior (as displayed in the text) she is better able to recognize those that deviate from these conventions. For example, in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the contradiction between the elevated prose and Don Quixote's lofty ideals on the one hand and the mundane subject matter on the other hand suggests to the reader that the story should not be taken at face value. The juxtaposition of narrative tone and content signals Cervantes' ironic perspective, reaffirmed by the peasants' derisive reactions to Don Quixote, and offers readers a point of entry from which to analyze the novel's socio-historical context. The ironic "clue" therefore acts as an invitation to the reader to learn more about that nation and era.

The *Ansatzpunkt* also acts as a point of comparison; with a clear grasp of the ironic signal, the reader can then connect the way that device, theme, or idea is

deployed in other works of world literature. Auerbach describes this characteristic as the *Ansatzpunkt*'s "potential for centrifugal radiation … Once chosen it must have radiating power, so that with it we can deal with world history [*Weltgeschichte*]" (15). In other words, Auerbach proposes that an *Anzatspunkt* will allow a reader to trace how a device, theme, or idea appears in different works, as opposed to a scholarly approach "investigating the position of the writer in the nineteenth century," for example, that pays attention to one historical and cultural context (15). Auerbach's analysis of representations of literary realism, and specifically the *figura* (a word that refers to an event that "signifies not only itself but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms, without prejudice to the power of its concrete reality here and now" [*Mimesis* 555]) throughout different eras and literary traditions, is a key example of this centrifugal comparative approach. In *Mimesis* he connects diverse texts including *Germinie Lacerteux*, the *Odyssey*, and *Gargantua and Pantagruel* through their unique deployments of *figura*; this approach is in contrast to a survey of European nineteenth-century literature, for example, or an analysis of *figura* in French texts. The centrifugal nature of an *Ansatzpunkt*—and, I would contend, an ironic *Ansatzpunkt*—provides a point of departure to synthesize many works of world literature. Far from being unintelligible or irredeemably contextually specific, Kierkegaardian irony in world literature (with its all-important signals) can facilitate intercultural understanding, a critical moment in world-historical development.

Of course, readers encounter texts in circulation, and the cultures, nations, and eras in which they were produced, at a distance. The reader can never be fully

enmeshed in the national context described in a work of world literature, but this distance is very much in keeping with the spirit of the ethics of world literature as it offers the reader some perspective on her own culture. As Damrosch writes in *What Is World Literature?*, in analyzing a work of world literature readers take specialists' knowledge to situate the work within the frame of world literature, a construct of the reader's making:

> [W]hen we read the *Genji* as world literature, we are fundamentally translating it out of its home culture and into a new and broader context. We can make this translation far more effectively if we attend to the insights that specialists possess, but we will use this information selectively and for different purposes. Whereas the specialist attempts to enter as fully as possible into the source culture, the student stands outside, very much as Benjamin describes translation itself standing outside a work's original language, facing a wooded ridge that each of us will forest with our own favorite trees. (297)

Damrosch suggests that, with the help of specialists' knowledge, including but not limited to explanatory footnotes, alternate translations, and historical context, students can begin to comprehend texts from very different nations, eras, and languages. Damrosch's injunction that a reader, and especially a non-specialist, can never fully comprehend such a "foreign" work does not diminish the benefits she gains through reading the text; these benefits become even more important given the self-reflection made possible through reading works in circulation. I extend Damrosch's assertion by

suggesting that controlled irony is one strategy that facilitates this cross-cultural circulation of texts. Through these ironic critiques (and specialists' analyses thereof), non-specialist readers learn about the context in which the text was written, even if they are unable to fully immerse themselves in that context.

This distance complicates my assertion that translations objectively convey the literary and cultural norms by which readers—particularly non-specialists—learn to recognize signals to irony. Of course, translations have distorted, and continue to distort, our understanding of literary, historical, and societal conventions, thereby inhibiting, if not preventing, our ability to comprehend an author's ironic critique. Moreover, as Talal Assad notes in "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," an individual reading a "foreign" text (or culture) interprets that text through the lens of her home culture, which complicates the reader's ability to understand the norms by which she must recognize devices and behaviors that deviate from them. In both circumstances, irony cannot be identified or interpreted through the text alone. While readers might find it difficult to reject their own cultural norms when reading a text written in a different place and time, I propose that additional scholarly apparatuses help prevent, or at least mitigate, these assumptions by conveying information regarding the author's context and its conventions.

Beyond Holy Originals and Profane Copies

I argue that world literature's ethics stem from the way it facilitates historical development. However, scholars frequently cite the issue of translation—both its

possibility and the right to translation—as a counterargument to world literature. As I discussed in Chapter One, many postcolonial and world literary critics argue that translation is in some sense impossible given the reader's inability to grasp the linguistic potentialities of all words in both the source and the target languages. Others, notably Susan Bassnett and Harish Trevedi in their introduction to *Postcolonial Translation*, argue that translation is an aggressive act that perpetuates Western hegemony, silencing local languages to the benefit of Western powers.[64] I recognize that this approach to translation has been dominant throughout much of Western history to justify war and imperialism, among other horrendous acts. Examples of this linguistic and cultural violence are legion and many scholars have thoughtfully analyzed its impacts. However, I argue that translation *itself* is not, by definition, violent; rather translators enact that violence through mistranslation, failing to provide adequate contextual information, or choosing one meaning without acknowledging other possibilities. In this respect, it is theoretically possible to advocate for a culturally sensitive ethics of translation, one that does not damage a text but rather preserves its unique characteristics as much as possible, aims for the reader's comprehension of the cultural context described, and facilitates cross-cultural respect.

Contemporary translation theorists have attempted to make this change by moving away from the "genealogical" model of translation in which translators faithfully reproduce an identical work to the original. In their insistence that translators produce an entirely new text, related to but different from the original, these theorists make possible the circulation of ideas, techniques, and literary forms among nations and

languages. As Benjamin writes in "The Task of the Translator," translation must be understood as a distinct text, related to but not coeval with the original: "the language of a translation can—in fact, must—let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself, as its own kind of *intentio*" (260).[65] Additionally, in George Steiner's understanding a faithful translation is not one that corresponds, word-for-word, with the original but one that retains as much of the intention and spirit of the original as possible.[66] Fidelity is attained when the "balance of forces" has been restored to the work by the translator; this restitution is both ethical and economic and "creates a condition of significant exchange" in both directions (Steiner 313–318). Translations should be understood not as reproductions of original works, but as new works that help a different culture better understand the context in which the original was produced. Adequate knowledge of this context is essential to the reader's lived experiences, to the target culture in which the work is read, and to the process of world-historical development.

The first benefit of translation is that these works broaden readers' perspectives on the world. In his monograph *After Babel,* Steiner suggests that translation, and especially translated literature, can offer a more complete picture of the world, both highlighting national particularities and emphasizing cross-cultural similarities. He speaks of this process as the "dialectic of unison and of plurality": "each act of translation is an endeavour to abolish multiplicity and to bring different world-pictures into perfect congruence" (246). Apter proposes in *The Translation Zone* that the act of

translating a work is certainly dangerous and that its dangers must be recognized; however, any misgivings about translation must be balanced with an awareness of the empowering possibilities offered by translating a work written in a "minor" or marginalized language.[67] Apter writes that despite the fact that translation is "an agent of language extinction," and

> [d]espite the questionable stakes of a publishing industry ever poised, piranha-like, to exploit the embattled situation of the dissident writer, and despite the homogenized, commercialized flavor of translationese afflicting many prize-winning works of foreign fiction, efforts must be made to keep Algeria, and the many countries that find themselves in comparable situations, from being blacked-out or whited-over in the international public sphere of letters. (108)

In its ideal form, translation offers a perspective not otherwise available to many readers; it allows readers to better understand the specificities of different national characteristics and to identify connections between nations. It is the translator's task, and the reader's, to acknowledge and analyze the problems of translation, as those problems illustrate the power dynamics of translation. Although Apter rejects this view in *Against World Literature* in favor of her Derridean reading of the impossibility of translation, her disclaimer is still valid, especially because it aligns with contemporary translation theory.[68]

Many of these same scholars also argue that translation, at its best, has a reciprocal influence on source *and* target language and literature. In other words, a

work read in translation can offer the reader a different perspective about her own culture, expectations, and language. Lawrence Venuti proposes that any act of translation necessarily constructs, at the same time, a "domestic representation for a foreign text and culture" and "a domestic subject *and* position" (68).[69] Put differently, the translator can highlight the constructedness of social and political institutions in both source and target nation. Apter extends Venuti's idea when she claims that a translation "reposition[s] the subject in the world and in history" and "render[s] self-knowledge foreign to itself … denaturalize[es] citizens, taking them out of the comfort zone of national space, daily ritual, and pre-given domestic arrangements" (*Translation Zone* 6). Finally, in "The Task of the Translator" Benjamin claims that the target language should be, and is, influenced by the source language; only bad translations "[preserve] the state in which [the translator's] own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue" (262). The act of translation should, and can, impact the target culture on a number of different levels. Examining a work of world literature in translation shows the reader her own conditionality and highlights the changes made to her own nation by the text and its source.

That is not to say that a translated work is sufficient in and of itself; explanatory materials offer essential insight both about the socio-historical context and the act of translation. If ironic works in translation circulate in the global marketplace, they must be accompanied by explanatory material including introductions, commentaries, and marginalia.[70] When translators explain their choices in translation as far as possible and

provide additional socio-historical context, the reader can better understand the nation being depicted and appreciate the politics of translation.[71] Including this contextual information helps the reader to encounter the source culture "on its own terms." As André Lefevere writes in "Composing the Other," including contextual information can help translators avoid appropriating elements of the source culture into the target culture in violent, ill-fitting ways. He argues that translators must eliminate translation-by-analogy:

> When we no longer translate Chinese T'ang poetry "as if" it were Imagist blank verse, which it manifestly is not, we shall be able to understand T'ang poetry on its own terms. This means, however, that we shall have to tell the readers of our translations what T'ang poetry is really like, by means of introductions, the detailed analysis of selected texts, and such … a huge investment in re-education/re-socialization is needed if we are ever to arrive at the goal of understanding other cultures "on their own terms." (Bassnett and Trivedi 78)

This contextual information eliminates the question of the reader's mastery of the text by demonstrating the reader's inability to fully grasp all details of the source work and culture, but still provides that reader with the opportunity to better understand it. In other words, as we read this scholarly apparatus we are reminded of the limits of our own knowledge, but are still motivated to continue learning about the author's source culture. This approach, described as the marriage of world literature, translation theory,

and area studies, makes visible and accessible the unique cultural, national and historical allusions of the text.

This understanding of translation as well-glossed adaptation, rather than as a faithful copy, makes possible irony's circulation. Translators may choose between several possible terms to convey the sense of the text to the reader in the target language. For example, in "Translating Literary Irony," Pierre Skorov illustrates how explanatory material, especially the translator's comments about the cultural and linguistic valences of the original term, can help readers decipher culturally specific irony. Skorov explains that in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (the text I examine in Chapter Four), the term самопишущее перо refers both to a fountain pen and, more literally, to a "self-writing" pen (Skorov 93). The translator chooses to convey this term as an "automatic pen" to "[hint] at the mechanistic and artistically worthless nature of such writing" (Skorov 93). In this way, the translator's decision to eschew literal translation and instead convey the meaning in the target language preserves "the potential of irony at the expense of strictly literal exactitude" (93). Translations may also preserve rhetorical devices used to signal irony, even if the translation requires alterations. Devices like hyperbole and litotes, authorial interjections, and thematic contradictions can be maintained in this type of translation. In other words, it is possible for irony to be translated in a way that preserves textual meaning and adapts the text to its target language without sacrificing the heart of the author's ironic critique.

Conclusion

In his theory of controlled irony, Kierkegaard offers a new way we, as readers and literary critics, can understand irony as an ethical and socially engaged device essential to national and worldhistorical development. If we further understand the clues to controlled irony as possible *Ansatzpunkts* in works of world literature, we can see how irony can circulate as Herderian world literature. Controlled irony in circulation helps a reader better understand the nation and era in which the text was composed, and through that process of understanding another place and time readers can evaluate their own society.

Up to this point, my discussion of irony's ethics and the circulation of world literature in general has been very theoretical. The next three chapters interrogate the practicalities of this theory in three works of world literature. I begin by analyzing Goethe's *Faust*, a work ubiquitous in discussions of world literature. Then I turn to two adaptations of this work—Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*—to demonstrate that irony is accessible in its circulation as world literature. I argue that these adaptations of Goethe's ironic critiques, written in different nations and eras, shows that irony can be understood in different cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. Both authors alter Goethe's depiction of the Faust myth to better address their nations' unique situations. This process of transformation demonstrates that the controlled irony in the original text has been so thoroughly understood and assimilated that it is now used to critique specific

elements of the target nation. In short, Goethe's ironic critiques in *Faust* serve as my *Ansatzpunkts* to analyze the role of indirect communication in world literature.

Chapter Three

"The great heathen"[1]:

The Ironies of German Lutheranism in Goethe's *Faust*

Kierkegaard cited three authors as "masters over irony"—William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Johan Ludvig Heiberg—who used controlled irony to critique society. He was most captivated, however, by Goethe's epic verse-drama *Faust* (1808); in the years leading up to his defense of *The Concept of Irony* he wrote many journal entries about Goethe's irony.[2] Given Kierkegaard's deep interest in *Faust* and opaque comments about Goethe at the end of his magister dissertation, it seems fitting to begin with *Faust*. In this chapter I analyze two moments of ironic critique in *Faust* Part I to explore how the theory of ethical ironic critique, proposed in Chapter Two, operates on a practical level. These moments of critique signal to readers Goethe's frustrations with two strains of German Lutheranism, particularly the contradictory intellectualist and emotionalist strains of religious discourse in the late-eighteenth century.[3] Constrained moments of ironic critique, even in a sprawling work like *Faust*, show how socially engaged irony serves an ethical function when the author illuminates an unrecognized disjuncture between his society's stated values and its current practices, a process that is necessary to dialectical world-historical development.[4]

In making this argument I enter a vociferous debate about the nature of Goethean irony. Goethe scholar Benjamin Bennett proposes that Goethe's irony is

opaque and negative as it "definitely conceals, but does not admit the existence of any articulable relation whatever to its concealed content," which thus prevents the reader's resolution of implicit and explicit meaning (*Beyond Theory* 7, 8).[5] He contends that Goethe articulates a sense of truth in *Faust* through misdirection; readers understand truth only through our "negative attitude toward it" (50, 60).[6] However, Bennett's reading only focuses on Part II which, I argue, risks obscuring Goethe's social engagement in Part I.[7] Furthermore, I find suspect Bennett's claims that Goethe's rejection of objective truth is a political gesture. He asserts that with no "possible determination of its content," Goethe rejects the bourgeois notions "of 'symbol' and 'totality'" (*Beyond Theory* 163). This argument overstates Goethe's political beliefs: he was a conservative and a monarchist, a fact he openly acknowledged in his conversations with Eckermann (14).[8] To argue that his ironic critique upends the institutions he proudly supported is to read Goethe retrospectively (and perhaps wishfully), which inhibits our understanding of his irony's meaningful, although not radical, engagement with the socio-political structures of his day.

My argument contributes to recent scholarly discussions about Goethe's engagement in his socio-historical context. Jane K. Brown, Nicholas Saul, Elisabeth Krimmer, and others demonstrate that Goethe's writings were more socially oriented than critics typically acknowledge.[9] As Krimmer notes, despite being a Lutheran Goethe was sharply critical of Protestant beliefs and practices, earning himself the moniker "the Great Heathen" from Heinrich Heine (100). Goethe includes a host of religious critiques in *Faust,* as Elizabeth Wilkinson, Osman Durrani and Jane K. Brown

have shown.[10] My chapter contributes to this conversation by placing irony at the center of Goethe's social critique. I analyze two moments of controlled ironic critique in *Faust* I, the first "Study" scene, in which Faust translates the first portion of the Gospel of John, and "Martha's Garden," when Faust attempts to persuade Gretchen to consummate their relationship. These scenes expose the hypocrisies of German Lutheranism. Goethe ironizes both intellectualistic and Pietistic approaches to religion, highlighting how both distort Christian dogma, biblical meaning, and daily practice. Goethe's ironic allusions to and invocations of Christian themes, with (as Eudo C. Mason contends) their "external features [preserved] intact" (283), serve as a recognizable, decipherable form of social critique. Goethe's controlled irony is not only an ethical device that illuminates the need for social change and facilitates world-historical development, but also his deployment thereof illustrates how these moments can be depicted in an accessible manner and can be understood as a work circulates in the global marketplace.

Why Goethe Again? Why Goethe Now?

While Goethe's *Faust* does not initially seem an obvious "case study" for a dissertation in English literature, his writings generally speaking, and *Faust* in particular, are central to the formulation of world literature. As such, for a dissertation on world literature, what could be more appropriate than starting with Goethe? He is a central figure especially in the recent resurgence of world literature. Erich Auerbach's writings on Goethe, conveyed to the Western academy through Edward and Maire

Said's 1969 translation of "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," established the German poet as the paradigmatic figure in world literature; later generations of world literary critics influenced by Auerbach and Said, including A. Owen Aldridge, Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, Emily Apter, and others, similarly depict Goethe as a progenitor of world literature.[11] While I disagree with this genealogy, in order to intervene in discussions of world literary theory I believe I must engage Goethe's writings on my own terms, as well as to converse with these scholars.

Moreover, Goethe's text raises fundamental questions about literature and modes of circulation that are relevant to the Anglophone canon and beyond. Most importantly for the purposes of my work, *Faust* has inspired a huge number of adaptations that reflect the nation and era in which the author was working. Kierkegaard, for example, asserts that each iteration of the Faust legend reflects the society and age in which it was produced: "That the Faust who is meant to represent this age differs essentially from the earlier Faust and, in general, from the Faust of any other time, is so evident that we have only to be reminded of the fact" (BB: 49). Contemporary *Faust* criticism reinforces Kierkegaard's assertion; Harry Redner insists that Faust's desire "reflects closely the demands of each age, just as the turning to the Devil reflects the crisis of each age" (xiii), and Lorna Fitzsimmons writes that Faust is a "fulcral matrix of cultural memory" (1).[12] Reading *Faust* provides the reader a glimpse into the author's socio-historical context. For example, Americans' obsession with Goethe's *Faust* is prevalent in twentieth and twenty-first century popular culture: F. W. Murnau's *Faust, Damn Yankees, The Silence of the Lambs, V for Vendetta, The*

Departed, *Wall Street* and *Wall Street 2: Money Never Sleeps*, *The Devil's Advocate*, and a host of others invoke the trope of "the deal with the devil" to critique Western capitalism.[13] Adaptations of *Faust* in Anglophone global literature—including J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, David Dabydeen's *Disappearance*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, Guy Butler's *The Dam*, Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*, and, as I will analyze below in Chapter Five, Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*, among others—transform Goethe's narrative to explore the lingering influences of colonialism in postcolonial societies.

Goethe's *Faust* takes on valences in different eras and different locations that cast light not on the work or the character, but on the society producing the work. This historical specificity is essential to the ethics of world literature as Herder describes it; only through recognizing the unique qualities of each nation can the reader fully appreciate and assimilate relevant critiques to her society. Given the fact that *Faust* engages Goethe's socio-historical context, I argue it is a perfect case study to understand how these specificities manifest in ironic critique, how the poet uses irony to spur social reevaluation, and how that ironic critique can be legible in translation and circulation.

"Now it is exact": The Heresy of Religious Intellectualism

Arguably the most pivotal scene in *Faust* is the first "Study" scene, in which the doctor and the devil discuss their potential pact. The trope of the "deal with the devil" is a ubiquitous one not just in popular culture but also in *Faust* scholarship, but focusing

on this trope has, I argue, obscured some of the contextually specific elements of the "Study" scene.[14] In the translation scene that immediately precedes the initial conversation between Faust and Mephistopheles, Goethe satirizes the ridiculousness of intellectualist religious attitudes in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.[15] Faust's translation of the first line of the gospel of John—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"—parodies the intellectualist strains of German Lutheran theology in the early nineteenth century and points out the dangerous lengths to which such a perspective can be taken. By distorting the final word of the first line, "Word," three times in Faust's translation, Goethe exposes the heretical potential of intellectualized religion.[16] The fact that the critique occurs in this pivotal scene—which, as Mason and John Geary write, is unique to Goethe's *Faust*—reiterates the importance of social critique in the work.

At the beginning of the first "Study" scene Faust returns home, followed by a stray poodle (actually Mephistopheles in disguise, as he later discovers), railing against his intellectual limitations.[17] For solace he turns to the gospel of John and attempts to translate the first lines into German (ll. 1214–1216).[18] He begins the translation but stops almost immediately:

> It says: "In the beginning was the *Word*."
> Already I am stopped. It seems absurd.
> The *Word* does not deserve the highest prize,
> I must translate it otherwise
> If I am well inspired and not blind.

It says: In the beginning was the *Mind*. (ll. 1224–1229)[19]

Inspired by his intervention, Faust continues to refine the first verse:

Ponder that first line, wait and see,
Lest you should write too hastily.
Is the mind the all-creating source?
It ought to say: In the beginning was the *Force*.
Yet something warns me as I grasp the pen,
That my translation must be changed again.
The spirit helps me. Now it is exact.
I write: In the beginning was the *Act*. (ll. 1230–1237)[20]

Shortly after this course of translation, Faust calls Mephistopheles to take human form by uttering a spell: "If you should be / Hell's progeny, / Then see this symbol / Before which Tremble / The Cohorts of Hell!" (ll. 1298–1302). In response to the incantation Mephistopheles transforms into a hippopotamus and an elephant, and finally assumes human form, and proposes the deal with Faust.

The purpose and meaning of this scene have been hotly debated.[21] Some scholars, including Franco Moretti, Paul Bishop, and Harold Jantz, assert that the translation scene is theologically sound and consistent with German Lutheran theology.[22] Jantz especially contends that Faust's translation demonstrates his "reverent" attempts to more fully comprehend the nature of divine creation (*The Form of* Faust 104–105).[23] Pointing to the parallel between the first lines of gospel of John and the creation story in the book of Genesis, Jantz contends that Faust understands that

"the *logos* cannot be a mere *word*, it must have *meaning*, significance; beyond that it must have the potentiality, the *power*, to lead over to the divine *act* of creation" (104).[24] Altering the text in this way, Jantz claims, has profound implications for human experience as well.[25]

I argue, however, that Jantz's reading of the scene does not fully explore the consequences of this action in the world of the text. Faust translates this line without any context or philological knowledge. By emphasizing "Acts," rather than "words"—and omitting the connection between God and logos in the rest of the verse, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"—Faust alters the meaning of the verse to the point that he produces a heretical new text rather than translating this "sacred original." This act of altering the holy original—literally, in this sense—allows Faust to opportunistically alter biblical meaning to suit his purposes and supplant the Bible as humanity's organizing logic. Such a misreading extends far beyond Luther's call for individual engagement with the scriptures and moves from translation to rewriting. As Bennett notes, "[b]y misconstruing the opening verses of John, or at least by revealing in his construction the negative operation of self-consciousness, Faust unwittingly reenacts what those verses talk about" (*Goethe's Theory of Poetry* 66, 67). As a creator of a heretical new text, Faust claims for himself divine powers in shaping readers' perceptions of the world.[26]

To read this scene as unproblematical or straightforward also obscures the socio-historical context in which Goethe wrote, especially given Lutheran theology's hegemonic function in the German states in the eighteenth century. Faust's rejection of

"word" in the first place, calling it "absurd," goes against the Lutheran doctrine of *sola scriptura*, which holds that the Bible is the sole source of religious meaning; priests and religious leaders have equal access to divine revelation as do poor (literate) peasants, in Martin Luther's contention. Furthermore, the intermediary terms of Faust's heretical translation, "Mind" and "Force" (ll. 1229, 1233), move him even further away from Lutheran theology and especially from Luther's writings. As Brand Blanshard writes in *Reason and Belief*, Luther was especially hostile to rationalistic theology; I therefore contend that for Faust to elevate the mind over the word contradicts one of the fundamental tenets of contemporary Protestant religious belief. Although Faust rejects these intermediary terms, Jantz's easy transition from "word" to "act" is more complex than he admits. Faust's translation is not a faithful, theologically sound revision. Rather, it produces a new, heretical text, departing sharply from not just the holy original but also from the Protestant world-view espoused by Lutheran dogma.

Each successive translation takes Faust further and further from religious orthodoxy, a fact especially signaled by his comments leading up to each iteration of the translated verse, and relocates meaning from the text's words to the translator's thoughts. Faust introduces the first two versions with the phrase "It says"; before the third, he declares, "It ought to say"; and before the final, he proclaims "I write."[27] In other words, he foregrounds his own active role as an arbiter of textual meaning, over and above what is written in the book. He clearly signals his deviation from the "holy original," as he calls it earlier, and instead shows his encroaching role in crafting the verse's meaning—which would have profound theological implications. This ironically

unraveling translation reveals how intellectualistic approaches to religion can easily veer into heretical territory, with the translator doing as much as, if not more than, God to shape religion and direct human understandings of the world.[28] Through these thematic paradoxes between Faust's practice and religious orthodoxy, Goethe signals to readers that this passage should not be taken as an earnest profession of faith, but rather as the opposite.

Goethe also provides several formal clues that signal that what Faust believes he is doing is the opposite of what he enacts; put differently, these clues signal the passage is ironic. First is his use of repetition and escalation; he does not isolate the final word of the phrase but rather repeats the entire phrase four times. This repetition encourages readers to compare meanings, especially since each phrase occurs at the end of a line, which highlights the progression from "word" to "act." The translation's placement on the page similarly suggests that the meaning should not be read seriously, as this positioning links the translation to absurd moments from earlier in the scene. Immediately preceding this passage, Faust is carrying out two "conversations," one a scholarly, high-minded monologue about contentment and human knowledge, and the other a spontaneous series of rebukes to Mephisto the poodle. These two conversations are arranged differently on the page—the scholarly ponderings are indented slightly, and asides to the dog are flush with the left margin. While the translation spins out of Faust's high-minded musing, the translation itself is *also* left-justified on the page, linking the translation to Faust's hotheaded admonishments to Mephisto. This arrangement of the verses is consistent with the manuscript's first printing by Cotta in

1808 and in each subsequent edition published during Goethe's life, regardless of the house of publication (*Faustedition.net*). Given Goethe's active involvement in the revising and editing processes, this arrangement on the page is certainly significant and likely intentional. In response to the poodle's growling, Faust snaps:

> Stop snarling poodle! For the sacred strain
> To which my soul is now submitting
> Beastly sounds are hardly fitting.
> We are accustomed to see *men* disdain
> What they don't grasp;
> When it gives trouble, they profane
> Even the beautiful and the good.
> Do dogs, too, snarl at what's not understood? (ll. 1202–1209)[29]

In other words, Faust insinuates that the poodle is only making noise because he does not understand the profundity of the translation. Given the fact that this remark shares a similar left-hand justification with the translation scene, I argue that Goethe suggest both the poodle's snarling and Faust's translation are dilettantish, meaningless noise in response to something neither understand. The visual connection between the translation and Faust's off-the-cuff remarks, *not* his intellectual musings, further signals that readers should not interpret Goethe's depiction as earnest or straightforward.

The poetic form also signals the translation's irony.[30] Goethe composes the scene in *Knittelvers*, a doggerel-like verse form that suggests a comic or satirical content.[31] As David Chisholm writes in "Daniel Call's *Schocker*: German Knittelvers

in the late twentieth century," this verse form "has been used since the eighteenth century to describe four-stress rhyming couplets which seem to be rather simply and awkwardly constructed, and whose content is frequently comical, course, vulgar or obscene" (7). After 1677 the verse form was associated with humorous and satirical poetry in German, paralleling the French *poème burlesque* (*Goethe's Knittelvers* 7). Goethe used *Knittelvers* in earlier works that satirize theological issues, including *The Farce of Father Porridge* and *Lumberville Fair*.[32] This analysis is echoed by John Geary in *Goethe's* Faust*: The Making of Part I*, where he argues that "the lightness of the *Knittelvers* as a verse, the meter, makes us assume a lightness of content, an easiness of comprehension" (78). These rhyming couplets are regular in terms of meter and rhyme in a work which is full of Goethe's liberties in verse and rhyme scheme, which signals to the reader that the words on the page are not to be taken seriously. Goethe uses *Knittelvers* during crude or obscene moments or to denote the speech of the lower classes.[33] The disconnect between the lofty subject matter and earthy poetic form further indicates the scene cannot be read as an easy correspondence of Faust's explicit content and Goethe's intended message, and with the other thematic clues presented in the translation the reader encounters a great deal of evidence that casts doubt on the text's meaning.

While the poetic and thematic signals for irony are relatively straightforward, the target of Goethe's ironic critique is not as easily available to the reader. At this point, she must undertake her own analysis to determine the target of Goethe's ire. In the translation scene, for instance, Goethe's critique of biblical scholasticism could have

any number of targets. However, careful historical research points to one likely source: Carl Friedrich Bahrdt's adaptation-translation of the Bible, *Die neuesten Offenbarungen Gottes in Briefen und Erzählungen* (published 1773–1775) (Durrani 58).[34] Goethe was perturbed by what he saw as the intellectualist hubris of Bahrdt's translation, which aimed to provide a colloquial, accessible version of the Bible. The translation sought to remedy a host of issues in previous German versions: Bahrdt claimed to remedy the "oriental syntax and dictionary expressions" of the *Lutherbibel* by using "pure German expressions" that better represented the "content of the Bible, not its form" (Sheehan 140; Bahrdt 5). In order to make the message clearer to the average lay reader, Bahrdt assumed the role of translator and exegete; he frequently "inserted a thought which, although not exactly in written form in the text, the author has suggested or authorized a parallel" (5, my translation).[35] In other words, Bahrdt would make additions to the text as he saw fit, adding whole phrases or lines to the original. In addition, he claimed to rescue words that were "simply lost to true thought," along with keeping elements of the text only complementary to the German language and getting rid of that which is "incomprehensible or obscure" (5).[36] Bahrdt's translation can be described charitably as "free"; the less forgiving Lutheran officials of his day branded him a heretic. Throughout his foreword, he celebrates his translatorial prowess, much as Faust does in his translation scene.[37]

Goethe's satire of Bahrdt's work is clear when the two are compared side-by-side.[38] Both authors use simple diction in their translations. Bahrdt's word choice and syntax are simple: "The Word was already at the birth of this world" (327, my

translation).[39] Faust's translation is similarly straightforward, especially emphasized in the repetition of the phrase "In the beginning was the word" and the substituted clauses at the end (ll. 1224, 1229, 1233, 1237).[40] This parallel does not indicate Goethe's admiration for Bahrdt, whose translation was deeply unpopular, even heretical, in the late eighteenth century. As Jonathan Sheehan notes in *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship Culture*, in contrast to the pedagogical functions of biblical teaching, Bahrdt's translation "made his own heterodoxy into a pedagogical instrument of reform. In doing so, he violated that barrier between public speech and private teaching that governed the reactions to the Enlightenment Bible" (142). His translation was widely maligned and he was imprisoned for his anti-church stance. While Goethe was no fan of religious dogma, his pantheistic writings have little in common with Bahrdt's zealous intellectualist religion.

Moreover, Goethe's 1774 satire of Bahrdt's translation further confirms my argument that this scene is ironic. In *Prolog zu den neusten Offenbarungen Gottes verdeutscht durch Dr. Carl Friedrich Bahrdt*, an early polemical sketch, Goethe depicts a fictional scene in which Dr. Bahrdt's ridiculous priorities are exposed.[41] The sketch begins with the fictional Bahrdt's immersion in his translation: "An idea happens to come to me, / Thus should I speak, if Christ I'd be" (Carus 303).[42] In the main event of the short scene, the writers of the four New Testament gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) appear to Bahrdt in his study in search of hospitality. Rather than being humbled or inspired by the apostles, Goethe's theologian castigates their unkempt appearances, an outward appearance that mirrors the aesthetic disarray of their gospels:

"Your writings are, I must confess, / Just like your beards and like your dress, / Or old dollars, no longer at par, / Whose mint-stamps at a discount are, / Were they re-coined with copper alloy, / All the people would take them at par with joy" (Carus 303–304).[43] Despite their importance to Christianity, Bahrdt insists that the only way he would find the gospel writers acceptable would be if they took baths and changed their clothes. He is wholly uninterested in the substance of their visit, instead placing greater emphasis on their external appearances. This scene could be read as a metaphor for his translation practice, one more focused on outward appearance than inner substance. In this early work, Goethe depicts Bahrdt as a ridiculous figure, incapable of acknowledging the truth even if it was sitting in his study; this critique is consistent with Faust's heretical translation scene.[44]

Through this distortion of the gospel of John, Goethe points out the dangerous potentials of intellectualistic religion. Faust is often analyzed in terms of his quest for knowledge at all costs, most clearly articulated in his first monologue of the work—"I have, alas, studied philosophy, / Jurisprudence and medicine, too, / And, worst of all, theology / With keen endeavor, through and through" (ll. 354–357)—and his secular medical pursuits with his father. However, in this translation scene Goethe shows that religious intellectualism is just as harmful as Faust's secular quest for knowledge. Goethe identifies the various shapes that the desire for knowledge can assume to show his readers the subtle differences and easy slippages through which that desire, like Faust's translation, gets distorted. Moreover, this scene occurs immediately before

Faust makes his deal with the devil, heightening Goethe's message about the perils of excessive intellectualism.

"Feeling is all": Slippery Affective Rhetoric in "Martha's Garden"

The rest of Part I revolves around Mephistopheles's continued, and increasingly successful, temptation of Faust; arguably Faust's moment of capitulation to the diabolical figure unfolds during his seduction of Gretchen, a village girl with whom he is infatuated. He commands Mephistopheles to "get me that girl, and don't ask why" (l. 2619), the devil arranges for their tryst, and Faust abandons the young girl after impregnating her, leaving her imprisoned for having a child out of wedlock. While Goethe uses this scene to demonstrate the lengths to which Faust will go now that he is under Mephistopheles's sway, the poet also interjects a moment of controlled ironic critique into the seduction story. Similar to his critique of intellectualism in German Lutheranism, in "Martha's Garden"—the section where Faust persuades Gretchen to consummate their relationship, arguably the pivotal point of Gretchen's storyline in Part I—Goethe interjects a critique of Pietistic "feeling" to demonstrate the distortions of theology from multiple angles in the late eighteenth century.[45]

At the beginning of the scene, Gretchen asks Faust to reassure her by professing his Christian beliefs, a strategy she uses to convince herself that if he is also a believer, their sin will be less egregious. After evading several questions about what he does or does not believe, in a perfect non-confession he "confesses" to Gretchen and professes that outright declarations of faith have no importance because God's divinity is sublime:

Do not mistake me, you who are so fair.

Him—who may name?

And who proclaim:

I believe in him?

Who may feel,

Who dare reveal

In words, I believe him not? (ll. 3431–3437)[46]

According to Faust's confession, God is ineffable; sentiment is the only essential element of religious belief:

Do not we look into each other's eyes

And all in you is surging

To your head and heart,

And weaves in timeless mystery,

Unseeable, yet seen, all around you?

Then let it fill your heart entirely,

And when your rapture in this feeling is complete,

Call it then as you will,

Call it bliss! heart! love! God!

I do not have a name

For this. Feeling is all;

Names are but sound and smoke

Befogging heaven's blazes. (ll. 3446–3458)[47]

Faust eventually convinces Gretchen to leave her door unbolted that evening, secure in the knowledge of the imminent consummation, and avoids confessing his lack of faith.

While some scholars argue this scene is an earnest profession of pantheistic faith, I argue that Goethe includes many thematic and formal clues to signal his ironic meaning.[48] The most prominent formal indication is Faust's listing of potential names for God, which evokes the earlier translation scene and casts doubt on Faust's earnestness. The repetition of four possible terms—"bliss! heart! love! God!"—echoes the four possible translations Faust considers in the "Study" scene and, in creating that parallel, casts doubt on his belief in the viability of any one of those words, especially the last one ("God"), which corresponds with "Act" in his earlier translation. In other words, the fact that this list echoes the earlier translation scene, with its heretical overtones, suggests to the reader that Goethe is making a similarly ironic critique in this scene.

Thematic clues also point to a contradiction between Faust's appeal to Gretchen and Goethe's intended meaning. Gretchen notes the similarities between Faust's non-confession and the religious terms she hears each week at church, but ponders a divergence she can't quite identify: "Those are very fair and noble phrases; / The priest says something, too, like what you spoke— / Only his words are not quite so—" (ll. 3459–3461). Her earnest confusion over Faust's appeal further suggests to readers that we must not read his profession as a straightforward or theologically sound one. Moreover, Faust's decision to opt for an artful non-confession, rather than lie to Gretchen, further represents Goethe's intentional, and ironic, critique of emotionalist

religious discourse.[49] In an earlier scene Faust expresses no qualms about lying to Gretchen ("Street") but in "Martha's Garden" he twists religious discourse to avoid indicting himself.[50] The contradiction between his professed willingness to lie to Gretchen and his non-confession—in other words, Faust does not openly lie to Gretchen but develops a twisted argument—suggests to readers that the scene should not be taken at face value.

The contradiction of sacred form and profane content further indicates Goethe's ironic message. The poet heightens the contradiction of sacred and profane at the end of the passage when Faust applies the idea of "feeling," so central to his professed religious belief, to his proposed romantic tryst with Gretchen. Shortly after "confessing" his faith by appealing to her emotions and intuition, Faust attempts to direct the conversation back to his goal of consummating their relationship. He implores her, "Will there never be / At your sweet bosom one hour of rest / When soul touches on soul and breast on breast?" (ll. 3502–3504) In Faust's insistence that she focus predominantly on feelings, both religious and sensual, Goethe demonstrates that "feeling" can be twisted so far that it can be easily used for base purposes that subvert religious teachings. These thematic contradictions demonstrate that readers cannot, and should not, take Faust's confession at face value.

The final contradiction of this scene I wish to note is that between theme and form. The theme is fairly explicit—Faust's opportunistic twisting of religious ideas for personal advantage—and it also indirectly highlights the impotence of his non-confession. He uses the form of a religious catechism to do so, which further heightens

this contradiction. Gretchen begins by asking three questions of Faust: "How's it with your religion?" "Do you believe in God?" and "Then you deny him there?" (ll. 3415, 3426, 3431)[51] Faust responds with his profession of faith, which, I propose, parallels the structure of Martin Luther's small and large catechisms, the Nicene Creed, and the Heidelberg Confession. Faust's responses are also relatively short, which evokes the catechistic form. He alters the form slightly by answering Gretchen's questions with rhetorical questions of his own, interrogating whether it is possible, or wise, to profess religious belief at all; such a strategy contradicts much Christian practice. Additionally, as Ritchie Robertson notes in "Literary Techniques and Aesthetic Texture in *Faust*," "Martha's Garden" foregrounds "free rhythms," and the lack of any regular rhyme scheme shows "the futility of theistic or atheistic affirmation" (6).[52] Where the "Study" scene's sing-song cadence and repetition highlight Goethe's irony, here Goethe rejects regular meter and rhyme to echo the catechistic form while simultaneously demonstrating its impotence. For example, to reassure Gretchen of his earnest confession Faust explains: "Wherever you go, / All hearts under the heavenly day / Say it, each in its own way; / Why not I in mine?" (ll. 3462–3465) In German, the lines each have seven, 12, seven, and eight syllables, respectively, and none of the lines rhyme (in contrast to Kaufmann's English translation). While the poet evokes the call-and-response form of religious confession, in this scene he shows its lack of inner structure and meaning. The slippery boundary between religious and sensual feeling demonstrates to readers that we cannot see Faust's as an earnest confession.

This continual presence of contradiction does not indicate Romantic or deconstructive irony, however; Goethe illuminates these contradictions to expose what he sees as the hypocrisies of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Pietism. The themes and language Goethe uses in this scene parallel, and distort, the writings of prominent German Pietists. Through this parallel we see that the contradictions of Faust's confession expose the same contradictions of Pietism itself. Both Faust and German Pietists stretch the idea of religious feeling to the extent that it loses any religious meaning, in Goethe's understanding.

"Pietism" is a difficult term to define; however, for the purposes of this chapter I will use the following: it was a seventeenth century Protestant reform movement that originated in Germany.[53] While there were many offshoots of Pietism within Germany and around Western Europe, Scandinavia, Great Britain, and the United States, these groups held similar beliefs in "personal renewal and new birth, conventicle gatherings for Bible study and mutual encouragement, social activism and postmillennialism, and ecumenical cooperation—in contrast to the polemical Protestantism that gave rise to the Thirty Years War" (Shantz 7).[54] German Pietism rejected scholastic theology and instead emphasized the accessibility of faith through the believer's feelings and devotion.[55]

Goethe knew Pietism fairly well, both in theory and in practice, due to his close relationship with Susanna Katharina von Klettenberg in the early 1770s. Scholars have written about Goethe's use of Pietist ideas and themes, especially in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, both written in the early part of

the decade.[56] While Goethe was favorably disposed toward Pietism at first—especially the Herrnhut Moravians led by Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, to whose conventicle Klettenberg belonged—his interest waned significantly in the late 1770s.[57] Very little has been written connecting *Faust* to these Pietistic themes, even though the *Urfaust*, with its exclusive emphasis on the Gretchen tragedy, was composed between 1773–1775 (Boyle 224, Mason 188), during what Nicholas Boyle refers to as Goethe's "Pietistic phase" (76). Two notable exceptions include Thomas Tillmann's *Hermeneutik und Bibelexegese beim jungen Goethe* and Ronald Douglas Gray's *Goethe the Alchemist*, in which the scholars (respectively) argue that Faust's conversation with Wagner parallels Goethe's writings in *Zwo wichtigen bisher unerörterten biblischen Fragen* (Tillmann 175) and that the alchemical themes in *Faust* are a reflection of Goethe's reading of Gottfried Arnold's mystical Pietism (Gray 20). However, these works tend to regard Faust's emphasis on religion as seriously embracing the ineffability of religious belief and rejecting creedalism. For the reasons described above I would argue against this position, and instead propose that through Faust's confession Goethe parodies Pietistic insistence on feeling as the basis of belief. Since Goethe's understanding of Pietism was quite wide-ranging, it is difficult to identify a specific Pietist figure that Goethe is referencing. I argue that Goethe uses the basic ideas of Pietism as an amalgam to critique the sect as a whole.[58]

Faust's rejection of orthodox creedalism and what James Van Horn Melton refers to as the "disputational style of Lutheran scholasticism" parallel two trends in eighteenth-century Pietism (326). Pietists of all stripes rejected what they saw as an

overly rigorous emphasis on correct terminology at the expense of individual belief (Campbell 77, 81). Johann Arndt, for example, contrasted terminology with faith to argue that focusing on correct diction contradicted the basic premise of Christian belief: "Many think that theology is a mere science or rhetoric, whereas it is a living experience and practice … True Christianity consists, not in words or external show, but in living faith, from which arise righteous fruits, and all manner of Christian virtues, as from Christ himself" (qtd. in Campbell 81). Arndt's successor, Philip Jakob Spener, echoed this rejection of doctrine in *Pia Desideria*; and Arnold contended that earnest faith is so far beyond scholasticism that it is unnameable. Elizabeth Wilkinson writes in "The Theological Basis of Faust's *Credo*" that:

> Faust's speech follows the movement of Arnold's argument [in *Historie und Beschreibung der Mystischen Theologie*] pretty exactly[.] From the initial statement of God's Unnameability it moves down through the various ways of knowing Him which are open to man … to rise again at the end to a dismissal of all names, since, although a mirror by which God reveals himself, they are at the same time the veil by which he veils himself. (234)[59]

Furthermore, Faust adopts Arnold's phrase "befogging heaven's blazes" ("*Umnebelnd Himmelsgluth*") at the end of his "confession" to Gretchen. Faust's rejection of confession is thus more than an attempt to avoid lying to Gretchen; it is an example of Pietistic feeling.

Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf's lectures on religion are, I propose, a concrete point of comparison from which to analyze Goethe's ironic critique. Zinzendorf was an eighteenth-century religious official who founded the Herrnhut Pietists, better known as the Moravians.[60] Zinzendorf's mystical, pietistic writings express the same themes as does Faust in "Martha's Garden."[61] For example, in his *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion*, delivered in London in 1746, Zinzendorf proclaims that language is meaningless when it comes to religious belief. Insisting on "proper" terminology in discussing religious matters confuses the meaning of scripture and obfuscates the truth (43). Drawing from 1 Corinthians chapter 13, Zinzendorf writes: "Even if he [a believer] spoke with the tongues of angels, yet he would be nothing more than a ringing bell, impelled by a spirit foreign and unknown to himself but not full of the spirit inwardly in the heart" (*Lecture V* 45).[62] Zinzendorf's writings were seen as radical by his main-line Protestant counterparts; John Wesley wrote pejoratively that Zinzendorf had "no works; no law; no commandments" (qtd. in Forrell xvii). Of course, it is important to note that the Pietists, and especially Zinzendorf and the Moravians, did have their own catechism and creeds, which is somewhat of a contradiction to their stated position.[63] That being said, Pietists put significantly less emphasis on those documents, creedal and otherwise, compared to the day's orthodox Lutherans.

Scholastic approaches to religion elevated the role of the believer's intellect and gave individuals a false sense of self-importance; according to Zinzendorf, this self-aggrandizing was antithetical to Pietist practice (Faull 40). Faith is not equivalent to

knowledge, as Zinzendorf writes in the fifth lecture, as "there are … certain people who have insights into truths and are not yet saved, [so] it cannot be made a universal principle that knowledge saves" (*Lecture V* 45). Individual knowledge is inconsistent at best and places too much emphasis on the believer's achievements as opposed to her piety. Words are useless unless the believer feels the Holy Spirit moving within her.

The main components of religion, according to Zinzendorf, are love and belief, a perspective that Faust opportunistically echoes in his conversation with Gretchen.[64] In his speeches Zinzendorf repeatedly states that the only essential components of religion are the believer's religious feelings (*Lecture VII* 46, 80). Zinzendorf exacerbates the antagonism between intellect and feeling with a biblical example in Lecture Five: After his resurrection Jesus asks his disciple Peter, who denied Jesus three times during Jesus' crucifixion, not "do now you believe in me" but "do you love me?" (48) Love and belief cannot be known, intellectually speaking, but rather are intuited and felt by the believer. As Faull writes, in Zinzendorf's understanding religious knowledge comes from "the heart and not from a priori epistemological structures … Consequently, the heart, in contradistinction to the mind, is the place of contact … with God" (41).[65] The Bible and other religious texts were worthwhile insofar as they deepened the reader's feelings of devotion. Faith therefore must be "understood not through demonstrable proofs but rather through the individual *feeling* the truth which already resides in God's word" (Faull 33). Love, faith, and feeling are preconditions for knowledge and rationality, not the other way around. While knowledge cannot engender faith, true faith enlightens the believer in every sense, in Zinzendorf's understanding. In many

respects, this approach to religion was an egalitarian one; emphasizing the interior and subjective elements of faith, as opposed to experiences and educational background, opened religious discussion and leadership to women and commoners (Van Horn Melton).

The parallel between Faust and Zinzendorf, however, is not a positive one; Goethe exaggerates Faust's Pietistic rhetoric to expose the dangerous potential uses to which they could be put. The clearest ironization of Pietist thought comes with Goethe's reliance on the discourse of "feeling" (*Gefühl*) to express Faust's base desires. Zinzendorf's particular brand of Pietism used erotic language to describe a believer's faith and relationship with Christ. For example, all believers, regardless of their gender, considered themselves to be "brides of Christ" and believed God to be both their creator and husband (Zinzendorf 5). Furthermore, much Moravian liturgy focused on the "sweet, wet wounds" of Christ, which could also be interpreted to have sexual connotations.[66] Relationships between believers in a community were described in erotic terms as well (Farrelly 19). Goethe's decision to use Pietistic language, with its easy slippage into the visceral discussion of Gretchen's and Faust's liaison later that evening—"Will there never be / At your sweet bosom one hour of rest / When soul touches on soul and breast on breast?" (ll. 3502–3504)—reveals the dangerous potentials of emphasizing "feeling" at the expense of any other religious ideas. If erotic language can be used to discuss religion, he implies, using that same language and reasoning to persuade a partner into a sexual relationship is not too far off.

Additionally, the fact that Faust employs Pietistic ideas when speaking to Gretchen is significant. They occupy profoundly different social spheres, a fact that both parties recognize. Gretchen is triply disadvantaged because she is a young peasant girl. He weaponizes the ostensibly egalitarian language of Pietism to get his own way and assert his dominance over Gretchen. In this respect Goethe uses the circumstances of Faust's confession to illustrate the dangers to which this discourse can be put. Faust's confession is not an earnest one, but rather stretches Pietist ideas of belief to their breaking point to expose their hypocrisies.

In "Martha's Garden," Goethe ironizes the form of the catechism to reveal the slippery potentials of Pietistic feeling. In exposing Faust as an opportunist, Goethe also exposes Zinzindorf's strain of Pietist theology as dangerous, even heretical, in the extent to which it can be taken. Again, it is important to note that Goethe introduces this socio-historical critique of Pietism at a pivotal moment in the work, the central event of the Gretchen tragedy. By interjecting this specific critique, and combining it with an exploration of Faust's opportunism, at such a crucial moment of the plot, Goethe casts doubt on the possibility of German Lutheran Pietism as a coherent world-view.

Beyond "Sound and Smoke": Ironic Critique in World Literature

Through his critique of intellectualism and affect Goethe aims to expose false piety; his critique illuminates a serious issue requiring a remedy, in this case a more critical attitude regarding religious discourse. However, he does not uniformly condemn Christianity, nor assert that religion as a whole is not useful for making sense

of the world. Indeed, Gretchen's earnest religious beliefs are held as commendable throughout the work, even by Mephistopheles. For example, in the scene "Neighbor's House" (a few scenes before "Martha's Garden") Mephisto remarks about Gretchen, "You good, innocent child" in an aside, which demonstrates his lack of ulterior motives.[67] Gretchen's religious faith is an "intuitive moral compass" that has the capacity to give structure and logic to an individual's daily life, according to Krimmer (110), and suggests that Goethe is not uniformly critical of religion. Rather, Goethe reserves his scorn for "ecclesiastic institutions" (110).[68] As Eckermann notes in *Conversations with Goethe*, Goethe remarked that "there is no art in being clever when nothing is respected" (134). Goethe does not deny the validity of religion, nor the world governed by religious logic; instead, he points out some troublesome elements in need of reform. In other words, Goethe's is a controlled irony in the Kierkegaardian sense.

As a true Kierkegaardian master over irony, Goethe does not offer the reader any alternative approaches to religion; he does not identify sects, denominations, or dogmas that are more appropriate than Pietism. Rather, he invites the reader to reflect on the social context being depicted and acknowledge the need for action. In other words, he does not identify other methodologies or logics that may be more appropriate, or less heretical, but rather offers the ironic critique to the reader as an invitation to reflection and action. Goethe implicitly challenges his readers through this critique: now that you can see it, he seems to suggest, will you do anything to change it? As Stuart Atkins notes in *Goethe's* Faust, in "On Didactic Poetry" Goethe writes that "all

poetry should inform, though insensibly, and make man aware of what is important for him to inform himself of; the lesson has to be deduced as from life itself" (3). Goethe does not interject moralizing messages in his work, but rather engages readers. Through their active analysis of the work's ironic critique, Goethe facilitates the conditions for social change (and perhaps individual change as well).

This ironic commentary is not especially accessible or self-evident; it requires substantial historical research in German sources, as well as knowledge of historical verse forms and Lutheran theology. That being said, I argue that the precise historical situation is not as important as are the general ideas being critiqued—excessive intellectualism and distorted rhetorics of affect. In this sense, Goethe's clues to irony become increasingly important. For example, many fundamentalist Christian sects in contemporary America advocate an affective, anti-intellectual religious practice. Moreover, the basic critiques he offers of elevating individual interpretation above, and sometimes contrary to, the meaning of the text, and of distorting rhetoric to serve one's own purpose, can resonate in many different socio-historical contexts. While Goethe's critiques address eighteenth-century German religion, they could easily apply to distorted intellectual and affective nationalistic texts. By addressing these historically specific issues in an indirect way, Goethe both invites readers to consider how the critique applies to his context and facilitates our contemplation about how its themes might be extrapolated to other eras, nations, and disciplines.

It does not necessarily follow that his clues cannot be preserved in a work's circulation as world literature—that is, as the work is translated and read in a very

different national, social, and cultural milieu. Given the definition of world literature offered in Chapter Two above, and the ethics of translation necessary for conscientious world literature, I contend these clues can be retained under certain circumstances. First, the formal devices Goethe uses to signal irony—hyperbole, contradiction, repetition, and listing, among others—can be maintained in translation, especially because these clues are so dependent on the thematic context.[69] The scholastic translation scene will always contradict the affective catechism scene. Just because these clues may not be accessible to *all* readers in *all* contexts does not mean that they are *never* intelligible in circulation. That being said, many of these clues to Goethe's irony are stable because they rely on the work's content rather than on signals exclusive to nineteenth-century Germans.

Some clues are less evident, notably the connotations of *Knittelvers* in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century German. Translators have used a few different tactics to convey this signal to irony that depends on the socio-historical, linguistic, cultural, and religious context of the original work, strategies that correspond to Lawrence Venuti's ideas of domestication and foreignization. Translators including José María Valverde, Lucian Blaga, and Mori Ōgai have adapted the form of *Knittelvers* to reflect or echo a "local" verse form; one example is the play "Faustus in Africa," a South African adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, in which the poet Lesego Kampolokeng drew on local popular music to rewrite material in a rap-like rhythm that evokes *Knittelvers*.[70] To claim that Western poetry is so unique that it cannot be approximated in other languages is hubristic; acknowledging that *Knittelvers* is one

tradition of satirical poetry among many is a democratizing gesture that acknowledges the affinities of literary form even when written in diverse cultures. Ultimately, I suggest, the structural convergence of content and form make the signal to irony more recognizable as such and therefore more easily translatable.

However, I realize that the above naively presupposes an equal exchange between literary works translated into English and those translated from English; the statistics about the international book market, and the types of books that become works of world literature, demonstrate that there is a huge imbalance of works translated from English into other languages.[71] Translating Goethe's *Faust* into a non-Western language, and adapting it into a local poetic form, could have the contradictory effect of further glorifying English-language (and Western European) literary forms, since the idea that one English form can stand in for a host of other very different literary traditions does, in some respects, overvalorize the English form and suggest its preeminence.[72]

Arguably a more effective strategy, suggested by translators and critics of world literature, is to adopt an approach that melds world literature, area studies, and translation theory, specifically in providing copious explanatory notes to help the reader orient herself.[73] Put differently, I argue that controlled irony can be better preserved through thematic metonymy, made possible through scholarly apparatuses that provide the necessary contextual information to help the reader in the target culture interpret the text and, especially, moments of controlled irony. If Goethe's translation scene were thoroughly glossed, explaining the historical, cultural, and literary valences of

Knittelvers, the reader would have an increased chance of discerning the author's ironic approach. Again, as Damrosch and André Lefevere note, the student of world literature in translation can never become a complete specialist on the text, but rather in reading these works she gains greater perspective on both the context in which it was produced and her own.[74] Through these explanatory notes a translator of world literature could help the reader identify signals to irony, especially those that involve culturally and linguistically specific verse forms; facilitate intercultural understanding; and promote Herderian world-historical development.

The reader then assumes an active role not only in recognizing the irony but also in searching for, or deciphering, the historical context the ironic passage references. In this way, irony serves as a point of departure (*Ansatzpunkt*) into the text's socio-historical context, and the reader actively comprehends the work and the author's allusions in a way not required of readers in straight-forward texts. Through these clues authors also signal to readers some of the great concerns of their day; in interpreting the ironies of a literary text the reader becomes familiar with the society's concerns and priorities. Recognizing these ironies in a work of world literature facilitates readers' (and writers') ability to identify similar social concerns in their own context and address them appropriately, especially from the sense of perspective facilitated by reading a work of world literature on its own terms. Irony, unlike aspects of world literature that focus on "universal themes," emphasizes socio-historically contextual concerns; with the help of explanatory notes and glosses from a translator or content expert, the reader becomes increasingly familiar with the society being depicted.

Chapter Four

"Obdurate Facts":

Subversive Historians in *The Master and Margarita*

In remarks made during a 2013 conference, British Member of Parliament Jeremy Corbyn criticized British Zionists' lukewarm response to an address made by Manuel Hassassian, then the Palestinian ambassador to the U.K. Corbyn proposed that one reason for this tepid reaction was due to the fact that the Zionists, "having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives, they don't understand English irony" (qtd. in Mead). In offering this anti-Zionist response (and suggesting that these British citizens are un-English), Corbyn reinforced the notion that irony is culturally specific. To be "in" on the true meaning of irony, in this view, requires such a high degree of cultural fluency that only central members of a discursive community can understand it. If true, this assertion suggests that irony—even the controlled irony described in the previous two chapters—cannot be adequately understood in circulation and that the very idea of irony in works of world literature is impossible.

However, such an assertion is false, as evidenced by the prominence of ironic texts in world literature, chief among them Goethe's *Faust*. In the final two chapters I turn to two texts that further demonstrate the intelligibility of irony in circulation: Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Wilson Harris' *The Infinite Rehearsal*. As adaptations of Goethe's work, these novels support my claim that irony is translatable and can be understood outside of its original context of production.

Bulgakov and Harris use Goethe's framework of engaged irony in their adaptations of the epic verse-drama, suggesting that both authors understood the original work's ironic critique. The fact that two very different authors, working in different linguistic, historical, and socio-political contexts—early twentieth-century Russia and postcolonial Guyana, respectively—employ irony in a similar way as Goethe suggests both novelists recognized Goethe's ironic critique as such.

However, Bulgakov and Harris do not import Goethe's indirect critique of German Pietism into their works. Rather, they use his form of ethical irony—one that is controlled in the Kierkegaardian sense and includes clues to its meaning—and alter the content to critique issues unique to their own societies. Attending to the ways in which authors deploy irony emphasizes the major socio-political concerns of the author's place and time; if a reader considers the engaged function of irony in works of world literature, she can learn a great deal about the author's socio-historical context. In reading works of world literature and learning this information, she thus learns the tools to identify similar critiques in her own society and, in so doing, facilitates world-historical development in the Herderian sense.

Bulgakov's controversial novel *The Master and Margarita* reflects the process of the circulation, uptake, and transculturation of ironic critique. He signals his reliance on Goethe in several ways and employs indirect critique in conditions in which an earnest call for change could have resulted in his death. While Bulgakov offers several critiques in the course of the novel, one of the most strident is his exposé of the Bolshevik party's attitude toward history. The characters' rejection of historical fact in

favor of fictional narrative challenges the political uses of the discipline in Stalinist Russia. Like Goethe before him, Bulgakov draws readers' attention to the false claims of one of his society's dominant ideologies.

In the following pages I break my argument into two sections: the first contains my argument that adaptations demonstrate the intelligibility of ironic critique in world literature. In the second I offer a close reading of Bulgakov's controlled irony in *The Master and Margarita* and draw parallels to the author's contemporaneous societal concerns.

Variations on a Theme by Goethe

In contemporary American culture, "adaptation" is largely synonymous with converting a novel into a film (or worse, the reverse process). However, the definition is much broader than suggested by these recent connotations. An expanded definition of the term offers a framework to better understand the way irony circulates in world literature. In *Theories of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon explains that adaptation can alternately refer to a copy/paste process of composition, a mode of reading and writing concerned with appropriating another text, and an intertextual mode of writing and reading (8). Put differently, adaptation is a mode of writing that borrows from, and makes extended reference to, another text; the finished product must signal clear references to the source text and yet mark a new interpretation, setting, or outcome of the original. In addition to this authorial process, adaptations proscribe a mode of engagement in which readers, to fully appreciate the text, must comprehend both source

and target works and can "oscillate" between them, as I explain further below. Of course, intertextuality is not necessarily synonymous with adaptation; other intertextualities include allusions, translations, transcriptions, condensations, bowdlerizations, abridgements, censored editions, retellings, and spinoffs (Hutcheon 171).

Adaptations do not efface the presence of the original work; rather, many authors openly acknowledge their reliance on, and alteration of, an original text. Hutcheon notes that an adaptation consciously signals its dependence on the "original" text so that the connections between the two are recognizable. In this way adaptations are "palimpsestuous" works, to use Michael Alexander's term, that always reference the source work (Hutcheon 6). For an adaptation to be successful as an independent work, however, it must be intelligible by both readers who are familiar with the source work (what Hutcheon calls "knowing" audiences) and those who are unfamiliar with it ("unknowing" audiences) (121). Adaptations must also deviate from the source work in meaningful ways, given the author's artistic innovations and the influence of the author's cultural context.

As a text is adapted it undergoes a transformation that is not only artistic but also cultural. This change—which Hutcheon calls "indigenization" or "transculturation"—is an essential component of the process (Hutcheon xviii, 146, 161). Hutcheon proposes that Edward Said's concept of traveling theory is an analogue to the transculturation of an adaptation (Hutcheon 150). In *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Said explains that as an idea (or theory) moves beyond its original context, it is

met with and altered by "a set of conditions—call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistances—which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration … [t]he now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place" (227). Hutcheon contends that adapted texts function much in the same way. As the source text to be adapted enters a new socio-political, linguistic, and historical environment, the author of the adaptation transforms the ideas of the source text to integrate them into the target culture more seamlessly: "Almost always, there is an accompanying shift in the political valence from the adapted text to the 'transculturated' adaptation. Context conditions meaning, in short" (145). The process of circulation and change thus produces the conditions for the adaptation to successfully circulate in that new context.[1] In this way the original work and its adaptations operate much like the "theme and variation" idea in musical works, but rather than rely solely on artistic alteration, differences also depend on formal constraints, the adapter, the audience, and the author's socio-historical setting (Hutcheon 142).

Focusing on the changes made to an original work in an adaptation throws into relief the contexts that shaped both source and target texts. Hutcheon suggests that readers' pleasure in interpreting the palimpsestuous adaptation depends on their ability to recognize both the similarities *and* the differences between source and target texts. As readers work through an adaptation they oscillate between the primary text and the adaptation, comparing one against the other (xv). In this way "recognition and

remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (4). These cyclical moments of reading, possible for the reader even if she encounters the adapted text first and then reads the original, simultaneously raise the question of how much each iteration is shaped by its socio-historical, ethnic, and national context of production: "In shifting cultures and therefore sometimes shifting language, adaptations make alterations that reveal much about the larger context of reception and production" (28). By comparing the differences and similarities between, for example, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*, readers are presented with information that enables them to compare prevailing attitudes toward colonialism in eighteenth-century England and twentieth-century South Africa, respectively. In this way, adaptations advance Herder's stated goal that world literature in circulation fosters inter-cultural understanding.

Irony in world literature—including in adapted texts—highlights both the source and target cultures in many ways. Controlled irony is a socially engaged approach, so comparing two authors' uses of indirect critique highlights the authors' social concerns.[2] In this respect irony and adaptation, when considered together, amplify one another to emphasize the author's concerns. Adaptations of ironically inflected world literary texts also demonstrate that these works are intelligible, at least partially, in circulation. The evidence of inter-cultural and international understanding—seen in the multiple adaptations of Goethe's *Faust* by Hector Berlioz, Osamu Tezuka, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, for example—is further strengthened by the prevalence of controlled irony in many target texts. In adaptations, authors shift the content of ironic critique but

maintain its form as a socially engaged device. Bulgakov and Harris both wield irony in a similar manner to Goethe to demonstrate the need for change in their own societies.

In his novel *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov uses many of Goethe's formal manifestations of irony, but the Russian dissident alters the content to address twentieth-century Russia. Like Goethe, Bulgakov calls for socio-historical change in an era in which earnest critiques were ineffective and facilitates the conditions for world-historical development. To support my claim about Bulgakov's controlled irony, I demonstrate first that, contrary to claims by many Bulgakov scholars, *The Master and Margarita* is indeed an adaptation of the German work. I then analyze how Bulgakov transculturates ironic critique to reveal the hypocrisies of historical discourse in Soviet Russia.

The Master and Margarita as an Adaptation

My initial claim, that *The Master and Margarita* is an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, is a controversial one in Bulgakov scholarship. Interpretations of *The Master and Margarita* are numerous and varied, ranging from Elena N. Mahlow's contention that the novel is an allegory of Soviet society, to Ari Belenkiy's claim that the Master is Bulgakov's autobiographical character, to Leslie Milne's assertion that the novel is a carnivalesque representation of Soviet society.[3] One possible reason for these numerous and divergent interpretations is the fact that Bulgakov left eight drafts of the novel (despite attempting to destroy the first during a period of political exile). While the eighth and final version is largely regarded as the most complete, editors and

translators have tried to address the text's gaps and inconsistencies by incorporating passages from earlier drafts. Bulgakov's third wife, Elena Sergeevna Bulgakova, also shaped the text after the author's death by deleting and inserting passages based on what she felt her husband would have wished. Finally, the novel's censorship by the Soviet authorities, while now long past, continues to create confusion. The novel was heavily censored by the Soviet authorities upon its initial publication in *Novy mir* in 1964; this censored version was the source text for the first English translation as well. The full version of the original Russian did not come out until 1967. The fact that so many different versions of the novel exists gives rise to these many interpretations.[4]

Despite the (often conflicting) abundance of interpretations, I contend that Bulgakov's transformation of Goethe's epic verse-drama is a critical yet under-acknowledged layer of meaning to the work.[5] Bulgakov's transformation of Goethe's ironic critiques dramatically alters the story line but the author still references the source work in numerous ways, especially through ironic critique. Many scholars claim that the significant differences between the two works discredit any superficial connections; however, I will argue below that these differences support my decision to read Bulgakov's novel as an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*.[6]

Bulgakov signals his reliance on the original text in several ways; two of the most obvious are the epigraph and the characters' names.[7] The epigraph is taken from the scene in *Faust I* in which Mephistopheles and Faust meet for the first time: "'Who are you, then?' / 'I am part of that power which eternally / wills evil and eternally works good'" (*Faust* ll. 1335–1336, Bulgakov 3). While Andrew Barratt contends the

epigraph is a red herring that does not suggest a parallel with Goethe's text, I would argue that including such a conspicuous reference is meaningful because it calls attention to similarities between the two works.[8] The use of names similarly emphasizes the affinities between the two works. Woland is not a name typically associated with the devil, but it is one of Mephistopheles' names from *Faust I*.[9] Additionally, Bulgakov called the Master "Faust" in drafts of the novel up to 1934, as J. A. E. Curtis notes in *Bulgakov's Last Decade: The Writer as Hero* (31), and "Margarita" is the Russian form of Margarethe (Gretchen's full name), which links the female love interests of the works' respective Faust characters. The similarities between the characters extend to their personalities as well: Woland is recognized widely as a variation on Mephistopheles, the Master is read as a Faustian character, and Margarita is understood to be a (less tragic) twentieth-century iteration of Goethe's Gretchen.[10] While the parallels between the Goethean characters and their counterparts in Bulgakov's novel are not always exact, the similarities between them support the "theme and variation" reading of the two works.

Comparing Mephistopheles and Woland illustrates Bulgakov's reliance on the German text. Both characters are (arguably) the main characters in their respective narratives. As Richard Ilgner notes, the devil's central role distinguishes Bulgakov's novel as a Goethean adaptation, especially compared to the Faust works by his peers, A. V. Lunacharsky and V. F. Odoevsky, who downplay the devil's significance (179). Woland and Mephisto are both agents of change as they upend the Faust figure's life and challenge the prevailing social order. More importantly, both facilitate conditions

for others to sin. Woland is not the active tempter Mephistopheles is, instead leaving that task to his henchmen Koroviev, Azazello, and Behemoth; but like Mephistopheles, Woland exposes humanity's underlying greed and selfishness. Smaller details also strengthen the parallel between the two characters and thus the two works. For instance, poodle imagery recurs throughout both source and adapted texts: Woland carries a cane with a poodle head as the knob, and during Satan's Ball Margarita wears a necklace plate with a poodle on it and rests her feet on a cushion embroidered with a poodle (10, 261, 263–4); and Mephistopheles (of course) appears to Faust in the shape of a poodle (ll. 1154–1321).[11] I do not deny that there are differences between these two characters—I agree with Proffer that Woland is an ironic tempter, not a nefarious or worldly character (545), and even Haber's assertion that Bulgakov's devil "reassert[s] life" is distinctly different from Mephistopheles' "attempts to annihilate it."[12] That being said, there are more similarities than differences between these two figures.[13]

In addition to these character similarities, the structure of Bulgakov's novel parallels that of Goethe's text. In "Story and Symbol: Notes Toward a Structural Analysis of *The Master and Margarita*," Bruce A. Beatie and Phyllis W. Powell identify several parallel scenes between the two works, most notably including "Walpurgis Night" and "Satan's Ball" (224).[14] The centrality of the romance is another shared element that shows *The Master and Margarita* as an adaptation of *Faust*. Barratt notes that Goethe adds the love story to the *Faust* myth; the romance between Faust and Gretchen is unique to Goethe's version and is absent in later renderings of the legend, including Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (Barratt 278). The romance between

Margarita and the Master, when combined with the other structural similarities, confirms the work as an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*. The works have strikingly similar outcomes as well, as A. C. Wright proposes in "Satan in Moscow": "The details may be different but the overall comparison remains valid. And in general terms, the duality of good and evil in Goethe is not far removed from that in Bulgakov …" (1163).

Of course, this is not to say that the two works are similar in every way. Bulgakov's characters diverge from Goethe's in a number of ways: the Master is accused of being a failed Faust; Woland and Mephistopheles do not expose human failings in the same way or for the same purpose; and Margarita is a more active character than Gretchen.[15] Moreover, scholars have identified several possible source texts for Bulgakov's work, including Pavel Florenskii's treatise "The Imaginary in Geometry"; Ernst Renan's *La vie de Jésus*, Arthur Drews' *The Christ Myth*, and Henri Barbusse's *Les Judas de Jésus*; Tacitus' *Annals*; and his father's theological writings, among others.[16] Laura Weeks concludes that Bulgakov's work is not an adaptation but is rather a subversion of Goethe's *Faust* because the Russian novelist alters so many elements ("What I Have Written, I Have Written" 22).[17]

However, I argue that these differences, far from negating the parallels, actually support reading *The Master and Margarita* as an adaptation of *Faust*. Again, one major requirement for an adaptation is that it emphasizes both similarities to, *and differences from*, the original; the reader's pleasure of consuming an adaptation lies in the recognition of both parallel and divergent elements. The discontinuities between these works demonstrate Bulgakov's transformation of *Faust* to speak to 1920s Russia. *The*

Master and Margarita is an independent text that is enriched by the similarities with Goethe's work, not dependent on them. If Bulgakov had not transformed the Woland character from Goethe's humorous corrupter, who creates conditions for sin and revels in it, into an aloof, sardonic tempter, who observes the Muscovites as they indict themselves without his assistance, the work would have remained a retelling of *Faust* rather than an adaptation. As Curtis writes in *Bulgakov's Last Decade*, "Bulgakov borrows suggestive images from a text, but then leaves them to acquire a new life of their own in a fresh context" (170). In short, the parallels between the two works are so strong, and the differences so contextually specific, as to justify reading *The Master and Margarita* as an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*.

Another reason I argue *The Master and Margarita* is an adaptation of Goethe's work is due to Bulgakov's use of controlled irony. Like Goethe, the Russian novelist uses moments of indirect critique to expose under-recognized hypocrisies in contemporary social ideology. Bulgakov employs several literary devices to signal his critique: for example, he parodies the Eucharist in "Satan's Ball" by having Woland drink blood from Berlioz's severed skull, adds incongruous interjections to question the skaz narrator's legitimacy, and uses Aesopian language (passive, agentless sentences) to allude to the secret police.[18] These moments of ironic critique do not invalidate the narrator's veracity or cast doubt on objective truth, as I will argue below. Rather, in the spirit of Goethe and Kierkegaard's controlled ironist, Bulgakov uses this form of indirect critique in limited moments to draw attention to social contradiction, simultaneously signaling the solution to deciphering the riddle. As David Bethea notes

in *The Shape of the Apocalypse*, "Bulgakov's lyrical flights and satiric strafing missions are always under the control of a restrained and calculating pilot" designed to expose societal issues without invalidating the whole society (193).

Most of these ironic critiques are aimed at the Soviet state. While scholars have debated the target of Bulgakov's comments, proposing that he attacks Socialist Realism, rationality, and Joseph Stalin, I argue that the primary object of critique, and the most Goethean in nature, is that of the Soviet concept of history.[19] Through these critiques Bulgakov highlights the cross-purposes of historical discourse in Soviet Russia: although Soviet historians in the 1920s claimed to rewrite Russian history to more accurately reflect the Bolshevist spirit, in actuality they distorted historical fact to suit party doctrine. Bulgakov highlights distorted history through repetition, as three of the main characters (Woland, the Master, and Ivan) are historians with uneasy relationships to state authority. Through these politically indeterminate figures Bulgakov questions the veracity of Bolshevist historical narratives.

Outsider Historians

From the novel's first scenes at Patriarch's Ponds, Bulgakov establishes an opposition between historical truth and party narrative. One of the most overt ways he signals this tension is in contrasting the narratives associated with each perspective. There are, scholars generally agree, three narrative voices in the novel that serve different functions: the skaz narrator in Moscow gossips about the literati's intrigues; a limited third-person narrator explains Woland's antics in Moscow; and an omniscient

narrator in Yershalaim narrates the story of Pontius Pilate's trial of Jesus and its aftermath. The account offered by the skaz narrator, the central narrator in the Moscow sections who discusses official literary matters, is the ostensibly factual one in Bulgakov's novel because it recounts the day-to-day events of Muscovite society. As I will show below, however, this narrator has notoriously faulty and incomplete knowledge of events, and Bulgakov uses moments of incorrect interpretation to raise questions about the veracity of official accounts (Amusin 364). The Yershalaim narrator, on the other hand, offers a credible explanation of the events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion through neutral reportage. The factual tone conveying the mythical story implies that this section is more factual than the one set in Moscow.

However, despite their (ostensibly) true knowledge of historical events, the three characters are not commended for this understanding; on the contrary, they are ostracized from official society. Historical knowledge is depicted as antithetical to party doctrine.[20] These characters' marginalization directly contradicts the prominent status accorded to historians in Soviet Russia during the 1920s, especially as they were among the most politically inclined academics working to support Stalin's agenda. This disjuncture between the world of the novel and Bulgakov's reality illuminates the Russian novelist's critique of the Bolsheviks' opportunistic uses and abuses of history.

Bulgakov first signals his ironic critique of "party-approved" history through the skaz narrator's tone. A skaz narrator, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, is a colloquial first-person narrative style, marked by slang and dialect, and evokes spoken stories rather than written ones. In Bulgakov's novel, the skaz narrator

acts as an intermediary between characters and readers, demonstrating to readers how each event should be interpreted; however, the skaz narrator has suspect interpretations and thus does not act as the work's neutral perspective. Mikhail Berlioz, the "editor of a fat literary journal and chairman of the board of one of the major Moscow literary associations, called Massolit for short" (Bulgakov 7), commissioned and rejected an anti-religious poem written by the then-poet (later historian) Ivan Nikolaevich Ponyrev, known by the pseudonym Bezdomny ("Homeless").[21] Berlioz rejects the poem because it depicts Jesus as a historical figure; however, the way in which the narrator describes Berlioz's reaction undercuts his claims to the truth. The editor, as the narrator explains, lectures that:

> … this same Jesus, as a person, simply never existed in the world, and all the stories about him were mere fiction, the most ordinary theology … Displaying a solid erudition, [Berlioz] also informed the poet, among other things, that the passage in the fifteenth book of Tacitus's famous *Annals*, the forty-fourth chapter, where mention is made of the execution of Jesus, was nothing but a later spurious interpretation. (9)

Loaded terms like "erudition" and "spurious," immediately suggest the narrator's hyperbolic position; moreover, the narrator does not identify Berlioz's historical error in the editor's assertion that Flavius Josephus does not acknowledge Jesus' historical existence (Peavar and Volokhonsky 398 fn. 7). The narrator so quickly and enthusiastically agrees with Berlioz, and his faulty knowledge, that Bulgakov calls into question the veracity of both character and narrator. As Vida Taranovski Johnson

suggests in "The Thematic Function of the Narrator in *The Master and Margarita*," "the ironic voice of this intrusive narrator is so strong that it defines the satirical level of the work … The narrator thus acts as a moral barometer, clarifying the author's attitudes and directing the reader's response to characters and events" (281).[22] Through hyperbole, enthusiasm, and uncritical acceptance, the skaz narrator signals to readers that Berlioz's knowledge is incomplete at best.[23]

The Yershalaim narrator, and those characters with privileged access to events described therein (Woland, the Master, and Ivan Bezdomny), conversely are suggested to be objective arbiters of historical truth.[24] The novel's three historian characters are the only characters with direct experience of the Yershalaim story; they are not passive listeners of Woland's story, but rather Ivan and Berlioz witness the events as if they were experiencing them in real time.[25] The second chapter concludes with the (somewhat) sympathetic figure of Pilate pronouncing Jesus' execution and then returning to his palace, and the third chapter begins with the same words that concluded the previous chapter, as if Woland had told the whole story to Berlioz and Ivan. When the story is done, both men "awake" suddenly from the story, feeling as if they had fallen asleep; Ivan puzzles, "'How is it I didn't notice that he'd managed to spin a whole story? … It's already evening! … Or maybe he wasn't telling it, but I simply fell asleep and dreamed it all?'" (42) Later, in his dreams, Ivan watches Jesus' crucifixion (171–182). Bulgakov confirms the veracity of the Yershalaim narrative with Woland's assertion to Berlioz that he "was personally present at it all. I was on Pontius Pilate's balcony, and in the garden when he talked with Kaifa, and on the platform, only

secretly, incognito, so to speak" (43). Given these facts, we infer that these characters were transported to these events alongside Woland, or at the least that Woland gave them access to his first-hand account.[26]

Bulgakov's use of irony in this section aligns with the Oxford English Dictionary's third sense of the term—that the outcome of the situation is contradictory to the reader's expectations. Paradoxically, even though the four chapters in Yershalaim are ostensibly less believable than the material existence of life in Moscow—given their biblical nature—the omniscient narratorial voice offers none of the skaz narrator's hyperbolic interjections or faulty interpretations, but rather creates the atmosphere of objective historical narrative. The scenes in Yershalaim are presented in a straightforward manner, without exaggerated elements or language, which suggests to the reader that they should be read unironically. This presentation of historical fact is a neutral approach to history and is more trustworthy than the skaz narrator's biased approach. In juxtaposing these narratives, Bulgakov indirectly encourages readers to ponder their willingness (like the skaz narrator) to agree with Berlioz's orthodox view of history.

Despite their access to objective truth, the novel's three historians operate on the fringes of official Bolshevik society, suggesting that this historical knowledge is incompatible with party doctrine. This incompatibility is identifiable as ironic—again, in the OED's third sense—in Bulgakov's violations of readers' expectations about the discipline of history. Through Berlioz's insistence on "correct" historical interpretation, Bulgakov indicates the discipline's centrality in the orthodox world of the novel.

Regardless of what we, as readers, think about Berlioz's false erudition, the editor places significant importance on historical narrative; this adherence to party ideology is echoed several chapters later, when the Master explains that his novel about Pilate was denounced for "attempt[ing] to foist into print an apology for Jesus Christ" (144). The fact that three of the novel's main characters, as historians, deviate from this narrative so insistently suggests to readers that this violation of expectations demands attention.

Woland's intimate knowledge of the Yershalaim sections immediately establishes him as a man outside of the official orbit, a perception that is reinforced in several ways. Berlioz identifies Woland as a historian, given that Woland claims he comes to Moscow to examine the "original manuscripts of the tenth-century necromancer Gerbert of Aurillac" (18).[27] In the following chapters he makes no attempt to abide by Soviet norms or policies—for example, while Nikanor Ivanovich assumes Woland should live at the Metropol, Koroviev insists that "He doesn't like hotels! I've had them up to here, these foreign tourists!" (98) Even as a diabolical judge Woland is a passive observer, allowing the members of his retinue to engage in Moscow's official circles while he watches, and judges, citizens from the sidelines. Azazello, Koroviev (also known as Fagot), Behemoth, and Hella antagonize comfortable Muscovites, tempting them to sin; Woland, on the other hand, observes society from a distance. Woland consistently distances himself from contemporary Moscow, especially its official structures and apparatuses. He is a historical expert who wants nothing to do with Soviet society or party doctrine.[28]

The Master, a historian by education, is similarly isolated from official governmental and social structures due to his historical knowledge of the Yershalaim narrative, as represented by and contained in his novel.[29] While many scholars have debated whether the Yershalaim chapters represent the body of the Master's novel, I argue they are for several reasons. One of the clearest illustrations of that fact is Margarita's reading of the burned manuscript in chapter 25—the words she reads from the singed notebook (298) are the same as those that begin the next section of the Yershalaim narrative (299). I further propose that the Master's novel is not an artistic creation but, rather, is a retelling of empirical historical truth. Several characters—Berlioz, Woland, the Master, Ivan, and Margarita—have direct experience with this novel through dreams, visions, and readings. Despite the fact that each character encounters this narrative in different ways, the story recounted remains consistent in tone and focus (Amusin 66). In the sanitorium, Ivan tells the Master of the vision to which Woland had granted him access, recounting Jesus' audience with Pontius Pilate; the Master's response—"Oh how I guessed! How I guessed it all!" (135)—suggests that the Master channeled historical fact rather than crafted a fictional tale.

The Master's historical knowledge is regarded by government officials as deeply dangerous. When he shares his work with the government-sponsored literary organization, Massolit, his work is rejected outright and he is denounced in the newspaper and then imprisoned for three months (143, 149). His peers' strong reactions against his work, especially given their official governmental positions, suggests that the knowledge the Master presents is too dangerous to be passed on to

other citizens. Moreover, these officials believe that the Master must be discredited to prevent his ideas from being taken seriously. He is imprisoned for his writings; when he returns to Moscow from his imprisonment, he commits himself to the sanitorium as he has nowhere else to go and feels completely isolated from Muscovite society (199). His knowledge of the historical events depicted in the Yershalaim section have imperiled his life to such a degree that the only place in which he is safe is in a madhouse. Through his depiction of the Master, Bulgakov demonstrates the serious consequences of not adhering to party doctrine. Historical truth is anti-Bolshevik and dangerous to the whole society.

Ivan, the third historian, is similarly a man on the fringes of official society. Ivan is first introduced as a party member in good standing, someone committed to strengthening party doctrine; however, he immediately betrays his own ignorance because, unlike his mentor Berlioz, Ivan cannot discern the correct historical narrative to use in his poem discrediting Christianity. In his earnestness to write an anti-religious poem to publish in Berlioz's journal, he misses the fact that the party holds that Jesus did not exist at all. Even in his most politically engaged moments, therefore, Ivan stands apart from his fellow party members. Ivan moves further away from Bolshevik ideology after his experience with Woland in Patriarch's Ponds, especially in the asylum where he has a vision of Yeshua's crucifixion and death. Both he and the Master have extended recourse to this historical narrative only in the mental institution. As Tomislav Z. Longinović suggests, "Bulgakov actually wants to emphasize the fact

that historical truth is often on the side of those who are excluded from the realm of 'normality'" (43).

At the end of the novel Bulgakov demonstrates just how far Ivan strays from Bolshevik party doctrine regarding historical narratives and suggests that his historical knowledge prevents his meaningful, sustained engagement in Bolshevik society. Once a year the erstwhile poet, now a professor at the Institute of History and Philosophy, has a solitary breakdown on the anniversary of Woland's arrival in Moscow. He visits the bench at Patriarch's Ponds where he and Berlioz sat and conversed with Woland, and gazes in the windows at Margarita's former residence (393); after making this nocturnal journey he "returns home completely ill" and recovers after his wife gives him a sedative (394–95). Even though he has given up one party activity for another, poetry for history, Ivan cannot fully "enter the fold" of political orthodoxy but remains distinct from official society in this significant way.[30]

The party officials, including Berlioz, Lunacharsky, Ariman, and Latunsky, paradoxically dismiss the historical fact of the Yershalaim section, instead adhering to the fictional narrative established by party doctrine. For example, Ariman and Latunsky denounce the Master's novel in the press, claiming that it is "an apology for Jesus Christ" and that the Master is an "icon-dauber" (144). While Berlioz does have limited experience with this narrative—he, like Ivan Bezdomny, sees the vision of Pilate's conversation with Yeshua in chapter two—he is killed by a tram-car shortly afterwards. I propose that Berlioz's swift death, after being shown the truth, suggests a fundamental

incompatibility of official ideology and historical truth. Historical narrative is thus depicted as antithetical to party approaches to history.

In this novel, party officials' professed respect for history is repeatedly overturned by their punishment of those who articulate a veracious narrative, an ironic contradiction that challenges the Soviet historical narrative of the 1920s. The disjuncture Bulgakov depicts between historical truth and ideological narrative critiques the Bolsheviks' hypocritical stance toward historical discourse. Although Stalin and other officials proclaimed history to be an essential discipline, only certain lines of inquiry were acceptable; expressions of politically inconvenient facts were punished swiftly and severely. The prominence of historians in Bulgakov's work alludes to the critical role played by historians in Stalin's Russia, especially in the 1920s, who were deeply engrained in the fabric of the Soviet state and whose works reinforced Bolshevik ideology.

The Uses and Abuses of History for Stalin

History was a highly ideological discipline in Soviet Russia and historians routinely reframed narratives of Russian history to align with party politics. Elaine McClarnand MacKinnon contends that during the 1920s and 1930s Russian historians saw their field as "a battlefield for revolutionary ideals, the harnessing of Soviet history to the political needs of the Stalinist state, the monumental projects mobilizing vast numbers of people, the collective writing of history, the merging of scientific methods with propaganda, and the creation of a Bolshevized academic culture of specific rituals,

language, and practices" (6–7).[31] In order to accomplish these goals, Bolshevik historians interpreted historical facts in ways that supported party operations, especially by writing works that (retroactively) depicted the inevitability of the 1917 Revolution. As John Barber notes in *Soviet Historians in Crisis*, one of the main goals of the field was to demonstrate the backwardness of pre-revolutionary Russia and to confirm the necessity of the Bolshevik party's ascent to power (64). The Bolsheviks, according to Katerina Clark in *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, "began to produce self-justificatory writings that not only involved immediate polemics with rival factions but gave an entire *coherent* account of Bolshevik history. They established their legitimacy both by merit … and by lines of continuity stretching into the past" (122).

In demonstrating the legitimacy and inevitability of the party's rise to power, history (more than other disciplines) fused academic study and political ideology, functioning both retrospectively and prospectively. Russian historian M. N. Pokrovskii called it "the most political of all the sciences," and another historian, Isaak Izrailevich Mintz, reportedly saw no contradiction between propaganda and scholarship (Barber xii; MacKinnon 15). This connection between history and politics proscribed the party's future: through an historical lens, officials could predict the party's future path as well, thereby asserting some control over future events (Barber 24). For example, MacKinnon writes that Mintz's scholarship, following Stalin's Five-Year Plan, "dutifully argued that foreign intervention was essentially the main cause of the protracted and harsh nature of the Russian Civil War" (15). Mintz thus gave support to Bolshevik worries about Western military intervention in Russia that threatened to

subvert "industrialization and collectivization" (15). Historians believed their underlying tasks—"to carry out the revolutionary struggle against bourgeois values, to use history to shape consciousness, and to provide heroic examples that showcased the triumphant march of Soviet socialism" (MacKinnon 14)—to have critical consequences for the present and for future socio-political developments. The fusion of historical narrative and propaganda thus distinguishes the Soviet conception of world-historical development from Herderian notions of world-historical development.

Of course, the conflation of history and propaganda is neither new nor surprising in twentieth-century geopolitics, but it was particularly egregious in Soviet Russia given that history underwent a dramatic shift from an academic discipline to a political practice.[32] A clear illustration of this transformation is evident in Josef Stalin's increasing involvement in academic studies. In 1931, Stalin wrote an infamous letter to the academic historical journal *Proletarskaya Revolutsiya*, protesting the editors' publication of an "anti-party and semi-Trotskyist article" by the historian A. G. Slutsky (qtd. in Barber 128). He argued that Slutsky's article was irresponsible, even treasonous, because of its reliance on archival materials. In the future, Stalin insisted, "political directives, not documentary sources, were to be the primary guides for historical scholarship, and that certain areas of historical investigation were not to be pursued against the defined interests of the Communist Party" (MacKinnon 16). Stalin's letter deeply impacted the profession, motivating editors of several historical journals to evaluate the articles published in past issues and retract any works that could be interpreted as anti-party, ensuring that all their content was consistent with Stalin's

political thought.[33] Contemporary scholars of Soviet Russia like George Enteen, Barber, and Weeks cite this letter as an extraordinary departure from disciplinary conventions. Historians were no longer free to determine the subject matter or findings of their work unless it supported party narratives. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the field of historical studies in Russia was thus ideologically entrenched and used to legitimize government initiatives.

Indeed, Stalin depicted himself as the foremost historian of the era, further reinforcing the notion of historians as entrenched ideologues (again, in contradiction to Bulgakov's sidelined critics). In 1938 Stalin assumed the chief editorial role for *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, more popularly known as the *Short Course*. This work was intended to serve as an ultimate reference on the Soviet state accessible to all readers, regardless of their educational level. As David Brandenberger and Mikhail V. Zelenov write in "Stalin's Answer to the National Question," Stalin saw the *Short Course* as "an accessible, nonscholarly approach that would reorganize the annals of the party's experience along rousing, instrumental lines" (860). Though untrained in copyediting and historical analysis, Stalin heavily edited the document to demonstrate the inevitability, and thus legitimacy, of the Bolshevik state's rise to power (Brandenberger and Zelenov 869). Furthermore, Stalin suggested that adhering to this historical narrative could benefit the future of the Soviet state. In this way, as James von Geldern succinctly notes, "history was statescraft for Stalin" (325).

Of course, the pressure to ideologize historical narrative was not solely imposed by the Soviet state, nor was the narrative monolithic. Many historians connected their work to Bolshevist ideology much earlier than its formal instatement by the government, according to Barber. "The need for a party line in history appears to have been more strongly felt by historians than by those actually at the head of the party. Only late in 1931 did the latter come to the conclusion that it was necessary to apply a strict political criterion to the activities of historians" (Barber 120). Historians thus embraced the centrality of their role in the Soviet state, a political motivation distinctly different from Bulgakov's isolated historians. Additionally, historians did disagree with one another, and with the discipline's relationship to the party, during Stalin's reign. Before Stalin's 1931 letter, variations were due to standard academic disagreements.[34] After this letter the professional differences did not disappear but the profession did become "more uniform and at the same time more docile" (Enteen 168). Variations in historical narrative could also be attributed to Stalin's mercurial personality.[35] As Brandenberger and Zelenov note, Stalin repeatedly changed his mind regarding the interpretation and significance of specific historical events; historians would scramble to produce work, and rewrite previous articles, that conformed to Stalin's present interpretation (875). In short, while history was an overtly political discipline in Soviet Russia, it was not always a monolithic one.[36]

Deeper investigation into Bulgakov's own attitudes shows that his views aligned with those of his three historians, rather than those of government officials. His admiration for historical fact, and disdain for its misuse, is most evident in the

Yershalaim chapters, where Bulgakov relied on several historical accounts of Jesus' crucifixion—Renan, Drews, Barbusse, and his father's theological writings.[37] Bulgakov's historical sources argue that the biblical Jesus did exist. Through these chapters, Bulgakov distinguishes between fact and interpretation, and casts doubt on Berlioz's, and Bolshevik historians', use of historical narratives.[38]

In blending fact and fiction, depicting historians as hermetic figures contrary to engaged Russian historians, and showing officials' reactions against true historical narratives, the novel calls into question the veracity of state-approved accounts. Bulgakov brings out into the open the ways in which the historical narrative of the crucifixion is twisted, negated, and weaponized by party officials like Berlioz, suggesting similar misuses of historical interpretation in other official capacities. But this rejection of state-sponsored historical narrative does not suggest Bulgakov's rejection of objective historical truth, contrary to claims by Barratt, Justin Weir, and others.[39] The fact that the Yershalaim narrative plays such a prominent role in the novel, and that it is suggested as the novel's absolute truth, indicates the possibility of objective fact in this world. Bulgakov undermines specific attitudes toward history, rather than all historical narratives, through ironic critique that illuminates this socially specific issue.[40]

Conclusion

Like Goethe before him, Bulgakov uses ironic critique to expose a major hypocrisy hindering citizens' understanding of the society in which they live. While

these writers address different cultural contexts, they both employ accessible irony to raise major questions about the logics (religious and historical) that governed their lived experiences.

It is important to note that Bulgakov's ironic critique was widely read as such by his contemporaries. These readers recognized his ironic critique in the novel, finally censored and published more than 20 years after Bulgakov's death. Bulgakov's series of eight drafts demonstrate a shrouding of explicit critique, muting his invectives, both explicit and indirect, to prevent his rebukes from being understood too immediately while still preserving many ironic moments.[41] As the novel took shape it became less pointed, as Henry Elbaum writes in "*The Master and Margarita*: Text, Context, Intertext," given "the author's growing dependence on Aesopian language and self-censorship" (60).[42] Perhaps due to his increased dependence on Stalin's patronage—who arranged for his installation as a consultant at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1928—Bulgakov couches his critique in ironic indirection. Formal censorship also blunted the novel's critiques until it was published in its full form by Possev Verlag in 1969, which restored nearly 60 pages cut for the initial publication in *Moskova* (Rzhevsky 1).[43] As L. Rzhevsky writes in "Pilate's Sin: Cryptography in Bulgakov's Novel, *The Master and Margarita*," censored passages in the *Moskova* version (and the first English translation based on it, by Mirra Ginsburg) included those about the culture of literary production in Moscow and direct references to police surveillance **(**4–6, 3**)**. Bulgakov's developing self-censorship, and perhaps more importantly the novel's official censorship, indicate that his critiques were intentional and that his contemporaries

recognized the author's ironic critiques as such. This novel's fraught development and publication history indicate the accessibility of Bulgakov's ironic critique.

Kierkegaard's injunction against ironic edification—that irony is "not the truth but the way"—applies to Bulgakov's novel as much as it does to Goethe's epic verse-drama. *The Master and Margarita* does not identify a solution to the contradiction it illuminates, and the inconclusive final chapter and epilogue demonstrate the impotence of the ironic world-view of Woland and his retinue.[44] For example, the work ends without meaningful changes in the characters: Curtis suggests that Woland and his retinue do not change Moscow (165). "The comic way in which Koreviev and Behemoth assure Woland that [Griboedov House, the administrative building in which MASSOLIT has its offices] will be rebuilt [after being destroyed in a fire] in fact leaves us in some doubt as to whether the literary establishment really will make use of this opportunity to reconstruct their institution in a new and better form" (167). Clearly, Bulgakov does not offer his contemporary reader any solutions about how to fix the problems he identifies in Soviet Russia, nor does he pass definitive judgment on any stakeholder of the represented organizations. Rather, as in Kierkegaard, these problems "appear to the reader as a gift and a task" to tackle on their own (Hannay 147). In this sense, according to Ewa Thompson, Bulgakov was a moralist, not a sermonist (qtd. in Wright, *Mikhail Bulgakov: Life and Interpretation* 273).

Bulgakov's adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* illustrates how irony can be understood in translation and circulation as world literature. Bulgakov employed irony in a manner similar to Goethe, using the form of controlled ironic critique but

populating it with local context. The author uses several "clues" to help his readers recognize this ironic critique, including the hyperbolic, over-enthusiastic skaz narrator and the violation of the ideological norms regarding the discipline of history, that facilitate the translation and circulation of irony. In transculturating the original work, Bulgakov demonstrates *Faust*'s relevance in another culture and highlights the intelligibility of irony in circulation. In these two works, both Goethe and Bulgakov foreground the major social issues of their contexts in ways not available through direct critique. In doing so, authors present readers with detailed information about social issues in nineteenth-century Germany and twentieth-century Soviet Russia. Ironic critiques not only can circulate and be understood as such in works of world literature, but they can also facilitate the Herderian goals of world literature to learning about and develop respect for other peoples, nations, and literary traditions.

Chapter Five

The "Dubious El Dorado":

Illusions of Progress in *The Infinite Rehearsal*

If, as Oswald Spengler asserts in *The Decline of Western Civilization*, Western culture shares with the Faust narrative an ethos of striving, it makes sense that writers in formerly colonized nations would take up this story in their own works, given the long history of Western colonization in the so-called "third world." Some prominent postcolonial writers foreground this theme in their works—including adaptations by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Devil on the Cross*, Salman Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses*, and Machado de Assis in *Quincas Borba* (translated as *Philosopher or Dog?*), among others—to contend with the lingering influence of imperial culture in postcolonial nations, to appropriate that narrative, or both to challenge and to transculturate it. In other words, while the previous chapters focused on Western texts, I propose that the Faust legend is not restricted to this Western context, but rather that it circulated (in part) due to Western countries' imperialism. Of course, in making this assertion I soften the distinction between postcolonial literature and world literature, two very different corpuses. As Pheng Cheah's *What Is a World?* explains, scholars vociferously debate whether postcolonial literature should be subsumed under the umbrella term of "world literature," an incorporation that (as Emily Apter alleges) effaces differences integral to postcolonial literature. However, given the definition of world literature with

which I am working in this dissertation—that these works circulate and can be intelligible beyond their initial contexts of production—I posit (as I did in response to Apter in Chapter One) that many works of postcolonial fiction do "fit" within this framework. Regardless of the *cause* of its circulation, the prevalence of adaptations of the Faust myth in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia confirms that the work has resonated in colonial, and postcolonial, societies.

Wilson Harris explicitly adapts Goethe's *Faust* in the second novel of his Carnival Trilogy, *The Infinite Rehearsal* (1987) and illustrates how authors alter the narrative to address societally and temporally specific circumstances. Harris—like Herder, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Goethe before him—positions literature as a unique medium through which to facilitate cross-cultural understanding. Most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, Harris manipulates Goethe's framework of controlled irony to critique postcolonial Guyanese society, in particular Harris's perception of his country's false belief in its progress in the twentieth century. In this way Harris's adaptation of Goethe's work further supports my contention that irony can be understood outside of its original historical, cultural, and linguistic milieu. I begin this chapter with an analysis of Harris's novel *The Infinite Rehearsal*, focusing on how he transculturates Goethe's controlled irony to target the El Dorado myth in twentieth-century Guyana and reveals the country's stalled progress. After offering this interpretation of Harris's work, I then analyze his description of literary critique as a mode of working through socio-historical disjunctures. In other words, Harris affirms Kierkegaard's assertion that literary irony can illuminate social concerns. Through the

"rehearsal," or repetition-with-difference, of historical events, Harris suggests that literature can help readers and authors alike revisit the errors of the past, imagine alternatives, and lay the groundwork for a different, better future. His adaptation of *Faust* ironically exposes Guyana's continued reliance on the trope of El Dorado in an era of technological progress and, in so doing, demonstrates to his readers that postcolonial Guyana is still reliant on colonialist tropes for envisioning an independent future.

World Literature and the Cross-Cultural Imagination

Harris's work dovetails with Herder's description of the purpose of world literature: in his nonfiction writing, Harris explains that his work is both specific to the context in which he is writing *and* that it incorporates universal elements. One of Harris's foundational philosophical concepts is the universal unconscious, a force shared by all cultures yet expressed in contextually specific ways.[1] The universal unconscious signals the underlying commonality of all cultures in a way that resists the incommensurability glorified by Apter, Bhabha, and other deconstructive postcolonial theorists.[2] Harris describes it as "a creative and re-creative complex that springs from the depths of the Human psyche" ("The Psyche of Space and Intuition of Otherness" 6). This universal force, as he explains in "The Absent Presence," involves unpredictable resources, is only recognized retrospectively, and can be obscured by basic sense perception (88). As Hena Maes-Jelinek suggests in "'Latent Cross-Culturalities,'" it is a force that is "psychological, metaphysical, and/or religious and even extra-human"

(41).[3] In other words, the universal unconscious is inherent in all objects and individuals and is present in all places and times. Cross-cultural perspectives are embedded in literary works despite the author's volition; the texts include meanings other than those intended by the author and it is the job of authors and readers alike to identify and draw out such themes. The author's role, for Harris, is more like that of a detective, one who pursues the text's "intuitive element" and "perceiv[es] the narrative as it revises itself" ("Interview with Wilson Harris" in *The Radical Imagination* 34).[4] Humans have no control over this intuitive element but Harris proposes that we must recognize its presence to more fully comprehend the world.

Authors writing under different conditions articulate this universal force in different ways; readers of world literature can recognize these articulations as expressions of the same spirit with contextually specific alterations. Recognizing parallel expressions of this spirit strengthens readers' understanding of the universal unconscious and appreciation of shared humanity. For example, Harris identifies symbols found in many different cultures that illustrate universal values: as he explains in "Merlin and Parsifal: Adversarial Twins," these symbols include the lamb of God, the dove of peace, and Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent (Bundy 58, 66; Fazzini 59). The commonalities found in the universal unconscious extend to whole literary works as well, a point Harris supports by connecting Edgar Allan Poe's novel *Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* and pre-Columbian masquerade (Bundy 99).[5] Harris explicitly avoids establishing causal or hierarchical relationships between these works, but rather indicates that these inexplicable parallels foster a sense of global interconnection.[6]

Maes-Jelink explains that the reader identifies these connections and perceives "linkages between apparently alien images apprehended as rhythms animating different ways of being, different spaces and worlds as well as overlapping partial visions," and in this way the universal unconscious is "utterly free from the imperialism of any specific culture" ("'Latent Cross-Culturalities'" 47, 40).[7] In identifying these connections, according to Nicola Hunte, we "re-position an event beyond its isolated frame into a network of significant associations or observations that define the event" (Hunte 45). Examining similar themes in cross-cultural expression can help readers develop connecting tissue between seemingly disparate places and times.

As readers investigate these similarities, they gain a better understanding of the forces shaping their expression. As is the case with analyzing adaptations, paying attention to the variations within these similarities throws into relief a given society's defining concerns. Hunte describes this orientation as "native individuality," the "capacity of cultural texts to develop individual imagistic markers that can be revisioned in other/diverse cultural spaces in a manner that suggests a heterogenic basis to an understanding of universality" (44). These iterations of the universal unconscious are very different from multiculturalism, which Harris refers to as an assemblage of different "ghettoes" that precludes meaningful cross-pollination (Harris in Kutzinski 21).[8] Ultimately, Harris asserts that through analyzing these universally resonating themes in their various manifestations, the reader "can be related to things that occurred perhaps in an ancient culture, which may assist us to understand ourselves better" (Fazzini 59). While scholars suggest that Harris's insistence on the interdependence of

all cultures is "constitutive of the Caribbean experience and the Caribbean personality," it also shares much with Herder's vision of world literature as a unifying force (Shaw 123).[9]

The Infinite Rehearsal as Postcolonial Adaptation

Through his process of adapting works, Harris reinforces these cross-cultural connections. The works he adapts—Homer's *Odyssey*, Dante's *Commedia*, and Goethe's *Faust*—are typically associated with Western culture, but Harris rejects this association because, he insists, each author articulates universal themes.[10] He writes in "Comedy and Modern Allegory" that:

> Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe are as much the heritage of black men and women as of white men and women because the triggers of conflicting tradition—whether Dante's Virgil, Shakespeare's Caliban or Goethe's Faust—lie in, and need to be re-activated through, the cross-cultural psyche of humanity, a cross-cultural psyche that bristles with the tone and fabric of encounters between so-called savage cultures and so-called civilised cultures. (137)

Harris further states in an interview with Alan Riach and Mark Williams that in the context of postcolonial literature, adaptation foregrounds the lasting impact of colonialism in formerly colonized nations; "activating Third World archetypes" simultaneously activates the overlying European skeletons ("Interview with Wilson Harris" in *The Radical Imagination* 40). Adapting classic works of Western literature

not only shows the affinities between formerly antagonistic nations, but also advocates for the idea that the West Indies are equal claimants to these canonical works of Western literature, by Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and others.

The Infinite Rehearsal, Harris freely acknowledges, is an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, especially visible in the novel's focus on Faust's quest for immortality and his obsession with technology.[11] As Harris's text is relatively unknown, a summary of the novel in broad strokes will help ground my later claims. *The Infinite Rehearsal* follows Robin Redbreast Glass in his journey through Old New Forest, widely read as an allegory of contemporary Guyana. The novel does not have a straightforward, chronologically unfolding plot but rather bounces among four timelines: 1945, when Glass's mother Alice, still pregnant with him, types the Faust novel her father has written (and that Glass later recalls word for word); 1961, when Glass, his mother, his aunt Miriam, and others perish in a boating accident; 1985, the "present day" in which the narrative begins; and 2025, the year the spectral Glass undertakes his journey up the Mountain of Folly.

Glass begins the narrative on the beach in 1985, where a ghostly immigration officer decapitates the ghostly Glass; his journey through Old New Forest and quest in the city of Skull begins at the moment of his second death. Glass muses that "my head toppled into the globe. I saw the civilization of Skull and the Mountain of Folly that I needed to climb and transcend if I were to arise from the sea" (11). As Glass prepares to embark on this journey to the city of Skull, he recounts his fetal memories of his grandfather's *Faust*, which he purportedly read as his mother typed it and which he

claims to be living out in the present day. He "succumbs" to Faust's promise of eternal youth in an anticlimactic moment of capitulation—he is "*caught* in the nexus of like yet unlike forces, caught and bedevilled by an age that gestated at the edge of a chasm, the chasm of marvels, the chasm of insensible creed in the circus of the machine"—unlike the definitive pacts Faust and Margarita make with their diabolical counterparts in Goethe's original text and Bulgakov's adaptation (43, 23).

The narrative then shifts to the spectral Glass's arrival in Skull in the year 2025, when Emma—his cousin, childhood playmate, and the future Archbishop of Canterbury—informs him that he and his cousin Peter must ascend the Mountain of Folly to save the doomed people of Skull from the perils threatening the city, including the increasing role of "simulated immortality" and the "coming space programmes" (63). The cousins ascend the Mountain of Folly to Faust's surgery office, which proves to be the diabolical doctor's trap to seduce them with the promises of technology, but they escape by following the "true seam in the wave of the rock" into the heart of the mountain. In the heart of the mountain they meet Billionaire Death and learn the pitiful equivalences Death earns from each human life. Eventually Glass descends from the mountain with the knowledge that "[t]rue survival costs dear … True survival should measure the price we have begun to pay the Beast in the garden of life as we gambol with it, dance with it, and exploit it to our apparent heart's content" (79). The narrative ends with Glass heading back into the sea in acceptance of his watery death in 1961. Interspersed in this plot development are reflections on the similar deprivations of capitalism and communism, the horrors of the atom bomb, and Glass's childhood.

Harris adapts the *Faust* story to address the realities of life in late twentieth-century Guyana in several ways, beginning with the character archetypes themselves. Harris describes Glass as an "immortal Faustian youth" (Bundy 253). Like Goethe's titular character, Glass embarks on a quest for deeper knowledge and is tempted by the novel's diabolical figure. Both figures are relatively passive in the narrative's plot development: just as Faust only seduces Gretchen because of Mephistopheles' machinations, so too does Glass seek out Faust on the Mountain of Folly only at Emma's prompting. Additionally, both are avaricious, despite Glass's attempts to disavow the vice; Paget Henry proposes that Glass is "partially caught in a nexus that was produced by his Faustian identifications with accumulating wealth" ("Intrasubjectivity in the philosophy of Wilson Harris" 218). For example, Glass introduces himself as a "pork-knocker," the colloquial term for a native Guyanese person who ventures alone into the jungle to prospect for gold, and is willing to negotiate with Faust the alchemist. Of course, Glass is a protagonist very different from Goethe's Faust, especially given Glass's posthumous wanderings and constant grappling with lingering colonial influences in Old New Forest; these alterations emphasize the novel's uniquely West Indian qualities, leading Henry to describe Glass as "not the Faust of Marlowe or Goethe, but a re-visioning of this mythic figure through Harris's Caribbean eyes" ("Intrasubjectivity in the philosophy of Wilson Harris" 210). In *The Infinite Rehearsal* Glass is the ambiguous Guyanese version of Faust, defined by his quest for immortality and riches, as well as his constant striving for a sense of identity.

Faust (also referred to as Doctor Faustus in a nod to Marlowe's and Thomas Mann's iterations of the Faust myth) plays the role of the diabolical tempter. Noted Harris interpreter Hena Maes-Jelinek explains that Harris's Faust acts as Glass's guide in the novel, most notably in Faust's encouragement to Glass and Peter to climb the mountain ("'Ulyssean Carnival'" 48). This Faust, like Goethe's Mephistopheles, tempts Glass with whatever resources are available—Harris's Faust disguises himself in the trappings of democracy, the Church, the humanities, and the university to persuade Glass to capitulate to Faust's temptation (Bundy 255). Faust's mastery over alchemy, technological progress, and immortality signal that he is Harris's version of a Mephistophelean figure.[12] He is not plagued with the earthly uncertainties as is Goethe's Faust but rather purports to have all the answers to human questions. He is decidedly a twentieth-century tempter: he leads a band in the sacred wood, which evokes the 1948 sugar strike in Guyana (62; "'Immanent Substance'" 66); his profession as a doctor "relates to Faust's alchemy" in the modern era (63); and he enjoins Glass to put his "faith in material progress" which he equates with technological development (22). Harris thus demonstrates the different guises a Mephistophelean tempter can take in the contemporary era.

Given the complexity of Harris's prose and his references to other Faust legends, scholars have debated whether *The Infinite Rehearsal* is more an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's work than Goethe's. While Gianluca Delfino and Michael Mitchell propose that Harris's characters are Marlovian, I contend that Glass and Faust are Goethean characters because, unlike in Marlowe's drama, both pairs are morally

complex.[13] In contrast to Marlowe's dualistic morality, both Goethe and Harris depict their characters in an ambiguous light, often blurring the boundaries between good and evil. In typical Harrisian fashion, the author extends and exaggerates these themes. As Maes-Jelinek notes in "The Wisdom of Uncertainty: 'Re-Visionary Strategies' in Wilson Harris's 'The Infinite Rehearsal,'" Harris intensifies Goethe's ambivalence to the point that Glass cannot agree to a formal pact with Faust because there is no clear differentiation between good and evil in *The Infinite Rehearsal* (159).[14] Moreover, like Goethe, Harris highlights the historical context in which he is writing—in this novel, the post-World War II, postcolonial era.[15] He does so through passing references to Hiroshima and Chernobyl, but also by extending the 1948 sugar strike in the world of the novel to the modern day, as well as deploring the prominence of cheap technology and pointing out the false distinction between communism and capitalism in the late twentieth century.[16] According to C. L. R. James, these historical references are uniquely Guyanese, given the nation's visible relics of the past, in contrast with the effacement of history in Jamaica and Barbados; this strategy supports the notion that Harris adapts Goethe's historically focused structure to his own socio-cultural context (172). While Harris interleaves several literary references within the novel's larger structure, I propose that he primarily engages with Goethe's epic verse-drama, given both texts' character archetypes, their complex morality, and their foregrounding of historical context.[17]

Most importantly, Harris deploys Kierkegaardian ironic critique, a fact that has largely gone unnoticed by his commentators. While Harris discusses "irony" in his

critical writings, he often does so in a way that connects it to literary and philosophical paradox. In other words, Harris's own work reinforces the misperception of irony as paradox central to so many twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary critics, which hinders appreciation of his ironic critique as social engagement. In "Quetzalcoatl and the Smoking Mirror (Reflections on Originality and Tradition)" Harris articulates this view of irony when he writes: "to conquer Death involves us in a cruel irony, it involves us in crusades, in inquisitions that burn men's bodies, kill heretics and infidels, in order to save their souls" (19).[18] Irony here is not saying the opposite of what the author means, but rather refers to uniting opposites in a paradoxical situation, as humans do when they commit acts of violence in the name of salvation.

Harris's critics unsurprisingly echo this conflation of irony and paradox. Maes-Jelinek writes of *The Infinite Rehearsal* that the "central irony here is the distinction between illusions or simulations of immortality, and, as we shall see, true survival in 'Infinity's chain'" ("The Wisdom of Uncertainty" 162), and contends that creativity necessarily involves the "ironic" juxtaposition of opposites (*The Labyrinth of Universality* 297).[19] While many critics debate whether Harris's paradoxical unions produce new objects or prompts an endless vacillation between two poles, they persist in identifying Harris's opposing forces as ironic.[20] Although some critics have explained Harris's stance as one of postmodernism or existentialism, he rejects both labels.[21] He rejects the idea that art is a game, a perspective he largely associates with postmodernism, and expresses a hopeful view for the future, almost in religious terms, that distinguishes his work from existentialism.[22] I do not deny that Harris's work is

replete with paradoxes—indeed, I would even agree that paradox is one of the predominant strategies of his fictional and nonfictional works.

However, I contend that in addition to these paradoxes Harris incorporates moments of controlled ironic critique in his work, especially in *The Infinite Rehearsal*. This slim novel is arguably the most historically situated, and most overtly political engaged, in Harris's *oeuvre*. Harris incorporates controlled irony to critique the El Dorado narrative still prevalent in postcolonial nations and literary traditions.

Mining the Numinous Seam: Persistent El Dorados

Although Krishna Ray Lewis describes the tone of *The Infinite Rehearsal* as a "desperate harangue" in certain places, I argue that Harris also includes moments of wry ironic critique, signaled by a scene paralleling the myth of El Dorado (Lewis 84). Through this scene Harris demonstrates to his readers the threat such myths pose to a postcolonial society, suggesting that it is dangerous to be seduced by the fantastic story of a journey into the country's interior that yields great treasures and profound insight. While he does not explicitly offer this critique in the text, the scene where Peter and Glass follow the seam in the Mountain of Folly exposes the persistence of false El Dorado myths, in the postcolonial context. These myths reinforce imperialist narratives that riches and profound truths are accessible only to those who venture deep into the heart of the "unexplored" country; moreover, their persistence in postcolonial Guyana's then-rapidly growing gold mining sector, Harris suggests, constricts possibilities for the country's meaningful growth.

Harris evokes the myth of El Dorado at the climax of the Faust storyline, at once showing it as an alternative to diabolical temptation and simultaneously revealing its hollowness. The journey into the center of the mountain begins with the cousins' escape from false salvation. Faust tempts Peter (disguised as Glass) to ascend the ladder to his surgery, enticing him with the promise of technological advancement. Faust calls to Peter: "'Come, come, Robin,' [Faust] said to Peter, 'I'm on your side, believe me. We're making the world safe for mankind. I'm up here to receive you. You've hesitated long enough. Seize the glory rope and climb into heaven'" (65). Glass, hiding behind Peter, is skeptical of Faust's "irreverence [and] self-mocking humor, for which the comedian of the machine was universally famous" (65). His unease in the situation prompts Glass to remember that "we [Peter, Emma, and Glass] had been empowered in our nursery rhymes to weigh the doors and windows of heaven, to knock on them and seek assurances of the nature and the meaning of value" (66).

Glass realizes that the window from which Faust is leaning is a false heaven, one that is "an enchainment of the mind if not an extension of the soul. A political parable of mind and soul born of childhood remembered visions in an age of dangerous superpowers professing good intention out of cunning self-interest, the good life out of expedient design" (66–67). Glass wants to resist Faust's temptation and instead consciously assess the "nature and meaning of value" Faust offers in his window. To prevent his cousin from capitulating to this false salvation, Glass warns Peter to "swing away from the rope or the cross [exploding rocket] to the true seam in the wave of the

rock" (66). In this way, Glass helps Peter to escape Faust's false heaven at the precise moment that Peter climbs the ladder to join Faust in his surgery.

Harris uses the imagery of the seam in the rock to ironically critique the myth of El Dorado. The notion of the "journey into the center" is an imperialist trope clearly articulated in, for example, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; this trope hinges on the notion that an "untouched" country (unexplored by Westerners, in other words) can hold immense wealth and convey profound truths to brave explorers willing to undertake the dangerous search. An example of this imperialist narrative more relevant to Harris's context is Sir Walter Raleigh's account of his voyage to El Dorado in his (in)famous 1596 work *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtifvl Empire of Gviana*. In describing the Spanish explorer Juan Martinez's discovery of the city of Manoa, which Martinez then rechristens El Dorado, Raleigh explains that on a journey to Guyana, Martinez was rescued by a group of local people who, according to Raleigh, "having not at any time seen any Christian nor any man of that colour, … carried Martinez … to the great city of Manoa, the seat and residence of Inga the emperor." Of course, it is nothing new to observe that venturing into the country's geographical center—the "great white spots on the map," in Conrad's language—offers Europeans the chance to "discover" unknown riches.

Peter and Glass "discover" the path to their salvation in a fortuitous way: as they are being tempted by Faust, Glass suddenly thinks of the "true seam or true line that Peter and [he] needed to understand in [their] ascent and [their] overcoming of the Mountain of Folly" (66). Their discovery of the path away from temptation, and to the

center of the country, parallels but is not commensurate with that of many El Dorado stories, especially given that Glass's and Peter's desperation contrasts with the bravery of historical questers. Moreover, Harris describes Glass's discovery of the path to illumination as one born out of the necessity to avoid Faust's false promises, which contrasts with the El Dorado explorers' single-minded search for gold.

While their journey is a dangerous one, Glass follows the country's natural resources, in the Mountain of Folly, both to escape Faust's false heaven and to find a more profound, valuable truth. In an ironic inversion of the motif of the journey to the center, in *The Infinite Rehearsal* Peter's and Glass's journey into the heart of the Mountain of Folly leads the explorers to a reverse, deflated El Dorado. Harris uses this trope ironically to expose our expectations of the outcome of the "journey into the interior." Connecting Glass's and Peter's journey through the mountain to Raleigh's story of the discovery of El Dorado, Harris indirectly illuminates our absurd expectations about what secrets are hidden in the country's untouched geographical features. The destination of Glass's and Peter's journey is very different from that of Martinez—they do not find the riches Raleigh describes in El Dorado. Harris violates readers' expectations about what these characters should see in the seam in the rock, an ironic inversion in the OED's third sense. Rather, the seam leads the characters to "a glimmering window in the Mountain of Folly, like a flag one sticks on the moon beneath a black sky, and a white imaginary sea [that] spelt our approach to a ward in space from which Billionaire Death inspected the cosmos" (67). This imagery—that of the flag on the moon, the black sky, and white sea—evokes the space race in the mid-

twentieth century. Harris links Raleigh's quest for gold with the moon landing, suggesting that the space race repeats imperialist missions of exploration and conquest. Through this inversion of readers' expectations, Harris ironically critiques the ever-expanding imperialist lust for discovery; the discovery of one type of riches does not satisfy the imperialist but rather leads to an unending chain for further conquest. He draws readers' attention to the limits of the fetishization of the "untouched" landscape.

Billionaire Death, the figure Glass and Peter find in the seam in the rock, also contradicts readers' expectations about the cost of imperialist expeditions. In contradiction to Raleigh's profession of his bravery, nobility, and benevolence, and the ostensible benefits for both his crew and the nation of Guyana, the figure at the heart of the imperialist exploration in the novel is singularly focused on profit. Billionaire Death, a figure Glass describes as embodying "love's death wish" (67), explains the cheapness of human life in the literal sense of weighing two quantities against one another on scales. For example, Death describes a young Jamaican girl's life as a "pittance," coldly calculating its monetary value: "Say five hundred dollars for the loss of crops … Twenty dollars for each hillside stone. A stone has fossil value in geologic space. A score of stones. Twenty by twenty. Four hundred dollars. Five plus four. Nine hundred dollars. Make it a round sum for a child's life—a thousand dollars" (69). The pessimistic scene the characters encounter in the heart of the Mountain of Folly sharply contrast the El Dorado myth, in which persevering adventurers are rewarded by stumbling upon the City of Gold in the heart of the interior. In contrast to the material

gain and spiritual fulfillment of many El Dorado narratives, Harris exposes the empty penny-pinching at the heart of such a venture.

Harris ironically critiques the El Dorado myth through the imagery of the seam in the face of the rock by leaning on, and then subverting, the tropes of the "journey into the interior." The seam in the novel is, geographically speaking, similar to the gold deposits present in Guyana's rock formations. In Guyana, gold prospecting is typically associated with alluvial prospecting, the process of extracting gold from loosened pieces of rock and stone using high-pressure water to separate the gold from the rest of the materials; "pork-knocking" refers to independent alluvial prospecting missions.[23] However, and more importantly for the purposes of this novel, Guyana's mountains have long been known to contain gold-enriched veins. Harris's description of this "lifeline" as a "seam" running along and inside the Mountain of Folly mirrors these natural deposits in the country's cliffsides. Even as early as Raleigh's *Discoverie*, explorers recognized that Guyana's mountains contained valuable gold and mineral veins. Raleigh writes about the first time he extracted gold from the face of a cliff. The gold was visible to the explorers as a line running through the rock:

> Near unto one of the rivers I found of the said white spar or flint a very great ledge or bank, which I endeavoured to break by all means I could, because there appeared on the outside some small grains of gold; but finding no means to work the same upon the upper part, seeking the sides and circuit of the said rock, I found a clift in the same, from whence with

> daggers, and with the head of an axe, we got out some small quantity thereof.

"Clift," an archaic variation of "cleft," refers to a fissure in the ledge; to put Raleigh's words differently, the gold ran through this fissure like a vein. In this way, the break in the face of the rock parallels the geography of the Mountain of Folly. As they escape Faust's surgery, Peter and Glass follow a cleft similar to the one described by Raleigh, and Glass explains that they "gained the seam or divide in the wave of rock" (66, 67). Later, Glass later remarks that they "pursued the seam … in our ascent *through* and *above* the Mountain of Folly. *Through* and *above*! *Within* and *without*!" (73) This language suggests a cleft running vertically along the side of a mountain: it is the interior of the mountain that has been exposed (within and without) and following it takes voyagers both through the mountain and to the peak. Moreover, the idea that following this cleft will lead to their salvation parallels Raleigh's sentiments. While Peter and Glass hope to escape Faust's temptation, Raleigh's band of explorers hope to follow the cleft (and the resources it contains) to economic "salvation" and add to the exploration's legitimacy.

The parallels extend beyond merely following the seam: both Raleigh's mission and Peter's and Glass's journey up the Mountain of Folly lead the explorers to unimaginable resources. These resources differ drastically, of course—in *The Infinite Rehearsal* Glass and Peter find profound truths about the nature of the world, whereas the El Dorado exploration extracts and exploits valuable material resources and local peoples. However, both narratives share the idea that following the cleft rewards the

explorer with information and resources that cannot be obtained in the "real" world. At the heart of the seam in the Mountain of Folly is, as Peter tells Glass, "Infinity's chain. That that chain remains unbroken despite everything is our slender passion and hope of the transformation of injustice that we inflict on ourselves and upon others" (71). As Peter explains, the seam offers the travelers access to the fragile, unbroken hope inaccessible in everyday life, perhaps similar to the naturally occurring resource with which Raleigh was obsessed—in 1596 the gold deposits in Guyana's mountains were not yet exploited by European invaders, and the legend of these untapped resources fueled explorers' lust for riches. Of course, the novel's hopes for transformation differ dramatically from the violent exploitation of Guyana's people and resources by Raleigh and his crew; however, both the novel and the historical account express hope that an extraordinary resource, found in the country's natural resources, would transform the seekers' lives.

The process of mining the seam, both literally (historically) and figuratively (in the novel), is dangerous as well. After emerging from the Mountain of Folly, Peter reflects on the allure and perils of pursuing this seam: "The machinations of Faust. Beware of the Glass that may mesmerize you. And yet in another light immortality is the comedy of a changeless romance between true, inner flesh and true, outer spirit" (71). Peter suggests that the seam, much like Faust's influence, is alluring but that the mission must be carefully undertaken as the treasure found in the seam represents possibility and danger in equal measure, in a manner that parallels, in some senses, the allure of gold to the European invader-explorers in Guyana. For the El Dorado

explorers, including Raleigh, the allure of gold is dangerous in its all-consuming nature, and the process of traversing the path poses real threats from the natural world, native inhabitants, and their own psyches. In their colonial voyage Raleigh's men become ill, traverse the water during a rough storm, and even disappear into the jungle. While the seam provides important resources to the explorers, both in the novel and in Raleigh's account, the process of accessing those resources imperils the seekers, physically and spiritually.

Harris makes this parallel recognizable as an ironic critique in several ways. First, and perhaps most obvious, is his use of fantastical elements, particularly his characters' unreality. For example, Glass is not a conquistador or explorer but rather a ghostly apparition bounding between timelines; after they descend the mountain, Peter reveals that he, too, is dead. He asks Glass: "How could I be here ascending the Mountain of Folly, how endure its riddles in the heart of a dying age, except I had died to the machinations of Skull?" (70) Moreover, rather than finding gold at the heart of the mountain Peter and Glass meet Billionaire Death, a representation of humanity's devaluation of life, in a moment of socially piercing irony. These otherworldly characters demonstrate the narrative's unreality and Harris thus invites readers to recognize the ludicrousness of expecting to find treasure at the heart of the journey into the interior. We, as readers, are left to question the function of such otherworldly characters and forces in the novel.

Additionally, the fact that Harris rehashes this outdated trope also suggests that readers should be skeptical of the continued legitimacy of imperialist tropes in the

postcolonial era. He particularly questions the El Dorado myth that the country is an untouched wilderness waiting to be plundered by Western explorers uniquely equipped to access its resources. This narrative has long been exposed as an improbable story used to justify imperialistic texts like Raleigh's, an exposure that unfolds in many postcolonial texts, including Harris's *The Palace of the Peacock* (1960). The reappearance of this outmoded myth in a postcolonial text, then, is a jarring one that does not align with Harris's nonfiction works on the purpose of postcolonial literature.

This El Dorado-like discovery also does not "fit" a narrative of postcolonial independence, especially in Guyana, where Forbes Burnham's ruling party, the People's National Congress (PNC), articulated its mission to establish the newly independent country as a modern socialist state in the 1970s and 1980s. Burnham's goal was anchored by a program to "feed, clothe, and house the nation."[24] Such modern, progressive programs directly contradict the archaic El Dorado storyline; through his novel Harris highlights the disjuncture between persistent imperialistic tropes with the realities of life in postcolonial Guyana. He resurrects this trope to remind us to think critically about the application of such imperialistic narratives in the twentieth century. In this way, by upending readers' expectations about what the seam represents—by writing an account of Glass's and Peter's journey that parallels the imperial discovery of gold deposits in veins in the sides of Guyana's mountains and then subverting the outcome of the El Dorado narrative—Harris implies to his readers the hollowness of the tropes of exploration and discovery of profound truth in the interior of the country central to Western narratives about the West Indies.

Harris's ironic inversion of readers' expectations also exposes the hypocrisies of Guyana's burgeoning gold mining industry in the late 1980s, during which Harris was writing this novel. After gaining independence from Britain in 1966, the PNC nationalized the country's major industries, including mining; however, under pressures both external and internal (chiefly due to the collapse of these state-governed industries) in the 1980s the government altered course and invited foreign and private companies to invest in Guyanese mining operations.[25] Government officials particularly heralded gold mining as a solution to solve the country's economic woes. As Lomarsh Roopnarine explains in "Wounding Guyana: Gold Mining and Environmental Degradation," the Guyanese government "returned to the global economy in the mid-1980s. The administration opened Guyana's interior to foreign and local miners to help generate foreign trade, invigorate a cash-starved economy, and begin to deal with running trade and budget deficits" (84).[26] Guyanese officials tied hopes for economic revitalization directly to increased gold mining, both by domestic and foreign companies; according to Marcus Colchester, Jean La Rose, and Kid James's *Mining and Amerindians in Guyana*, initiatives for large-scale hard-rock mining were funded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund during this decade. Foreign investment in Guyana's gold mining industry led to a boom that began in earnest in the mid-1990s and lasted through the early 2000s. While the El Dorado myth has long been recognized as a limited vision of West Indian countries, Guyana's economic policies in the mid-1980s drew on these myths to stabilize the country's economy.

In drawing a parallel between Glass's hopes for salvation through the seam in the rock and the increased attention to hard-rock gold mining as a panacea for the Guyanese economy, Harris reveals the troubling ways in which the Guyanese government continued to rely on outmoded tropes of El Dorado to encourage foreign investment. In depicting the culmination of Glass's posthumous adventure as the journey into and up the seam in the Mountain of Folly, through which endeavor he learns the hollowness of human existence, Harris raises questions about the appropriateness of the El Dorado myth in contemporary Guyanese politics. If such a narrative is dangerous, offering not opportunities for redemption but rather revealing the factors that limit human life, as explained by Billionaire Death, the author suggests that mining for Guyana's gold deposits will not save the country's economy.

Harris's ironic critique, elliptically exposing the improbability of salvation in Guyana's gold mining industry, is ethical because it demonstrates what Harris perceives to be the stagnation of postcolonial Guyanese society in its continued reliance on imperialist narratives in the era of independence. By stretching Glass's journey up and through the Mountain of Folly, in and through the seam, to the utmost and then revealing it to be hollow at its core, he challenges readers' assumptions that such journeys into the interior will yield great riches, insight, or both. The author also exposes the ways in which the El Dorado myth gets played out in contemporary postcolonial nations, especially given the PNC's proposal to shore up the national economy by inviting foreign companies to mine for gold. Although Harris wrote the novel relatively early in Guyana's late twentieth-century gold boom, he identifies how

government officials heralded gold mining as the country's way to economic solvency, much as Glass and Peter follow the seam in the mountain to escape Faust and find their way back to safety.

That is not to say that Harris's vision is a pessimistic one. His notion of the infinite rehearsal is, on the contrary, optimistic as it establishes the necessary conditions for social change. Harris contends that fictional works depict historical events with slight deviations from the ways they happened. This strategy is more than artistic license—it is the author's way of challenging the perception that history is immutable and that the present situation is inevitable. As Dominique Dubois remarks in "Wilson Harris's 'Infinite Rehearsal' or the Imaginative Reconstruction of History," "[t]he only way out [of the negative effects of colonization] is to imaginatively relive the events of the troubled history so as to unlock those polarities [between colonizer and colonized]" and "the imaginative dialogue it initiates [helps] revitalise our modern, guilt-ridden and polarised world" (40, 37).[27] This strategy is especially important in the Caribbean postcolonial context, claim Henry, Maes-Jelinek, and Jeannine Murray-Román.[28] Harris's ironic critique of the El Dorado myth in *The Infinite Rehearsal* acts as a way for readers to recognize the poverty of imperialist-era narratives and rather engage with the realities of life in twentieth-century Guyana. It encourages us not to be complacent with the recurring narrative tropes of imperialist history but rather to seek a different truth.

The Possibilities of the Infinite Rehearsal

As a postcolonial adaptation of *Faust*, Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal* uses the basic framework of Goethe's story but incorporates culturally specific details to address his own context of postcolonial Guyana. Additionally, Harris uses Goethe's framework of controlled ironic critique; like Bulgakov, Harris maintains the structure of Goethe's critique but targets a different, and more relevant, socio-historical disjuncture. This adaptation demonstrates two things: first, that ironic critique is intelligible in translation; and second, that Harris recognizes controlled irony's capacity for social engagement. Again, I propose that Harris's use of controlled irony, in the Kierkegaardian sense, does not diminish his emphasis on contradiction and paradox in his work, or even within *The Infinite Rehearsal*. Rather, he deploys these moments of controlled irony to demonstrate the persistence of these outmoded myths and challenge his readers not merely to recognize them but also to consider how such narratives constrain expectations for the postcolonial Guyanese economy.

Harris not only reemphasizes the ludicrousness of the El Dorado myth in 1980s Guyana, he also insists that the myth is constructed and therefore can be altered by individuals' actions. Of course, again like Kierkegaard's ironist, Harris does not offer us a more realistic alternative, nor does he suggest how we might change our attitudes about the El Dorado myth. Pointing out the fallacy of this myth, showing its potential to be altered, and inviting our participation in envisioning a new history (and therefore a new present) is sufficient for Harris. Literature's infinite rehearsals of history, and

especially the repetition of difference, can help readers recognize the need for social change and begin to envision those transformations.

Conclusion

The Importance of Being Ironic:

Indirect Critique and Technologies of Circulation

Literary irony is not only alive and well, but also it can be an ethical perspective, a necessary precondition for socio-historical change, and a device integral to the circulation of world literary texts. While the controlled ironists discussed above—Kierkegaard, Goethe, Bulgakov, and Harris—all offer an ethical vision of indirect critique, they by no means suggest that literary critiques are sufficient in and of themselves. These writers challenge readers to engage more deeply with their socio-historical contexts, to begin to realign what the society's values profess to be with what they are, and in so doing to restart the process of world-historical development. These assessments of reality are vital as works circulate beyond their contexts of production, inviting readers to identify similar disjunctures in their own societies, and establishing an ethos of intercultural, cross-temporal connection.

Irony, far from being unintelligible or elitist, is an ethical perspective and a fundamental yet under-recognized device in works of world literature. Ironic texts circulating in the global marketplace, and supplemented by scholarly apparatuses, can fulfill Herder's threefold goal that world literary works inform readers in other places and times of the unique cultural concerns to which authors responded, illuminate social issues analogous between the author's socio-historical context and that of the reader, and foster a sense of unity that does not efface cultural particularities. Attending to the

device offers a different lens through which to constellate comparative studies of world literary texts, enriching our understanding of which works *can* circulate in this "world republic of letters," to use Pascale Casanova's phrase, and of which devices facilitate cross-cultural intelligibility. In short: controlled irony is, and has been, an essential device in works of world literature from the earliest Western articulations of the concept by Herder and Goethe.

Recent works of world literature affirm irony as a central device in circulating works. In the last decade, three texts that have won the Man Booker Prize—Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*, and George Saunder's *Lincoln in the Bardo*—are acerbically ironic.[1] While all three were written in English, they are also all culturally and historically specific: Beatty's novel excoriates the (largely) American practice of redlining and Adiga's exposes the cost of unchecked ambition. Compounded with the socially engaged irony of other novelists, including Salman Rushdie, J. M. Coetzee, and Eka Kurniawan, such prominent ironic novels consecrate the device's prominence in, and value to, world literary texts, to use another of Casanova's terms.

The twenty-first century poses a problem of scale to scholars of world literature. As an increasing number of writers across the globe have access to technologies of publication, both formal (book publishers) and informal (social media), more works are circulating across cultural and linguistic boundaries than ever before. Tellingly, many of the works circulating in digital spaces also foreground culturally and linguistically specific ironic critiques. Video clips, social media posts, and memes have gone "viral"

and circulated beyond their original contexts; moreover, the ironic critiques offered in these digital artifacts have been understood in these target cultures. The viral video clip "America First—The Netherlands Second" is an excellent example of this popularity and intelligibility: the Dutch late-night comedian Arjen Lubach offers an introduction to his country in "Trump-speak" to convince the then-President-elect of the benefits of continuing diplomatic ties between the two countries. This video inspired many adaptations filmed by comedians in other countries, including Switzerland, Iran, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Australia, and Namibia, demonstrating the accessibility of irony in translation. While globalization has flattened cultural differences in many respects, ironic critiques circulating on digital media offer an opportunity to highlight, and recognize, the source culture's unique identity. Controlled ironic critique is not only central to world literature's past, but also demonstrates the possibilities of a world orientation of English literary studies in the future.

Notes

Introduction:

[1] See Graydon Carter qtd. in Seth Mnookin, "In Disaster's Aftermath, Once-Cocky Media Culture Disses the Age of Irony"; Roger Rosenblatt, "The Age of Irony Comes to an End"; Jedidiah Purdy, *For Common Things: Irony, Trust, and Commitment in America Today*; David Foster Wallace, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction"; Dave Eggers, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*; Christy Wampole, "How to Live Without Irony"; Darryl Pickney and Joan Didion, "Obama: In the Irony-Free Zone"; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*; Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*; Alexandra Petri, "'Hamilton' and the end of irony"; and Dylan Jones, "How social media (finally) killed irony."
[2] Studies of irony's definition and historical development are exhaustive and include: Joseph A. Dane, *The Critical Mythology of Irony*; Dilwyn Knox, *Ironia: Medieval and Renaissance Ideas on Irony*; Morton Gurewitch, *The Ironic Temper and the Comic Imagination*; G. G. Sedgewick, *Of Irony: Especially in Drama*; Norman Knox, *The Word Irony and Its Context, 1500–1755*; J. A. K. Thomson, *Irony: An Historical Introduction*; Candace Lang, *Irony/Humor: Critical Paradigms*; Katharina Barbe, *Irony in Context*; Claire Colebrook, *Irony*; Gary J. Handwerk, *Irony and Ethics in Narrative: From Schlegel to Lacan*; D. C. Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic;* and, of course, Wayne C. Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony*, among others. For an overview of different approaches to irony in literary criticism, see John Evan Seery, *Political Returns: Irony in Politics and Theory from Plato to the Antinuclear Movement*.
[3] See, for example, Jennifer Bajorek, *Counterfeit Capital: Poetic Labor and Revolutionary Irony* 4; Ross Chambers, *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* xvi, 1; Seery, *Political Returns* 170; and Angelique Haugerud, *No Billionaire Left Behind: Satirical Activism in America* 31–32.
[4] See also Andrew Opitz, "Impassioned Satire and Militant Irony: An Investigation into the Evolving Politics of Satire."
[5] Matthew Arnold makes a similar point in *Essays in Criticism*.
[6] See David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956*.

Chapter One:

[1] See also Joseph Dane, *A Critical Mythology of Irony* (149).
[2] See Gerald Graff's 1974 article "What Was New Criticism? Literary Interpretation and Scientific Objectivity," Ian Hunter's "The History of Theory," René Wellek's "The New Criticism: Pro and Contra," and Paul A. Bové's *Destructive Poetics: Heidegger and Modern American Poetry*. Both Graff and Wellek aim to show in their articles that these critiques of New Criticism are misguided, particularly charges of the methodology's empiricism.
[3] See also his remarks about New Criticism in "The Rhetoric of Blindness" and "Hypogram and Inscription."
[4] These scholars include, but are not limited to, William J. Spurlin (in his introduction to *The New Criticism and Contemporary Theory)*, William E. Cain's essay "Deconstruction in America," Jonathan Arac's "Repetition and Exclusion: Coleridge and New Criticism Reconsidered," Geoffrey Hartman's *Beyond Formalism*, Gerald Graff's *Literature Against Itself*, and Frank Lentricchia's *After the New Criticism*. For a further discussion on the ties between New Formalism and ostensibly anti-formalist approaches, particularly New Historicism, see Susan Wolfson's "Reading for Form."
[5] While postcolonial theory and world literature are two distinctly different literary theories, I will defend the decision to combine them together in the third section of this chapter.

[6] It is important to note that Anglo-American formalists were hardly the first literary critics to emphasize the importance of irony in "good" literature. Many of the theorists cited in this chapter frequently discussed Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* as an influential work for their understanding of irony. Coleridge's understanding of literature itself was strongly influenced by German Romanticism, notably the works of Friedrich Schlegel. Other formalist critics, including Randall Jarrell, highlight the similarities between literary modernism, New Criticism, and German Romanticism, which "holds in solution contradictory tendencies" ("The End of the Line" 215). Indeed, the phrase "permanent parabasis" used in the chapter title and invoked frequently by subsequent generations of literary critics is taken from Schlegel. For more information on the relationship between Coleridge and German Romantic irony, see Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony*; David Simpson, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry*; D. C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony;* and Kathleen Wheeler, *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria*.' Of course, this view of the relationship between Coleridge and German Romanticism is contested by René Wellek in *Confrontations: Studies in the Intellectual and Literary Relations Between Germany, England, and the United States in the Nineteenth Century*.
[7] Although Northrop Frye was an archetypal critic, he shared some views embraced by the New Critics.
[8] Claire Colebrook also asserts that irony allows for paradoxes to exist in the same place and time (54).
[9] This difference reflects divergent philosophies about the organization of the world. Richards' understanding of poetry's equilibrium of opposed impulses does not necessarily require, or result in, an understanding of the world as a unified whole but instead sees every element balanced by its opposite.
[10] Welleck and Warren also reject psycho-biographical readings in *The Theory of Literature*.
[11] Empson cautions that irony is a device that differs dramatically depending on the reader's context and theoretical allegiance(s) and emphasizes its function on the sentence, rather than structural, level of a work (xiii).
[12] In "The Road of Excess" Northrup Frye suggests that "[i]rony presents a human conflict which, unlike a comedy, a romance, or even a tragedy, is unsatisfactory and incomplete unless we see in it a significance beyond itself, something typical of the human situation as a whole. What that significance is, irony does not say … Irony preserves the seriousness of literature by demanding an expanded perspective on the action it presents, but it preserves the integrity of literature by not limiting or prescribing for that perspective" (14).
[13] Similarly, in *Literary Criticism: A Short History*, Brooks and Wimsatt define irony in close relation to paradox and metaphor: it is "a cognitive principle which shades off through paradox into the general principle of metaphor and metaphoric structure—the tension which is always present when words are used in vitally new ways" (747).
[14] See also Mark Currie's examination of Frank Kermode's understanding of the relationship between peripeteia and irony in *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise*. Currie proposes that if irony is the reversal of expectation, peripeteia is irony playing out in time (*The Unexpected* 139). Similarly, Kermode proposes in *The Sense of an Ending* that not only is peripeteia important to a narrative, the way in which it is utilized reveals the author's commitment to representing reality: "The more daring the peripeteia, the more we may feel that the work respects our sense of reality" (18).
[15] Empson bluntly states in his introduction to *Seven Types of Ambiguity* that all good poetry is supposed to be ambiguous (xv). Brooks and Warren perpetuate this notion in *Understanding Fiction* when they inform teachers that ironical ambivalence is the key to interesting literature (xix). Similarly, in *The Sense of an Ending* Frank Kermode posits that peripeteia (the temporalization of irony through narrative) is present in "every story of the least structural sophistication" (18). Conversely, Ransom proposes in *The New Criticism* that irony and tragedy are not required for good poetry, or in all poems. When irony is present, it should be a "feature in the gross effect of the poem" as a structural, rather than textual, element (101).
[16] For example, Burke points to the "doctrines of 'emancipation'" as one key contradiction: "It was under the aegis of 'emancipation' that the commercial state arose and conquered the feudal state—yet this same stressing or emphasis threatens to endanger the commercialists' hegemony itself, once they become thoroughly entrenched in their privileges" (246).

[17] Later in the essay de Man puts the matter in terms of "reading," saying that the New Critics (particularly Richards and Empson), and the French poststructuralists influenced by them (especially Riffaterre), are uninterested in the reader's intervention into a text (33).
[18] This "radical relativism" helps to avoid the "*vertige*, a dizziness of the mind caught in an infinite regression" (10). In this sense de Man's understanding of the indeterminacy of meaning differs significantly from Booth's unstable or infinite ironies. However, he does not suggest that it is possible to create dialectically synthetic readings from these relativistic ambiguities.
[19] In an interview with Stefano Rosso, included in *The Resistance to Theory*, de Man notes that his approach is particularly important to understanding the differences between his version of deconstruction and Derrida's, whose theory emphasizes (in de Man's understanding) that a text is deconstructed by a "philosophical intervention from outside of the text" (118).
[20] While a multiplicity of meanings can arise in the process of linguistic translation, Derrida contends that malleable unity is more characteristic of translating a concept into philosophical ideas (72).
[21] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin contend in *The Empire Writes Back* that "Jameson provides post-colonial critics seeking to develop Fanon's analysis of Manichean duality with the necessary model of a reflexive relationship between a social process and a text, a model which emphasizes that a text's relationship with 'the historical subtext' is an active one. It is the text which transforms the historical subtext which it draws up into itself and this transformation constitutes what Jameson characterizes as the 'symbolic act' of the narrative" (169–170).
[22] In using this term Apter imports Barbara Cassin's term from *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* and Apter's own translation as *The Dictionary of Untranslatables*.
[23] Cassin claims that the *Dictionnaire* "is a pluralist and comparative work in its non-enclosing gesture" (*Against World Literature* 119), emphasizing the plurality and multiplicity of the endeavor. However, elsewhere in her monograph Apter critiques what she calls comparative literature's "bulimic" drive, its attempt to unify disparate literatures within one discipline (*Against World Literature* 3). I would argue that Apter's translation of the *Dictionnaire* is similar to the inclusivity she critiques in comparative literature.
[24] Similarly, in *Death of a Discipline* Spivak argues that comparative literature, and world literature specifically, are paradoxical fields of study because they are both hegemonic and create the condition for their own destruction in subsequent approaches to literature. In other words, comparative literature pushes a unified world view but makes possible an interruption both permanent and from-below "of a Comparative Literature to come" (p. 16 n 21).
[25] At its most culturally sensitive, world literature is "a pluralist critical practice of comparison that massages neoliberalism" (177).
[26] As David Ferris notes in his article "Indiscipline," David Damrosch's definition of world literature as an intensive endeavor—the intensive reading of a few select texts—is paradoxical in its presupposition that intensive readings of a select group of texts offers an "extensive experience of the world" (86). I do not agree with Ferris' analysis of Damrosch—nowhere does Damrosch say that world literature offers an "extensive" understanding of the world, but of the world the text represents. Damrosch rejects the idea that works of world literature are, or should serve as, representations of the culture as a whole and can thus be interpreted as a substitute for complete knowledge of the socio-historical context being described in a text. Rather, *What Is World Literature?* posits that any claim to universal knowledge, or attempt at creating a comprehensive canon, is problematic if not impossible. Studying patterns of literary dissemination can offer a new understanding about how and why literature circulates between given contexts can offer some insight into how world literature functions and why, but does not claim to offer any "extensive knowledge" of a body of texts.

Chapter Two:

[1] These readings are especially prominent in discussions of Kierkegaard in literary theory; Walter Kaufmann's *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* is an influential text that links Kierkegaard to Nietzsche and existentialist thought more broadly.

[2] This active engagement on both sides echoes Linda Hutcheon's assertion that irony "happens": it requires engagement on both sides and does not exist statically or independently of interpersonal interactions.
[3] See Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, for example. Moreover, in *Rabelais and His World* Bakhtin contends that irony and carnivalesque humor act as an "escape valve," a venue to critique the established social order without upending it.
[4] To grossly simplify this long section of the text: Kierkegaard finds Xenophon's depiction of Socrates too focused on his immediate qualities (13) and Plato's view too positively productive (15). Only Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates in *The Clouds* recognizes that Socrates' power was a negative one, which was uniquely capable of revealing individuals' foibles and revealing gaps between phenomenon and essence. For more information on the Kierkegaard's use of Socrates see Tony Aagaard Olesen, "Kierkegaard's Socratic Hermeneutic in *The Concept of Irony*"; Martin Andic, "Clouds of Irony"; and Ziolkowski, "From *Clouds* to *Corsair*: Kierkegaard, Aristophanes, and the Problem of Socrates."
[5] Kierkegaard defines irony piecemeal in several sections: "Introduction," "Observations for Orientation," "The World-Historical Validity of Irony, the Irony of Socrates," and "Irony as a Controlled Element, the Truth of Irony," a total of 37 pages out of the dissertation's 329. Walter Kaufmann is particularly critical of Kierkegaard's prose, contending that its difficulty makes it prone to misunderstanding. In *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* he complains that Kierkegaard's style is "aggravating," full of "epic digressions and … philosophic acrobatics, dancing on the tightrope between seriousness and satire" (202). Kaufmann, unsurprisingly, contends that Kierkegaard's dissertation should be read ironically, as that is the only way to explain the opaque prose.
[6] Andrew J. Burgess isolates and explains each characteristic in his article "The Upbuilding in the Irony of Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*." While I disagree with Burgess's conclusion about Kierkegaardian irony—he reads it as a tool for moral edification—I found useful his definition of the device.
[7] All quotes from *The Concept of Irony* are from the Hong translation, the standard in English-language Kierkegaard studies.
[8] For Kierkegaard, the ironist's role is bestowed upon him and cannot be assumed by volition alone. Hannay notes: "That the world is a task assigned to us, and not something established in poetic representation, continues to be a motif of [Kierkegaard's] thought" (143).
[9] This focus would explain the long tradition in Kierkegaard studies that argues that *The Concept of Irony* is more about the ironist's psychological state, rather than about irony's social uses. Some influential works that illustrate this approach include Kresten Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*; Leonardi F. Lisi, *Marginal Modernity*; Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought*; and K. Brian Soderquist, *The Isolated Self: Truth and Untruth in Søren Kierkegaard's* On the Concept of Irony.
[10] Of course, the reader may miss these clues, as anyone who has taught this essay to a room of college freshman can attest.
[11] Romantic irony generally, and Fichtean irony in particular, according to Kierkegaard, was not interested in the individual's ethical process of discovering the correspondence between actuality and Ideality on his own, but instead focused on the newly created mythical actuality that had as little validity as the previous actuality: "But this infinity of thought in Fichte is, like all Fichte's infinity (his ethical infinity is ceaseless striving for the sake of this striving itself; his esthetic infinity is ceaseless producing for the sake of this producing itself; God's infinity is ceaseless development for the sake of the development itself), negative infinity, an infinity in which there is no finitude, an infinity in which there is no finitude, an infinity without any content. When Fichte infinitized the *I* in this way, he advanced an idealism beside which any actuality turned pale, an acosmism in which his idealism became actuality even though it was Docetism. In Fichte, thought was infinitized, subjectivity became the infinite, absolute negativity, the infinite tension and urge" (273). In other words, then, Romantic irony is more focused on the creation of an alternative actuality that is, in truth, an Ideality. This substitution is no better than a false actuality because it requires individuals in society to accept the myths being put forward about their own actuality, rather than doing any work themselves to determine the correct relationship.

[12] This negation of a particular actuality is not a hostility or undermining of *all* realities, a standpoint Kierkegaard rejected in Romantic irony.
[13] Kierkegaard notes irony is only relevant for specific socio-historical contexts. Kierkegaard illustrates this claim with two examples: the time of Socrates and the Sophists and his own era.
[14] While irony is required only in certain eras, Kierkegaard notes there is some element of this ironic process in the evolution of all historical actualities: "To a certain degree, every world-historical turning point must have this formation also, and it certainly would not be without historical interest to track this formation through world history. Without engaging in this, I shall merely cite as examples taken from the period closest to the Reformation, Cardanus, Campanella, and Bruno" (261). That being said, the role of irony in specific historical actualities is, as Kierkegaard notes, more critical than in others.
[15] Similarly, Edward F. Mooney suggests that Socratic questioning and infinite negation eliminates false knowledge and (eventually) makes way for Christianity (5).
[16] Kierkegaard posits that Socrates is the example *par excellence* of such ironic figures. In short, Socrates was a "divine missionary … As for the continual temptation to attribute something more to him, this is due to the failure to see that world-historical individualities are great precisely because their entire lives belong to the world and they, as it were, have nothing for themselves" (237).
[17] As Kierkegaard notes, the tension between phenomenon and essence must be resolved in order for "the world historical process [to take] place. The given actuality at a certain time is the actuality valid for the generation and the individuals in that generation, and yet, if there is a reluctance to say that the process is over, this actuality must be displaced by another actuality" (260).
[18] Hegel is a deeply unpopular figure in contemporary literary theory, especially because scholars charge that his discussions of philosophical system-thinking and totality are Eurocentric, deterministic, and conservative. For detailed and nuanced defenses of Hegel's thought, as well as incisive dismantlings of arguments against Hegel, see Brennan's chapter "Hegel and the Critique of Colonialism" in *Borrowed Light*, Susan Buck-Morss' *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, and Jon Stewart's edited collection *The Hegel Myths and Legends*.
[19] The world-historical individual, for Kierkegaard, assumes a great deal of importance in facilitating this process of the development of world spirit. This process of development does not occur spontaneously but requires a "prophetic individual" as a "sacrifice," someone who "spies the new in the distance, in dim and undefined contours" (260). In other words, the world-historical individual is (partly) responsible for ushering in the new historical actuality as the next stage in the progression of world spirit.
[20] See especially Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography* 139. It is important to note that during this era there were more types of literature entering into Denmark than ever before—Kierkegaard discusses Andersen's fairy tales, Goethe's works, and translations of "Aladdin" and One Thousand and One Nights in his journals. As such Kierkegaard had a fairly good understanding of what literature could accomplished for the reading public, however limited that public might be.
[21] Here Kierkegaard is playing on John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.'" *NRSV*.
[22] Henri Lefebvre echoes this position in *Critique of Everyday Life*, when he notes that irony can be a moment in the critique of everyday life but it cannot be the final stage (16, 194).
[23] Kirmmse does note that Kierkegaard's politics became increasingly radical after 1848, the year King Frederick VII signed the constitution into law "on which date Denmark became a constitutional monarchy with universal (male) suffrage" (70). Of course, these events occurred long after he had written his magister dissertation.
[24] Kirmmse explains that in Golden Age Denmark only the educated elite had access to poetry and novels, and most peasants (3/4 of the total population) would have only had access to the family Bible, religious tracts, almanacs, and a hymnal (77).
[25] There have been many ideas put forth about why the ironic hypothesis is so prevalent in Kierkegaard studies, especially in the twentieth century. First is Kierkegaard's opaque writing style—his prose resists easy comprehension, so on one level it makes sense that Kierkegaard could be parodying the overly convoluted style of the Danish Hegelians at the time. Compounding his difficult writing style was his status as an outsider and anti-institutional positions, especially vis-à-vis the Danish Lutheran church (Kirmmse 3), which further distanced his relationship to "traditional" or earnest scholarship. Habib

Malik also posits that the peripherality of Denmark and the Danish language led to an uneasy reception and interpretation of all Kierkegaard's work, especially given the fact that his journals were published posthumously, and *The Concept of Irony* was only translated into German in 1929 and into English in 1966. Stewart notes that many early scholars of Kierkegaard's thought—including N. H. Søe, Søren Holm, Niels Thulstrup, Gregor Malantschuk, and Jens Himmelstrup—positioned Kierkegaard and Hegel as antagonists. This positioning, while false (Stewart charges that they did not understand Hegelian dialectics), was particularly influential because Thulstrup and Malantschuk taught many scholars of the next generation. Finally, Kierkegaard's repeated insistence that his works were more like poetry than traditional scholarship (Hannay, *Kierkegaard* x; Malik 3) further primed readers to expect aesthetic, rather than earnest, arguments.

[26] Other scholars arguing for the ironic hypothesis include Kevin Newmark, Gregor Malantschuk, Merold Westphal (who proposes that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are "spiritual contemporaries" [43]), Winfield E. Nagley, Lee Capel, Pierre Mesnard, Louis Mackey, Linda Hutcheon, Candace D. Lang, Charles I. Glicksberg, Steven Shakespeare, Sylviane Agacinski, Michael Strawser, Martin Andic, George Pattison, Peter Fenres, David D. Possen, Joel Rasmussen, and Henning Fenger. Dissecting all arguments in favor of the ironic hypothesis is beyond the scope of the chapter; as such, I will analyze the themes common to all these arguments.

[27] Other scholars arguing for a serious reading of the dissertation include Walsh, Mark C. Taylor, Sophia Scopetea, Anthony Rudd, Kirmmse, Ernst Bojesen (Kierkegaard's Greek teacher), and Harald Hoffding, who complains that *The Concept of Irony* is so Hegelian it is worthless (qtd. in Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* 134).

[28] While Stewart's research about Kierkegaard's academic and personal life is compelling, some of Stewart's evidence in support of an unironic reading of the dissertation is anecdotal at best. For example, Stewart notes that many philosophers during Kierkegaard's time went through "stages" in which they adopted particular viewpoints that they later rejected during another stage, so it was likely that Kierkegaard did so as well. This line of analysis is fairly common in Kierkegaard scholarship—Mark C. Taylor argues in *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and Self* that there were significant changes in Kierkegaard's writings throughout his life, especially regarding the concepts of faith and suffering (24). Paul A. Bové's article "The Penitentiary of Reflection: Soren Kierkegaard and Critical Activity" similarly posits that Kierkegaard's thought occurred in stages and that terms were used differently during these phases (29). The "bandwagon" argument is not one I find especially convincing given the fact that it does not analyze Kierkegaard's work. That being said, many of Kierkegaard's contemporaries spoke about Kierkegaard's "Hegelian period," including Sibbern (quoted in Johansen, *Reminiscences of Soren Kierkegaard*, in Widenmann 85). Conversely, other scholars—including Malik, Taylor, K. Brian Söderquist, and even Stewart himself in other writings—show that the Hegelian themes/tones of *The Concept of Irony* persist in his later pseudonymous works as well, including *From the Papers of One Still Living*, "Seducer's Diary," and writings by Judge William (Malik 8; Taylor 68 footnote 81, 176). Regardless of whether Hegelian themes are earnestly present in Kierkegaard's later works, there is a strong argument to be made in favor of a serious reading of Kierkegaard's use of Hegelian ideas in *The Concept of Irony*.

[29] In *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, Stewart analyzes the makeup of Kierkegaard's examination committee, notably finding that Martensen, the most well-known Hegelian at Kierkegaard's university, was not a part of the committee until April of 1841, mere months before Kierkegaard completed his defense, and therefore that it was unlikely that Kierkegaard composed his text ironically to appeal to the Hegelian committee member. While Sibbern, Kierkegaard's dissertation advisor, is typically depicted as an unabashed Hegelian his position was more complicated, as Robert J. Widenmann notes. Sibbern attacked Danish Hegelians in an article in 1837, which suggests that Kierkegaard was not likely to be writing in a Hegelian tone to appease his advisor (76). Kirmmse further notes that Kierkegaard's committee members were unhappy with *The Concept of Irony* because it was pushed through the faculty very quickly, a process largely engineered by Sibbern. This fast progression casts doubt on the ironic thesis because if it was written in an ironically Hegelian vein, Kirmmse suggests, it would not have needed to be pushed through so quickly ("Socrates in the Fast Lane" 64–67). Additionally, the claim that Kierkegaard wrote in Danish to facilitate punning is unlikely, given the

precedents for Danish-language dissertations and Kierkegaard's facility in Latin. This argument is articulated in Kevin Newmark's article "Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: The Space of Translation" (in which Newmark analyzes the double meaning of the word *Ophaevelser*, which means both "sublation" and "to make a fuss over," which Newmark sees in the context of "much ado about nothing" and sublates the concept of sublation and links *Aufhebung*'s earnestness to *Ophaeveleser's* mindlessness [220]) and his book *Irony on Occasion* (in which he posits that the "double mode" *[dobbelt Maade]* of gift (*gave*) and task (*Opgave*) reveals the free play of linguistic irony [63]). However, as Kirmmse shows in his article "Socrates in the Fast Lane: Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony* on the University's Velocifère. Documents, Context, Commentary, and Interpretation," before Kierkegaard there were three students at the University of Copenhagen (Hammerich and Adler, both cited by Kierkegaard in his application, and Martensen, not cited) who also applied for permission from the king to compose their dissertations in Danish. Kierkegaard's request was not wholly unusual and does not necessarily signify a desire to pun (56, 54, 59).

[30] If Kierkegaard objects to Hegelian philosophy explicitly, he does so by critiquing the Danish Hegelians and not Hegel's work. As Hannay, Stewart, and Fenger propose, much of Kierkegaard's knowledge of Hegelian philosophy was "filtered" through works by Danish Hegelians writing in Copenhagen in the mid-nineteenth century. Heiberg and Martensen were especially prominent figures in this scene, and Kierkegaard expressed a great deal of frustration with both thinkers later in his works.

[31] The long discussion of Romantic irony in *The Concept of Irony*, for example, is consistent with Hegel's critique of irony in *Aesthetics*. In the *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* Hegel writes of Schlegel, Fichte, and Schilling: "this skill in living an ironical artist life apprehends itself as a *God-like geniality*, for which every possible thing is a mere dead creature, to which the free creator, knowing himself to be wholly unattached, feels in no way bound, seeing that he can annihilate as well as create it. … This is the universal import of the genial God-like irony, as that concentration of the I into itself for which all bonds are broken, and which will only endure to live in the bliss of self-enjoyment. This irony was the invention of Herr Fried. von Schlegel, and many followed him in prating about it then, or are prating of it afresh just now" (§LXXXIX). Kierkegaard, as Stewart observes, follows Hegel's commentary on Romantic irony "without criticism or variation" ("Hegel" 124).

[32] Kierkegaard's understanding of Socrates as a world-historical individual has ethical overtones; and, as James W. Hulse shows in *The Reputation of Socrates: The Afterlife of a Gadfly*, eighteenth century German philosophy—by Hamann, Herder, and Kant, among others—commonly analyzed Socrates as an ethical figure (123).

[33] Kierkegaard describes it as a force that is both "unconscious, the external, that decides; yet it is also something subjective. The *daimon* is not Socrates himself, nor his opinion, nor his conviction, but it is something unconscious; Socrates is impelled" (*CI* 164).

[34] As Hannay suggests, *The Concept of Irony* is his attempt to reverse Hegelian dialectics; rather than starting dialectical development with the possible, he wants to show what it might look like starting with actuality and seeing the possible within it (135).

[35] This claim is analyzed in depth in Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered* 132–181.

[36] In his essay "The Four Genealogies of 'World Literature'" Jérôme David traces four argumentative strains of *Weltliteratur* from Goethe to the 1990s: philological (dependent on literature circulating in translation), critical (a culturally specific articulation of universal values and aesthetics), pedagogical (the idea that nations can learn about each other through literary works), and methodological (an examination of "the type of revitalization their conceptual tools would need in order to make [Weltliteratur] possible" [22]). However, David's genealogies are not as easily separated as the article might suggest, as the philological and pedagogical models rely on the same idea of circulating literatures in translation.

[37] In *Against World Literature* Apter proposes that the journal *World Literature Today*, edited by Djelal Kadir from 1991–97, encouraged the development of the field, and cites Casanova's monograph and Moretti's essay "Conjectures on World Literature" (2000) as the "opening salvos" of the reinvigoration of world literary theory (Apter 1).

[38] For a response to the *n + 1* article, see Gloria Fisk's essay "'Against World Literature': The Debate in Retrospect." Owen modifies his position somewhat in the later essay "Stepping Forward and Back: Issues and Possibilities for 'World' Poetry."

[39] Franco Moretti's writings on world literature and distant reading have attempted to define world literature as a methodology, rather than as a corpus of texts. Moretti's proposal that surveying and analyzing all secondary literature written by linguistic or area specialists about their "own" literature, and analyzing these studies with computer-assisted models (including spatial, genetic, and quantitative) can offer a broader picture of literary trends and circulation. Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*; "Conjectures" and "Further Conjectures"; *Distant Reading*; *Atlas of the European Novel*. Pascale Casanova's work *The World Republic of Letters* represents the center-periphery debate; in this text she traces the way which books written "elsewhere" (especially in the postcolonial periphery) are selected and distributed in the center, and to whom. (Of course, Casanova's argument that Paris operates at the heart of all literary centers and "consecrates" the transmission has been a contentious one; see, for example, Christopher Prendergast's critique of Casanova in *New Left Review* and *Debating World Literature*.) Many scholars subscribe to the view of world literature as a mode of circulation, including Goethe, Erich Auerbach, Fritz Stritch, David Damrosch, Alexander Beecroft, John Pizer, and others. The rest of this chapter will examine this strain in depth, especially as articulated in Herderian philosophy.

[40] Herder's position, and the one to which I hold in this chapter, differs from arguments that some books are explicitly written for the global marketplace, a position explained in depth by Goethe, Rebecca Walkowitz in *Born Translated*, and Brennan in *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*.

[41] Several scholars eloquently refute these positions, including Nicholas Robinette, Sankar Muthu, John K. Noyes, and Casanova.

[42] Auerbach explains his understanding of Herder in "Vico and Herder."

[43] Herderian world-historical development is often cited as the "scapegoat" of reactions against such notions. Scholars arguing that this idea is teleological and racist, including Mufti, allege that Herder casts previous nations in a negative light, depicting peoples as unenlightened and valuable insofar only as they are the predecessors of contemporary European nations (Mufti 64). Similarly, in *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* Suzanne Marchand claims that even Herder's anti-imperialist writings have overtones of "imperialist hubris" (49). However, this chapter argues that Mufti and Marchand misread Herder by not acknowledging the dialectic of national specificity and collective belonging.

[44] Herder explains that the process of historical development is cumulative, requiring a "ladder" of development. He writes: "The Egyptian without Oriental childhood would not be an *Egyptian*, the Greek without Egyptian school-diligence not a *Greek*—precisely their hate shows *development, progress, steps of the ladder*!" (*Philosophical Writings* 281). Mufti points to this idea of cumulative development as a clear indication of Herder's teleological world view in *Forget English!* (64) However, Herder writes elsewhere that his breakdown of the stages of development into the ages of human life should not be understood as a moral judgment.

[45] This quality comes to fruition in and through everyday actions, including "in keeping with his estate, in raising his children, observing his duties, by means of example, work, institution, and teaching" (*On World History* 106).

[46] As he writes in *This Too a Philosophy of History*, it is necessary to examine both language and content to comprehend a nation "according to its intrinsic nature and aims, its pastimes and mores, and especially as the instrument of the historical process" (*Philosophical Writings* 308). In making this argument I build on work by Muthu, Hans Adler, Wulf Koepke, and others. For debates on the title of this essay see Mufti and Forster.

[47] Similarly, Muthu explains that as humans are able to influence climate and change the natural world, they thereby change language and their own national character (245).

[48] As Gregory Moore succinctly notes in his introduction to Herder's *Selected Writing on Aesthetics*, "art activates the totality of an organism; it is produced by the cooperation of our sensuous, imaginative, and intellectual faculties, by our interactions with the world around us, and so an analysis of art will inevitably shed light on the complexities of human nature and experience" (3).

[49] Auerbach notes that Herder sees all literature (and "customs, art, [and] language") as "emanations and expressions of" the national spirit (*Time, History, Literature* 14).

[50] Herder proposes that literature, and poetry specifically, have a strong affective component not present in other genres. A few paragraphs later he argues that poetry is more than a reflection of the world in which it was produced; the poet's artistry also enables that same view of the nation to be imprinted, so to

speak, upon the reader. He suggests that "a poet could never want to be merely a painter. He is an artist by virtue of impressive speech that paints the depicted object onto a *spiritual*, *moral*, that is *infinite* ground, into the *personality*, into the *soul*" (8). Poets, and writers more generally speaking, have a visceral impact upon their readers. Forster also writes in his introduction to *Philosophical Writings* that reading literature "exposes us [readers] to them [the "people's mind"] at their moral best … so that there are benefits of moral edification to be gleaned here. Second, he has cosmopolitan and egalitarian moral motives for such study: because literature, visual art, etc. make us acquainted with different peoples, at different social levels, including lower ones, and at their most sympathetic, it promises to enhance our sympathies for different peoples at different social levels …" (*Philosophical Writings* xxviii).

[51] Linguistic heterogeneity is the only type of diversity that cannot be withstood in national boundaries, according to Muthu (249).

[52] For example, in the essay "On the Change of Taste" (1776) Herder writes that aesthetic preferences change drastically between historical eras: "Could it be that what a nation at one time considers good, fair, useful, pleasant, true it considers at another time bad, ugly, useless, unpleasant, false?—And yet this happens! … This skepticism should almost put us off trusting our own taste and sensation" (*Philosophical Writings* 256).

[53] Muthu suggests: "Herder contends that universal claims about the truth or falsehood of ideas in the political sphere establishes a mode of thinking that makes difficult, if not impossible, the task of determining judiciously which practices and institutions ought to be reformed and in what manner" (216).

[54] Failing to respect and evaluate other cultures' knowledge is grossly hubristic: "Vain, therefore, is the boast of the European upstart who deems himself superior to the other parts of the world in what he is wont to call his enlightenment and his arts and sciences, claiming all the inventions of his continent his own just because he was born amidst the confluence of these inventions and traditions" (*Herder on Social and Political Culture* 315).

[55] As Muthu notes, understanding the nation is not equivalent to sanctioning all its ideas and practices. The critic must "set aside facile judgment in favor of more subtle and complicated accounts, which, Herder insists, does not require legitimating every facet of the object under study" (Muthu 217).

[56] Learning about and from other nations is not an organic process; it involves many fits and starts. Learning, assimilation, and enlightenment can only take place in specific historical circumstances. Muthu explains that an individual's enculturation by other nations and past eras, assimilation of their ideas, and transformation of his own nation is only effective "when the social conditions happen to be ready for reform" (220). These social conditions, while dependent on the learning process, are also impacted by chance and juxtapositions, and sometimes occur as unintended consequences of other actions. While the learning process is necessary for historical development, it does not follow that all learning is synonymous with development.

[57] This historical progression is nothing but "*a work of fate*—the result of a thousand *cooperating causes* of the *whole element in which they live*, so to speak" (*Philosophical Writings* 320).

[58] Furthermore, he emphasizes that Europeans do not necessarily have a superior intellect to their predecessors because the ready availability of inventions has made Europeans' lives significantly easier: "the easy access to inventions has to some extent blunted the European's inventiveness" (*Herder on Social and Political Culture* 316).

[59] Muthu explains this sentiment clearly in *Enlightenment Against Empire* when he writes: "Herder's arguments often target the arrogance and parochialism of those who judge other times and places in light of a present age that all too often is assumed to be a pinnacle of wisdom and virtue" (213). Herder's solution was an awareness of own the reader's own finitude and of the contingencies of all societies. See also *Philosophical Writings* 248.

[60] This view of historical development has ethical overtones because of the possibilities it affords colonized, enslaved, and oppressed nations: "The more we Europeans invent means and tools to subjugate, to deceive, and to plunder you other parts of the world … Perhaps it will one day be precisely your turn to triumph!" (*This Too a Philosophy of History*; *Philosophical Writings* 352). This argument prefigures Hegel's master-slave dialectic and Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. He clearly argues that historical development does not exist to benefit European nations, but posits that, like the developments in the ancient world that were assimilated by subsequent nations, advancements made by nineteenth

century Europeans could reverse the contemporary world-power order. In his introduction to *Philosophical Writings* Forster writes that "Hegel's philosophy turns out to be an elaborate systematic extension of Herderian ideas (especially concerning God, the mind, and history) …" (*Philosophical Writings* vii).

[61] In this sense, historical development and the refinement of culture are not unequivocally beneficial; some advances are detrimental to human beings. For example, in *Ideas on a Philosophy of History of Mankind* he writes that the creation of large cities in advanced societies creates negative effects like overcrowding, explaining that "irreparable" social changes occur due to the "sociability and easy intercourse between the sexes," and proposing that "[f]reedom, sociability, equality as they are now sprouting up everywhere—they have caused harm and will cause harm in a thousand misuses" (*Herder on Social and Political Culture* 316, 349, 350). Additionally, in *This Too a Philosophy of History* he caustically notes: "we admittedly also have the advantage *of being capable* 'of precisely *that exhausted, short-sighted, all-despising, solely self-satisifed, nothing-achieving*, and, precisely in its inefficacy, *consoling philosophy*.' Orientals, Greeks, and Romans were not capable of it" (*Philosophical Writings* 333).

[62] Koepke explains that "in the case of the Germans, he advocated a literature that would help to overcome the disorientation, fragmentation, and alienation in their society and in their daily lives and create a nation worthy of the name" (Adler 231).

[63] However, it can operate the opposite way, beginning with "*Ansatzphänomen* that releases the recognition and formulation of the general problem" (14). Auerbach also acknowledges that there are times in which multiple points of departure are necessary, but holds that all points must "[converge] on a central intention" (15).

[64] They argue that there are too many variables for translation to be considered a neutral practice: "First, and very obviously: translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems" (2). Furthermore, Mufti connects philology in general, and intercultural translation specifically, to William Jones and the development of Orientalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mufti contends that, given this lineage, reading a work in translation perpetuates this system of Orientalism even as it may disavow it.

[65] Benjamin provides a compelling illustration to explain how this harmonious relationship operates: "Fragments of a vessel that are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of imitating the sense of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the individual's way of meaning, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel" (260).

[66] Of course, given the many requirements of a "good" translation it follows that there are bad translations, and that there are works that are not translatable along these lines. As Benjamin writes in "The Task of the Translator," "translatability must be an essential feature of certain works" and not all works are equally translatable (254, 262). He further notes "For to some degree, all great texts contain their potential translations between the lines; this is true above all of sacred writings" ("Task of the Translator" 263). This idea, though, is articulated most forcefully in Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* He contends that not all literature gains in translation, but those that do are examples of world literature. A "gain in translation" is possible when "stylistic losses [are] offset by an expansion in depth as they increase their range, as is the case with such widely disparate works as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Dictionary of the Khazars*" (289).

[67] In *The World Republic of Letters* Casanova deems this process one of *littérisation* and consecration (in other words, the making legitimate of those languages previously deemed inferior, a consecration that moves beyond the one work being evaluated and extending to many others written in the same source language). Casanova also acknowledges the ambivalences of translation: "Translation therefore stands revealed as an ambiguous enterprise as well: on the one hand, it is a means of obtaining official entry to

the republic of letters; and, on the other, it is a way of systematically imposing the categories of the center upon works from the periphery, even of unilaterally deciding the meaning of such works" (154).
[68] Damrosch sneers at this rejection in his review published in *Comparative Literature Studies*. He particularly criticizes her rejection of translation which he sees as more of an engagement with Derrida than an earnest engagement with translation theory.
[69] This translational context can change the culture/era in which the work of world literature is consumed: "Translation projects can effect a change in a domestic representation of a foreign culture, not simply when they revise the canons of the most influential constituency, but when another constituency in a different social situation produces and responds to the translations" (Venuti 73).
[70] See Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* 290 and 295. Damrosch is especially interested in the context of pedagogy and suggests that students should be led to "cultural context, via corollary readings and through collaborative student explorations of websites and print resources" (290).
[71] As Walter Benjamin writes in his dialogue "Translation—For and Against," "Let us not deceive ourselves: translation is, above all, a technique. And as such, why should it not be combined with other techniques? I'm thinking primarily of the technique of the commentary … And just because the difference in linguistic situation was acknowledged, the translation could become effective, a component of its own world. All the same, to apply this technique to poetic texts seems to me highly problematic" (250).

Chapter Three:

[1] Heinrich Heine famously called Goethe "der große Heide," "the great heathen," in a letter to Karl August von Varnhagen in 1827. Quoted in Elisabeth Krimmer 99.
[2] Many scholars argue about the genre of the work. Some see it as an epic, including Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic*; John Geary, *Goethe's* Faust; and Arnd Bohm, *Goethe's* Faust *and the European Epic*. For contrasting perspectives see Jane K. Brown, *Goethe's* Faust (tragedy); Inez Hedges, *Framing Faust* (myth); Georg Lukács, *Goethe and His Age* (drama with epic moments; 235–37).
[3] Contrary to Ellis Shookman's assertion in "Goethe's Baccalaureus and the concept of romantic irony in *Faust*."
[4] Further supporting this claim, that Kierkegaard sees Goethean irony as an ethical tool to support dialectical development, is the fact that Goethe was often associated with Hegelian philosophy in nineteenth century Denmark. As Jon Stewart and Katalin Nun write in "Goethe: A German Classic through the Filter of the Danish Golden Age," Kierkegaard made a connection between Goethe and Hegel because Heiberg did as well in the journal *Kjøbenhavns flyvende post*, in which Heiberg writes that Goethe's poetry embodies Hegel's speculative philosophy (Stewart and Nun 56). While Kierkegaard had a notable about-face, a reaction against Goethe later in his career, Stewart and Nun propose that this swift change is due to Kierkegaard's negative reaction toward Heiberg's negative reviews of *Either/Or* and *Repetition* (Stewart and Nun 81).
[5] See Ulrich Gaier, "Dialektik der Vorstellungsarten als Prinzip in Goethes *Faust*," and Martin Esslin, "Goethe's *Faust*: Pre-Modern, Post-Modern, Proto-Postmodern," both in *Interpreting Goethe's* Faust *Today*. Also see Shookman, "Goethe's Baccalaureus and the concept of romantic irony in *Faust.*" In *Goethe's Theory of Poetry* Bennett proposes that the work rejects the idea that there is nothing outside of consciousness by continually calling the reader to self-reflection, and in doing so restores the idea that there is nothing outside of consciousness (28).
[6] Bennett suggests that irony is a "verbal *imitatio Christi* that clothes itself as it were in the flesh, in the idiom of its 'Mitwelt' (77), instead of seeking absolute enjoyment of the divine, and this mode of speaking, this verbal 'Irren' in which truth is present only as 'ein Fünkchen' that the hearer must for himself nurse into flame, is the only means by which truth can truly be spoken in the first place" ("Vorspiel auf dem Theater" 445). Similarly, in his dissertation *Aesthetic Liberalism and Literary Autonomy in the Kunstperiode*, Sean M. McIntyre argues that irony's creation of an artistic perspective is ethical because it does not attempt to authentically represent reality; these attempts at realistic writings are utopia and mendacious.

[7] Other works similarly focus on Part II, rather than Part I. See Martin Swales and Erika Swales, *Reading Goethe: A Critical Introduction to the Literary Work*; Jane K. Brown, *Faust: Theater of the World*; Henry Hatfield, *Aesthetic Paganism in German Literature: From Winckelmann to the Death of Goethe*; Hans-Jürgen Schings, "Magicians of modernity: Cagliostro and Saint-Simon in Goethe's *Faust II*"; and Martin Swales, "Goethe's *Faust* and the Drama of European Modernity." Hans Christoph Biswanger proposes the critique of capitalism in *Money and Magic: A Critique of the Modern Economy in the Light of Goethe's* Faust. Studies of Goethe's engagement with imperialism include Stuart Atkins, "The Evaluation of Romanticism in Goethe's *Faust*" in *Essays on Goethe*, and John K. Noyes, "Goethe on Cosmopolitanism and Colonialism: Bildung and the Dialectic of Critical Mobility." Scholars writing on technology include Jeffrey Barnouw, "Faust and the Ethos of Technology"; Bruce J. MacLennan, "Homunculus' Quest for a Body"; and Astrida Orle Tantillo, *Goethe's Modernisms*.

[8] Brown further notes that conservatives weren't impressed by Goethe's writings, especially *Faust*, given the licentious subject matter including sensuality, divorce, adultery, and blasphemy (*Faust: Theater of the World* 14). Given the complicated reactions to Goethe's literary output, we can see support for Boyle's assertion that Goethe's work takes a middle path, navigating the boundaries between official and marginal, establishment and opposition, and public and private (39).

[9] Brown, "*Faust*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, 84–100; Nicholas Saul, "Goethe the writer and literary history," in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, 23–41; and Krimmer, "Then Say What Your Religion Is: Goethe, Religion, and *Faust*," in *Religion, Reason, and Culture in the Age of Goethe*, 99–119. See also Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic*, and Kenneth D. Weisinger, *The Classical Façade: A Neoclassical Reading of Goethe's Classicism.* Weisinger writes: Goethe "shows the fragmentation of the modern world through an imitation of the ancient form, but in so doing he does not reestablish the classical sense of wholeness for the modern age, but simply reveals all the more clearly the fragmentation and disunity perceived in his own world" (22). Goethe also mutes his critique by framing it in a historical context, an argument Lukács articulates in *Goethe and his Age*. Brown supports his reading in *Faust: Theater of the World*, explaining that the work is Goethe's attempt to explore the dialectical relationship between subject and object, parodying earlier styles to do so (6). This thesis is robustly critiqued by Harold Jantz in *Goethe's Faust as a Renaissance Man: Parallels and Prototypes*, in which he argues that Goethe's focus is the Renaissance, not the Reformation. See also Inez Hedges on Lukács in *Framing Faust*.

[10] Durrani, *Faust and the Bible*, pp. 81 and 88; Brown, "*Faust*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, 85. Furthermore, Durrani writes in *Faust and the Bible* that throughout Part I Goethe includes references to *Song of Solomon* throughout Part I, especially in scenes including Gretchen (109), and Boyle proposes that the Prologue in Heaven is a "serenely humorous theological framework" for the entire play (537). For an overview of the discussions of religious themes in *Faust* up to 1977, see Osman Durrani, "Biblical Borrowings in Goethe's *Faust*: A Historical Survey of Their Interpretation." Moreover, in "Nichtchristliche 'Offenbarung': Goethe, Lavater und die biblische Apokalypse," Wolf-Daniel Hartwich traces the way Goethe borrows Lavater's descriptions of eschatology and apocalypse in *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust* II.

[11] See Chapter Two, above, for my comments about why I disagree with this decision to call Goethe the originator of the idea of world literature.

[12] Redner, *In the Beginning was the Deed*. Lorna Fitzsimmons, "Introduction: Magian Mnemotechny" in *Goethe's* Faust *and Cultural Memory*."

[13] See John Lyden, *Film as Religion*, and Hedges, *Framing Faust: Twentieth-Century Cultural Struggles*. Hedges' chapter six, "Oneiric Fausts: Repression and Liberation in the Cold War Era," centers on the "deal with the devil" trope in *film noir* (pp. 156–185).

[14] Karl Eibl, "Zur Bedeutung der Wette im 'Faust,'" Brown, *Goethe's* Faust*: The German Tragedy*, Harry Steinhauer, "Faust's Pact with the Devil," and J. M. van der Laan, *Seeking Meaning for Goethe's Faust* (especially chapter three). However, as Janice Elizabeth Hansen notes in her dissertation "Redeeming Faustus: Tracing the pacts of Mariken and Faust from the 1500s to the present," the "pact with the devil" theme considerably predates the Faust legend.

[15] Of course, Goethe may have drawn from several sources in this scene; many scholars especially note the correspondences between Goethe's work and *Paradise Lost*. See Mason 267; Angus James Nicholls,

Goethe's Concept of the Daemonic 118; J. H. Tisch, "Milton and the German Mind in the Eighteenth Century"; and D. Hawkes, *The Faust Myth: Religion and the Rise of Representation* 144.

[16] There is an interesting argument to be made about the fact that Faust conducts the translation three times, paralleling Peter's threefold denial of Jesus in the crucifixion story.

[17] He asserts that only by turning to the "supernatural world" (*Uberirdische schätzen*) can humans "overwhelm" their own frustration with their limited perspective (ll. 1216, 1214). Faust then muses, "I would for once like to determine— / Because I am sincerely perplexed— / How the sacred original text / Could be translated into my beloved German" (ll. 1220–1223).

[18] Many scholars have noted that the choice of the gospel of John is significant. As Durrani notes in *Faust and the Bible*, John is the only New Testament book to discuss creation; moreover, the gospel of John is traditionally associated with white magic and in the chapbooks Faustus is forbidden to read it (58).

[19] "*Geschrieben steht: 'Im Anfang war das Wort!' / Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort? / Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen, / Ich muß es anders übersetzen, / Wen ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin. Geschrieben steht: Im Anfant war der Sinn."* Kaufmann's translation preserves the rhyming couplets of Goethe's German lines—an intentional, and effective, strategy, as I explain below.

[20] *"Bedenke wohl die erste Zeile, / Daß deine Feder sich nicht übereile! / Ist es der Sinn, der alles wirkt und schafft? / Es sollte stehn: Im Anfang war die Kraft! / Doch, auch indem ich dieses niederschreibe, / Schon warnt mich was, daß ich dabei nicht bleibe. / Mir hilft der Geist, auf einmal seh ich Rat / Und schreibe getrost: Im Anfang war die Tat!"*

[21] Brown proposes that the sequence of the translation scene parallels Faust's moods in "Night" (*Faust: Theater of the World* 38; *Goethe's* Faust: *The German Tragedy* 66). She explains that the translation paradoxically brings Faust back into the "worldly world": "As Faust invokes divinity in ever more explicit terms in these two scenes, he is also pulled back into the physical world with increasing vigor. He is caught in the neoplatonic dialectic of world and spirit" (*Faust: Theater of the World* 39). Redner argues that Faust's connection between creation and action is indicative of Goethe's knowledge of eighteenth-century German philology and his close acquaintances with Hamman, Herder, and Humboldt. See also E. M. Butler's *The Fortunes of Faust* in which he posits the translation was influenced not by Christianity but by "traditional rituals" (37). Conversely, Alan Corkhill reads this scene as a critique of German Romantic intuition (in Fitzsimmons 17–36). Even further afield, Bruce J. MacLennan proposes that the translation scene anticipates artificial intelligence, especially computational models, in which "the potential computation is actualized in specific behavior to achieve some end: word, interpretation, power, action" (183).

[22] Moretti, *Modern Epic* 24; Bishop, "Introduction: Reading *Faust* Today" xxiv.

[23] In *Goethe's* Faust Stuart Atkins suggests that Faust is not concerned with either Jesus or logos; rather, Faust's emphasis on "doing" is "the visible demonstration of man's godlike powers," showing how the poet acts as a second maker after God (40, 50). Redner also posits that Goethe connects word and action not in the understanding of God's creation but of the power of words to shape lived experience. According to Redner, Goethe's emphasis on "act" is a "creation *ex nihilo* analogous to God's original act of creation; it is in that act itself understood as continuing forever, and so maintaining creation in constant Becoming" (81).

[24] John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth …" In *Goethe's Faust as a Renaissance Man* Jantz finds support for his argument by connecting Faust's translation with Heraclitus' analysis of *logos* to include "cosmic law," arguing that Faust's progression is a "simple, natural description of the magical process, beginning with the 'word,' which is valid because it is a symbol for the 'meaning lying behind it' … which gives the magus power over the forces of nature" (114, 115). However, in returning to Heraclitus Jantz ignores Goethe's interest and engagement with his contemporary religious context, and in so doing misses the ironic thrust of the passage.

[25] These scholars include Luz-María Linder, Atkins, Weisinger, and Geary. Weisinger calls the translation a "perversion of scripture" (32). While Linder ultimately reads the scene as an ironic critique of *Sturm und Drang* rationalism (147), Weisinger understands the ironic critique as an exploration of the accessibility of intellectualism in Germany in the eighteenth century (57, 61).

[26] Liselotte Dieckmann points out that during and after this scene the Bible is only quoted blasphemously (44).
[27] "*Geschrieben steht,*" "*es sollte stehn,*" and "*und schreibe getrost,*" respectively.
[28] In this way, as Erich Heller writes in "Faust's Damnation," this scene blurs the line between religion and black magic, "the abysmal craft bringing forth the machinery of fabrication and destruction that passes for understanding" (37). Linder similarly argues that Faust's translation is linguistic, not sacred, and that the scene demonstrates the dangers of decontextualization (149).
[29] "*Wir sind gewohnt, daß die Menschen verhöhnen, / Was sie nicht verstehn, / Daß sie vor dem Guten und Schönen, / Das ihnen oft beschwerlich ist, murren*" (ll. 1205-1208).
[30] Dieckmann writes, "very often we can read Goethe's true intention from the meter or rhyme scheme and we must certainly never disregard it" (36).
[31] David Chisholm writes in *Goethe's Knittelvers* that Goethe typically writes in free Knittelvers which omits syllable counting but preserves four-stress lines, rhyming couplets, incorporates "an indeterminate number of unstressed syllables" (19), and is consistent with satirical material.
[32] Boyle, *Goethe* volume 1 142–143.
[33] In his essay "'*Schwankende Gestalten*': virtuality in Goethe's *Faust*" Ulrich Gaier posits that Goethe uses different kinds of verse to signal social distinctions. "Margaret's naïve *Knittel*-verse differs greatly from Faust's high-tension use of the metre" (Schulte 66). See also Chisholm 24.
[34] See also Michael Heymel, "Die Bibel mit Geschmack und Vergnügen lesen: Bahrt als Bibelausleger" in *Carl Friedrich Bahrdt (1740–1792)*: 227–257.
[35] *"Dass ich, um dem Leser verständlich zu warden, zuweilen einen Gedanken eingeschobene habe, der zwar nicht geradezu in den gerichischen Worten liegt, den aber der Schriftsteller mitgedact hat, oder den wenigstens die Parallele autorisiert."*
[36] "*Wo bey dem einfachen Wort schlecterdings der wahre Gedanke verlohren gieng;" "Daß ich um eben der Ursachen willen Sprüchwörter mit Sprüchwörten vertauscht habe*." He uses Matthew 23:15 as an example.
[37] Bahrdt's contemporaries (Köster and Johann Miller) objected to his translation of the gospel of John, especially in his conflation of God and logos, as it denied the divinity of Christ (Sheehan 141).
[38] Satire is "militant irony," in Frye's phrase, as noted in the Introduction above.
[39] "*Der Logus, war schon bey dem Entstehen dieser Welt*."
[40] Indeed, as Boyle writes in his extensive biography of Goethe, as an eighteenth century intellectual Faust "might be a mid-century Deist imposing a rational sense on Scripture, like Bahrdt or his Tübingen disciple, Diez" (763). Boyle, however, believes that Fichte is a better parallel, as does Cyrus Hamlin in "Goethe's *Faust* and the Philosophers" (*Companion*).
[41] See also Tillmann 66-76 for a detailed explanation of how Goethe satirizes Bahrdt's translation. Gerhard Sauder's "Goethe's 'Prolog zu den neuesten Offenbarungen Gottes'" also explores Goethe's adaptation of Bahrdt's work.
[42] Paul Carus, *The Open Court*, essay "Goethe and Criticism." "*Da kam mir ein Einfall von ohngefähr, / So redt' ich wenn ich Christus war*" (III).
[43] Carus, "Goethe and Criticism." "*Daß ichs euch kürzlich sagen thu. / Es ist mit eurer Schriften Art / Mit euren Falten und eurem Bart, / Wie mit den alten Thaiern schwer, / Das silber sein geprobet sehr / Und gelten dennoch jezt nicht mehr*" (V–VI).
[44] Carus, the translator of Goethe's satirical sketch and editor of *The Open Court*, argues that in this work Goethe argues more in defense of Luther's translation than in opposition to Bahrdt's adaptation.
[45] Lukács reads the Gretchen storyline as a critique of "degenerate feudalism," a common theme in Enlightenment-era literature (*Goethe and His Age* 218). Similarly, as Tantillo argues in *Goethe's Modernisms*, Faust is a proto-capitalist character (22); Gretchen's exploitation and death are thus to be read as an indictment of capitalist logic.
[46] *"Mißhör mich nicht, du holdes Angesicht! / War darf ihn nennen? / Und wer bekennen: Ich glaub ihn? / Wer empfinden / Und sich unterwinden / Zu sagen: ich glaub ihn nicht?"*
[47] *"Erfüll davon dein Herz, so groß es ist, / Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühle selig bist, / Nenn es dann, wie du willst, / Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott! / Ich habe keinen Namen / Dafür! Gefühl ist alles; / Name ist Schall und Rauch, / Umnebelnd Himmelsglut."*

[48] Brown proposes that "feeling is all" is Faust's assertion of his own subjectivity (*Goethe's Allegories of Identity* 82). Wilkinson sees this scene as a reflection of the "*Sturm und Drang* impatience with mere words" (237).
[49] Atkins proposes that Faust is earnestly trying to avoid condemning himself with Gretchen, since Faust "recognizes the importance of orthodoxy for one basically so convention-bound as Margarethe" (84).
[50] Mephisto enjoins Faust to convince Gretchen of his interest using whatever means necessary: "Is this the first time in your life that you / Have testified what is not true? / Of God and all the world, and every single part / Of man and all that stirs inside his head and heart / You gave your definitions with power and finesse, / With brazen cheek and haughty breath" (ll. 3041–3046). Mephisto asks Faust to confirm that he will deceive Gretchen, to which Faust responds "With all my heart" (3055).
[51] "*Nun sag, wie hast du's mit der Religion*?" (l. 3415), "*Glaubst du an Gott*?" (l. 3426), and "*So glaubst du nicht*?" (ll. 3431).
[52] Robertson in *Companion* (ed. Bishop).
[53] For a brief overview of this debate, see Peter James Yoder, "Rendered 'Odious' as Pietists: Anton Wilhelm Böhme's Conception of Pietism and the Possibilities of Prototype Theory" in *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*.
[54] Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe.* The seminal text on German Pietism is F. Ernest Stoffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*. For a thorough history of Pietism see the series *Geschichte der Pietismus*, published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht between 1993–2004. Other scholarly overviews of Pietism include Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* and Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition*.
[55] In *The Religion of the Heart*, Ted A. Campbell notes that many different sects emphasized feeling rather than, or at the expense of, intellect; many different traditions were represented, including offshoots of Catholicism (Jansenism and Quietism), British Calvinism, Puritanism, and "Eastern Christian Piety and Hasidic Judaism."
[56] The "Confessions" section of *Wilhelm Meister* is especially notable, and forms the basis of Daniel J. Farrelly's monograph *Goethe and inner harmony: A study of the 'schöne Seele' in the Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister* (Irish UP, 1973). Other studies taking up the relationship between Goethe's writings and Pietist thought include *Goethe und der Pietismus*, "Goethe's *Werther* und Gottfried Arnolds *Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*", "J. C. Lavater and Goethe" (Atkins), "Nichtchristliche 'Offenbarung'" (Hartwich). Albrecht Schöne, in *Goethes Farbentheologie*, argues that Goethe's writings on the theory of color were influenced by Arnold's mystical writings, and Tantillo writes that Goethe incorporates Pietistic theology in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, especially in its exploration of confessional narrative, rejection of grammar and formal religious language, and celebration of emotion and the "less educated" (79, 115).
[57] Fraulein Klettenberg is often named as the reason for Goethe's rejection of religious dogma and embrace of the ideas of "feeling" in religion (Gray 48). For more on Goethe's rejection of Pietism, specifically, see H. B. Nisbet, "Religion and philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe* 219–231.
[58] Possible sources might include Philip Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*; Gottfried Arnold's *Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*; Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*; Johann Bernhardt Basedow, *Praktische Philosophie*; and Johann Caspar Lavater, *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit*.
[59] Wilkinson notes that Faust's speech also echoes the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, a key church figure for the Pietist tradition that predates it by several centuries.
[60] Kierkegaard's father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, was a Herrnhut Pietist.
[61] A brief note about Zinzendorf's biography: like Bahrdt, Zinzendorf was branded a heretic and fled Germany for Pennsylvania, where he established a strong Moravian conventicle.
[62] "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1).
[63] See *A Short catechism for some congregations of Jesus of the Reformed religion in Pennsylvania, who keep to the ancient Synod of Bern; agreeable to the doctrine of the Moravian Church*, and Katherine M. Faull, "Faith and Imagination: Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf's Anti-Enlightenment Philosophy of Self."

[64] Pietistic emphasis on *Innerlichkeit* was, in the twentieth century, seen as a precondition of Nazism—the connections between Pietism and the Prussian state emphasized obeisance to authoritarian regimes, so goes this line of thinking. However, the idea of *Innerlichkeit* is much more nuanced than simple devotion (Van Horn Melton 308).
[65] Faull understands this distinction as an alternative to Enlightenment/Cartesian ideas of the self as fundamentally intellectualistic (33, 48).
[66] See Faull, "Faith and Imagination: Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf's Anti-Enlightenment Philosophy of Self."
[67] See Jantz, *The Form of Faust* 34; Brown, *Goethe's* Faust*: The German Tragedy* 100.
[68] Conversely, Osman Durrani argues in *Faust and the Bible*, Gretchen's religious beliefs are only cemented after her "fall;" Durrani proposes that her early actions are predominately for show (showing off her jewelry in church) and as such she is only superficially Christian (103). Furthermore, Brown notes in *Faust: Theater of the World* that Margarete's first choice for salvation is Faust's love; God is her fallback choice (66). Where Durrani sees this as Gretchen's failing and impiety, Brown reads Gretchen's commitment to Faust as an embodiment of constancy, to serve as the antithesis to Faust's striving (66).
[69] For information on translating figurative language, see Diri I. Teilanyo, "Figurative Language in Translation: A Study of J. P. Clark's *The Ozidi Saga*," Christian Burgers et al., "HIP: A Method for Linguistic Hyperbole Identification in Discourse," and Burgers, Margot van Mulken and Peter Jan Schellens, "The use of co-textual irony markers in written discourse."
[70] For more information about Spanish translations see Stefan Beyer, "Goethean Rhymes and Rhythms in Verse Translations of *Faust* Into Spanish;" on Romanian, Sean Cotter, "The Soviet Translation: Romanian Literary Translators after World War Two;" and on Japanese, See John Timothy Wixted, "Mori Ōgai: Translation Transforming the Word/World." This translation is discussed in Katharina Keim's "Contemporary African and Brazilian Adaptations of Goethe's *Faust* in Postcolonial Context" in *International Faust Studies: Adaptation, Reception, Translation* 244–258.
[71] This point is ubiquitous in analyses of world literature, both for and against; see "World lite" from *n + 1*, Venuti's *The Scandals of Translation* and *Translator's Invisibility*, and Apter's *Against World Literature* for some key examples.
[72] See Mufti, *Forget English!*
[73] See Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* and Venuti's *Translator's Invisibility* for articulations in favor of this argument.
[74] In the final chapter of *What Is World Literature?* entitled "World Enough and Time."

Chapter Four:

[1] Hutcheon finds a similar parallel with Dawkins' meme theory; like genes, texts must adapt to survive in a new context. Examining the differences between the source and target texts make visible this process of transformation and suggests some reasons for these alterations: "Stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; like genes, they adapt to those new environments by virtue of mutation—in their 'offspring' or their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive; they flourish" (32).
[2] As I noted in Chapter Two, in order for irony to be "translatable" translators often alter it to suit the target language and culture. Irony in translation is thus already a form of adaptation. For more on this idea, see Marta Mateo's influential article "The Translation of Irony."
[3] Readings of *The Master and Margarita* as a political allegory include Elena N. Mahlow, *Bulgakov's* The Master and Margarita: *The Text as Cipher*; Anton Kovac, "The Problem of Good and Evil in Bulgakov's Novel *The Master and Margarita*"; D. G. B. Piper, "An Approach to *The Master and Margarita*"; L. Rzhevsky, "Pilate's Sin: Cryptography in Bulgakov's Novel, *The Master and Margarita*"; Judith M. Mills, "Of dreams, devils, irrationality and *The Master and Margarita*" in *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Daniel Rancour-Laferriere; and Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times*. For a survey of each of these approaches, see Barratt, 78–101.

[4] The primary outline of this development comes from Marietta Chudakova, "*The Master and Margarita*: The Development of a Novel." See also Donald M. Fiene, "A Comparison of the Soviet and Possev Editions of *The Master and Margarita*, With a Note on Interpretation of the Novel"; Laura D. Weeks, "What I Have Written, I Have Written" in The Master and Margarita*: A Critical Companion* ed. Laura D. Weeks; Henry Elbaum, "The Evolution of *The Master and Margarita*: Text, Context, Intertext;" and Andrew Barratt, *Between Two Worlds: A Critical Introduction to* The Master and Margarita.

[5] Bulgakov likely read *Faust* in translation as, according to J. A. E. Curtis, he had a "smattering" of German and "did not, admittedly, own many works written in foreign languages" (*Bulgakov's Last Decade* 24).

[6] Barratt 274; Ursula Reidel-Schrewe, "Key and Tripod in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*" 274; Ellendea Proffer, "On *The Master and Margarita*" 545; Edythe C. Haber, "The Mythic Structure of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*" 392; Weeks "What I Have Written, I Have Written" 37; A. C. Wright, "Satan in Moscow: An Approach to Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*" 1162; Val Boland, "Theme and Coherence in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*" 430; Amy de la Cour, "An Interpretation of the Occult Symbolism in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*" 18; Lesley Milne, The Master and Margarita*: A Comedy of Victory* 5.

[7] For a full list of the parallels between the two works, see Elisabeth Stenbock-Fermor, "Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Goethe's *Faust*."

[8] See also Gary Rosenshield, "*The Master and Margarita* and the Poetics of Aporia" (199 fn. 35). Wright argues, in "Mikhail Bulgakov's Developing World View," that the epigraph demonstrates the authors' similar world-views; like Goethe's decision to save Faust at the end of Part II, Woland's acknowledgment of his benevolent actions (however unintentional) reflects Bulgakov's "metaphysical optimism" (161).

[9] Many scholars puzzle over the alteration of the name from Voland to Woland. See, for example, Barratt 136; Reidel-Schrewe 213; Wright, "Satan in Moscow" 1163; and Vladimir Tumanov, "*Diabolus ex Machina*: Bulgakov's Modernist Devil" 52.

[10] On the similarities between Woland and Mephisto, see Stenbock-Fermor 311. For parallels between the Master and Faust, see Henry Hatfield, "The Walpurgis Night: Theme and Variations" 70; Haber, "The Mythic Structure of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*"; and Bolen. Barratt contends that although Margarita has some Faustian characteristics she is not a direct parallel (275). Haber also insists that while Margarita plays a Faustian role in the novel her motivations are more similar to Gretchen's: both are motivated by love for the male protagonists (394).

[11] The close association between poodles and hippopotami also come through in both texts; in Goethe's work, the black poodle transforms into a hippo before taking the form of Mephisto, and in Bulgakov's novel the feline henchman, Behemoth, shares a name with the Russian word for "hippopotamus" (*begemot;* Stenbock-Fermor 312).

[12] Proffer suggests that because he is an ironic tempter, rather than a nefarious corruptor, Woland more closely emulates Marlowe's Mephistopheles, "a tormented figure who carries his suffering with him … Woland maintains a certain regal distance—his retinue of demonic characters treats him like a Master, and Margarita herself is awed by him and his power. The Mephistopheles of *Faust*, however, is a worldly tempter who seems more human than hellish" (545). Haber suggests that "with regard to the devil, *The Master and Margarita* is *Faust* turned upside down. In Goethe's work the hero is seeking for ever higher levels of existence, while the devil attempts to annihilate life … In Bulgakov's world, on the contrary, mankind is dominated by life-denying forces, while the devil, in putting these forces into disarray, is reasserting life" (389, 390).

[13] See also Mills 315.

[14] Bruce A. Beatie and Phyllis W. Powell, "Story and Symbol: Notes Toward a Structural Analysis of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita.*" They also suggest that both novels incorporate similarly nonlinear depictions of time (223). Hatfield's "The Walpurgis Night: Theme and Variations" also enumerates the similarities between the two profane ceremonies, especially the authors' penchants for presenting impossible elements in a straightforward manner (69). Hatfield concludes, though, that Bulgakov's version is more pessimistic, satirical, and political than is Goethe's Walpurgis Night (69).

[15] In *Between Two Worlds*, Barratt argues that the Master is a failed Faust, however, because he stops striving while incarcerated and in Dr. Stanislavsky's sanitorium (274). Reidel-Schrewe similarly

proposes that "the Master is neither the main character in the traditional sense, nor does he conform to the idea of a Faust or a hero" (274). For a different perspective, Stenbock-Fermor suggests that Koroviev is the Faust figure in Bulgakov's novel, which occurs after Faust's death in which he is condemned to serve Mephistopheles forever (312). Sources that enumerate the differences between Woland and Mephisto include Haber, "The Mythic Structure of *The Master and Margarita*"; Proffer, "*The Master and Margarita*" and "On *The Master and Margarita*"; Rosenshield, "*The Master and Margarita* and the Poetics of Aporia: A Polemical Article"; T. R. N. Edwards, *Three Russian writers and the irrational: Zamyatin, Pil'nyak, and Bulgakov*; Hatfield; and Stenbock-Fermor. Stenbock-Fermor suggests that Frieda, the woman Margarita meets at the Ball, is the closer parallel to Gretchen given the fact that both characters commit infanticide (313).

[16] Florenskii's treatise: Beatie and Powell, "Bulgakov, Dante, and Relativity"; B. V. Sokolov, "The Sources for Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*." Drews and Barbusse: Haber, "The Mythic Structure of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*" and Elbaum. Tacitus: Stephanie West, "Tacitean Sidelights on *The Master and Margarita*." His father's theological writings: Haber, "The Lamp with the Green Shade: Mikhail Bulgakov and his Father." Other possible sources include Briusov's poem "Memento Mori" and his novel *The Fiery Angel* (Cretu), the Bible, Old and New Testaments (Weeks, "Hebraic Antecedents in *The Master and Margarita*" and Wright, "Satan in Moscow" and "Christ Interrogated"); the Ukranian puppet theater tradition of *vertep* (Longinović), and fairy tales (Hoisington). Curtis also identifies sources for Woland's imagery, including Orlov's *A History of Man's Relations with the Devil* and the Brokgauz-Efron Encyclopaedia (*Bulgakov's Last Decade* 171).

[17] Proffer highlights the overall effect of these changes: "Unlike Goethe, Bulgakov cannot accept the injustices as simply part of some vague philosophical whole. In *The Master and Margarita*, as opposed to *Faust*, it matters what choice people make: they are punished for wrong ones" ("On *The Master and Margarita*" 557).

[18] Edward E. Ericson argues that the work is a parody of religion in "The Satanic Incarnation: Parody in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*." Kevin Moss puts the work in the context of censorship and attempts to avoid being apprehended by the police in "Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*: Masking the Supernatural and the Secret Police." In masking the sentence subject, Bulgakov paradoxically highlights that which is unsaid. Moss argues that this use of agentless sentences would have been recognizable to Bulgakov's audience as a reference to the secret police without actually invoking individuals' or agencies' names. Stenbock-Fermor notes that this use of Aesopian language was quite common in nineteenth century Russian satirical works (309). See also Elbaum for a discussion of Bulgakov's use of Aesopian language as self-censorship.

[19] Arguments that Bulgakov critiques Socialist Realism include: Mark Amusin, "'Your Novel Has Some More Surprises in Store for You' (The Specificity of the Fantastic in *The Master and Margarita*)"; Edwards, *Three Russian writers and the irrational: Zamyatin, Pil'nyak, and Bulgakov*; Riitta H. Pittman, *The Writer's Divided Self in Bulgakov's* The Master and Margarita; West; Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*; Kristina Belyk, "*The Master and Margarita*: Deconstructing Social Realism"; and Tumanov. For those critics who allege Bulgakov critiques rationality: Pittman writes that "Bulgakov points out the limits to reason and acknowledges "irrational fact" (42). Woland and retinue support irrational fact, "promote a more common-sense, rational attitude to life than that to which the superstitious citizens adhere," and reveal the truth of evil (44). West similarly suggests that "Bulgakov's main targets [are] the 'certainties' of the materialist world-view and the increasing regimentation of artistic life, to which the eponymous Master of the title … falls victim" ("Tacitean Sidelights" 475). See also Justin Weir, *The Author as Hero: Self and Tradition in Bulgakov, Pasternak, and Nabokov* and Longinović. The position that Bulgakov critiques the Soviet state supported by a number of scholars. For example, Weeks insists that the novel is a "polemical response to the prevailing Marxist-Leninist version of history" ("What I Have Written, I Have Written" 47). She echoes this point in "In Defense of the Homeless": while it may seem to mock socialist realist literary form, Weeks insists that the main critique is of "the version of history found in Stalinist literature" (51). "We cannot be absolutely certain that Bulgakov consciously parodied the state-mandated literature of his day, but the close structural affinity with the Socialist Realist novel, the date of composition … and above all the opening debate … suggest that he was consciously engaging in polemics and that the arena in which he chose to throw down the gauntlet was history" (52). Weir

suggests that *The Master and Margarita* is an "attack on the hegemony of degraded reason in Soviet society" (13).

[20] Some scholars propose that while the Yershalaim narrative is broken up into three parts, they should all be understood as iterations of the same narrative by the same storyteller; different scholarly accounts attribute this narrative to each of the three characters, individually).

[21] The name "Berlioz" also connects *The Master and Margarita* to the Faust legend: Hector Berlioz's opera *La damnation de Faust*. However, Bulgakov was more intrigued by Charles Gounod's opera *Faust*, according to Proffer (*Bulgakov: Life and Work* 556).

[22] Vida Taranovski Johnson, "The Thematic Function of the Narrator in *The Master and Margarita*." See also Jessica E. Merrill, "The Stalinist Subject and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*."

[23] In the beginning of "There Were Doings at Griboedov's," the chapter that introduces the Moscow literary apparatus, the skaz narrator muses about the provenance of the Griboedov House, the location of the writers' offices: "The house was called 'The House of Griboedov' on the grounds that it was alleged to have once belonged to an aunt of the writer Alexander Sergeevich Griboedov. No whether it did or did not belong to her, we do not exactly know. On recollection, it even seems that Griboedov never had any such house-owning aunt … However, devil knows, maybe he did, it's of no importance" (55).

[24] Critics who see the Yershalaim section as objective truth include Curtis (164) and Fanger (qtd. in Barratt 176). Mills disagrees, reading the Yershalaim sections rather as Ivan's irrational dream (307).

[25] Margarita is the only non-historian with knowledge of, and faith in, the historical events as depicted in the narrative, even though her knowledge is indirect, accessible to her through the Master's novel and not through her own visions.

[26] Woland insists to Bezdomny and Berlioz that he (Woland) is the only specialist in the world about the tenth-century necromancer Gerbert of Aurillac (18), which is the ostensible reason for his arrival in Moscow. Later in the narrative we find out that the Master was a historian working in a Moscow museum before he quit (after winning the lottery) to write his novel on Pontius Pilate (138). At the end of the novel we learn that Ivan Nikolaevich Ponryev (who cast off his poetic nom de plume Bezdomny) is now a professor at the Institute of History and Philosophy (393), following the erudition of the Master whom he met in the sanitorium.

[27] For Bulgakov's reference to Gerbert of Aurillac, see Laszlo Tikos, "Some Notes on the Significance of Gerbert Aurillac in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*."

[28] Longinović creates a parallel between Woland and Marx (both German historians haunting the Muscovites) and notes that Woland is a *deus ex machina* who helps Margarita "liberate the Master from the collective delusion of the official ideology of materialism" (40).

[29] Notably, this occupation was part of the Master's character from the earliest drafts of the novel: Milne suggests in *A Comedy of Victory* that in the first redaction the protagonist, then called Fesya, was "a historian of the middle ages" (4).

[30] As Weeks notes in "What I Have Written, I Have Written," Ivan is so far removed from daily life, which she terms "history" with a lower-case h, in order to write the text that will become *The Master and Margarita*, the grand scale of capital-h History: "Another way of viewing Ivan's final position is that he retreats from history to be the chronicler of History" (60). Mills and Pittman agree that the whole novel is Ivan's work (although Mills contends it is his dream in the sanitorium, and Pittman that Ivan's schizophrenia constructs the whole thing). However, Susan Amert and Proffer (in "*The Master and Margarita*: Genre and Motif") contend that the whole work is the Master's novel, given the parallel between the stated last lines of the Master's novel and the concluding sentence of the epilogue. Vatulescu, conversely, argues that the novel is Bulgakov's parody of a polyphonic police file on a suspicious subject.

[31] Elaine McClarnand MacKinnon, "Writing History for Stalin: Isaak Izrailevich Mints and the *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny*."

[32] Sheila Fitzpatrick notes that RAPP, the proletarian literary association, functioned much in the same way during the 1920s and 1930s. Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Revolution as Class War," in Fitzpatrick 8–40.

[33] Barber notes, however, that Stalin's argument is historically inaccurate (130).

[34] George Enteen traces these competing strains of scholarship between 1928 and 1931 in his article "Marxist Historians During the Cultural Revolution: A Case Study of Professional In-fighting" in Fitzpatrick 154–168.
[35] MacKinnon 18 and 25.
[36] See also von Geldern 328.
[37] See Haber, "The Lamp with the Green Shade: Mikhail Bulgakov and His Father."
[38] Elbaum, "The Evolution of *The Master and Margarita*': Text, Context, Intertext"; Haber, "The Mythic Bulgakov: *The Master and Margarita* and Arthur Drews's *The Christ Myth*"; and Barratt, *Between Two Worlds*.
[39] Barratt argues that Bulgakov's is a proto-postmodern novel in which "the novelist always took precedence over the historian. What mattered most to him was that the story of Pilate should convince the reader *rhetorically* of its truth value" (197). Similarly, Weir proposes that the novel "undermin[es] rational subjectivity" and is "a fairly common modernist attack on Enlightenment rationality … The tale of Woland's visit to Moscow plays satirically on the tyranny of degraded reason in Soviet society and makes a comic subtext of Cartesian (and, of course, Marxist) epistemology" (5), Richard Pope insists that ambiguity and plurisignificance is the key to understanding the novel (16), C. E. Pearce argues that the multiple perspectives on one event, offered by the skaz narrator, make impossible any claims to absolute truth, and Yuri Prizel suggests that the novel offers a surrealistic depiction of reality in the unity of dreams and reality (109, 110).
[40] As Proffer notes in her biography of Bulgakov, the Yershalaim sections of the novel were the most stable, and least changed, throughout the eight drafts (*Bulgakov* 637).
[41] Illona Urquhart argues in "Diabolical Evasion of the Censor in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*" that this work, like other censored texts, both resists and is shaped by censorship.
[42] Laura Weeks also observes in "What I Have Written, I Have Written" that Bulgakov removed wordplay, earthy humor, and slapstick comedy in successive drafts, notably eliminating the acronym "OBSCHCHPIS (which could perhaps be rendered as COMMURINE or MASSPISS)" (Weeks 15).
[43] See also Fiene, "A Comparison of the Soviet and Possev Editions of *The Master and Margarita*, With a Note on Interpretation of the Novel." The editors of the 1973 Soviet edition were the first to consult Bulgakov's earlier drafts, notebooks, and archived materials (332).
[44] Curtis does note, in *Bulgakov's Last Decade*, that in earlier drafts the novel ended in apocalypse, including the total destruction of Moscow (175). Bulgakov's decision to leave the ending ambiguous demonstrates his rejection of any edifying message to the text.

Chapter Five:

[1] While many scholars have noted the connections between Wilson Harris's "universal unconscious" and C. G. Jung's "collective unconscious," Harris rejects the claim that he was directly influenced by Jung in an interview with Alan Riach (*Radical Imagination* 62). For more on the similarities and differences of these two concepts, see Gianluca Delfino, *Time, History, and Philosophy in the Works of Wilson Harris* 87-119.
[2] Riach examines this concept in detail in "The Presence of Actual Angels."
[3] On the non-material nature of Wilson Harris's universal unconscious, see also Vera M. Kutzinski, "The Composition of Reality: A Conversation with Wilson Harris," especially 23.
[4] Harris has written extensively on this notion of writer-as-detective: see "Art and Criticism" in *Tradition, the Writer and Society* 7; "The Fabric of the Imagination" 61–73; "Literacy and the Imagination—A Talk" 80; "The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination" 248; "Comedy and Modern Allegory: A Personal View" 127; and Harris and Kerry Johnson, "Interview with Wilson Harris" 87–90. A. J. M. Bundy identifies this process as one akin to dream books coming to the author, interestingly suggesting a parallel to Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (4). Bundy, "Introduction" to *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*.
[5] See also Bundy, "Introduction" to *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, 12.

[6] In "Comedy and Modern Allegory: A Personal View" he describes these cultural similarities as a theatrical process of "understudying" (138).
[7] See also Robert Bennett, "Tradition and the Marginalized Talent: Reading Wilson Harris's *Carnival* as a Postcolonial Revision of Dante's *Commedia*."
[8] See also Clevis Headley, "Wilson Harris and Postmodernism: Beyond Cultural Incommensurability" 46–47, and Maes-Jelinek, "'Latent Cross-Culturalities': Wilson Harris's and Wole Soyinka's Creative Alternative to Theory" 45, on the differences between multiculturalism and cross-culturalism.
[9] For other scholars writing on this notion as a uniquely Caribbean one, see Michael Niblett, "Strange Correspondences: Late Capitalism and Late Style in the work of Wilson Harris and John Berger"; Maes-Jelinek, "Europe and post-colonial creativity: a metaphysical cross-culturalism"; Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* 92; and Lorna M. Burns, "Creolization and the Collective Unconscious: Locating the Originality of Art in Wilson Harris' *Jonestown*, *The Mask of the Beggar* and *The Ghost of Memory*" 3.
[10] Harris adapts these texts in *The Palace of the Peacock*, *Carnival*, and *The Infinite Rehearsal*, respectively.
[11] See especially Harris, "The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination" 248–260. Secondary scholarship acknowledging this adaptation include Maes-Jelinek, "Europe and post-colonial creativity: a metaphysical cross-culturalism"; Michael Mitchell, *Hidden Mutualities: Faustian Themes from Gnostic Origins to the Postcolonial* 273–312; Niblett, "The Unfinished Body: Narrative, politics, and global community in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite* Rehearsal"; and Bennett, "Tradition and the Marginalized Talent: Reading Wilson Harris's *Carnival* as a Postcolonial Revision of Dante's *Commedia*."
[12] See Henry, "Intrasubjectivity in the philosophy of Wilson Harris"; Maes-Jelinek, "'Immanent Substance': Reflections on the Creative Process in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*" 66; Niblett, "The Unfinished Body: Narrative, politics, and global community in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*" 24; Johnson, "Translations of Gender, Pain, and Space: Wilson Harris's *The Carnival Trilogy*" 132, 136; and Delfino, *Time, History, and Philosophy in the Works of Wilson Harris* 99.
[13] Delfino, *Time, History, and Philosophy in the Works of Wilson Harris* 97; Mitchell, "The Seignory of Faust: Gnostic Scenery in *The Infinite Rehearsal*" 175.
[14] Mitchell also notes that Harris's Faust figure does not sell his soul ("Seignory of Faust" 176).
[15] Such a strategy is important, according to Bennett in "Tradition and the Marginalized Talent," because it rejects Harold Bloom's claim that revisions of a story are not dependent on the context in which they were written (5).
[16] For more information on the historical references embedded in the text, see Krishna Ray Lewis, "'The Infinite Rehearsal' and Pastoral Revision" 83; Maes-Jelinek, "'Immanent Substance': Reflections on the Creative Process in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*" 48; Niblett, "Strange Correspondences: Late Capitalism and Late Style in the work of Wilson Harris and John Berger" 176; and Niblett, "The Unfinished Body: Narrative, politics, and global community in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*" 24.
[17] For example, Lewis identifies references to Dido and Aeneas in the shipwreck, and Hamlet's father in the Ghost (85); Maes-Jelinek focuses on the sacred wood as a "source of terror and regeneration for both Dante and T.S. Eliot" ("'Immanent Substance'"64); and Karen Cornelis notes allusions to Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* and Donne's poem "The Relic" (180, 184). Maes-Jelinek concludes that the work is multi-textual ("'Ulyssean Carnival'" 53).
[18] He includes similar statements in "'Benito Cereno'" (*Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination* 123–133); "Tradition and the West Indian Novel" 143; "Comedy and Modern Allegory: A Personal View" (*A Shaping of Connections* 127–140); and "The Quest for Form" 23.
[19] See also Kutzinski, "The Composition of Reality: A Conversation with Wilson Harris" 29, and Burns and Knepper, "Revisionary '-scapes' of globality in the works of Wilson Harris" 129.
[20] Critics who see Harris's view as an endless cycling between opposed poles include Gregory Shaw, "Art and Dialectic in the Work of Wilson Harris" 125; Burns, "Creolization and the Collective Unconscious: Locating the Originality of Art in Wilson Harris' *Jonestown*, *The Mask of the Beggar* and *The Ghost of Memory*" and "Philosophy of the imagination: time, immanence, and the events that wound us in Wilson Harris's *Jonestown*." Bundy, contrastingly, argues that a new product—a synthesis—is produced in this

process of negotiation ("Preface: Cross-Cultural Community and the Womb of Space" in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, 73).

[21] Harris has rejected realism, both in total and component parts, numerous times, as have his commentators. He especially rejects the validity of linear time and fixed concepts, and realism's connection to imperialism. See, for example, Harris and Charles H. Rowell, "An Interview with Wilson Harris;" Harris, "The Absent Presence: The Caribbean, Central and South America," "Tradition and the West Indian Novel," "Interview with Wilson Harris," "Originality and Tradition" 125, and "Merlin and Parsifal: Adversarial Twins" 65; Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* 91, "Framing the Political: Self and Politics in Wilson Harris" 85, "Wilson Harris and Caribbean Philosophical Anthropology" 127, and "Intrasubjectivity in the philosophy of Wilson Harris" 213; Maes-Jelinek, "'Immanent Substance': Reflections on the Creative Process in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*," 68–69 and *The Labyrinth of Universality: Wilson Harris's Visionary Art of Fiction*; James, "On Wilson Harris" in *Spheres of Existence: Selected Writings* 168; Nouri Gana, "Donne Undone: The Journey of Psychic Re-integration in Wilson Harris's 'Palace of the Peacock'" 158; Mary Lou Emery, "Limbo Rock: Wilson Harris and the Arts of Memory;" Gemma Robinson, "The reality of trespass: Wilson Harris and an impossible poetics of the Americas" 134; and Jeannine Murray-Román, "Rereading the Diminutive: Caribbean Chaos Theory in Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Edouard Glissant, and Wilson Harris" 24.

[22] Critics who have tried to establish Harris as a postmodernist include Aldon L. Nielsen, "Hieroglyphics of Space: Wilson Harris in 'The Waiting Room'"; Slemon, "'Carnival' and the Canon" 70; Burns, "Philosophy of the imagination: time, immanence, and the events that wound us in Wilson Harris's *Jonestown*"; Headley, "Wilson Harris and Postmodernism: Beyond Cultural Incommensurability"; and Sam Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* 53–78. Harris's rejections of this label include: Monica Possi, "A Conversation with Wilson Harris" 264; Johnson, "Interview with Wilson Harris" 92; Harris, "Interview with Wilson Harris" in *The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks* 58, "Literacy and the Imagination—A Talk" 86. See also Maes-Jelinek, "'Latent Cross-Culturalities': Wilson Harris's and Wole Soyinka's Creative Alternative to Theory" 42, "Ambivalent Clio: J.M. Coetzee's *In The Heart of the Country* and Wilson Harris's *Carnival*" 96, "Carnival of Fiction: Creative Masks of Recent Caribbean Writing," and "'Numinous Proportions': Wilson Harris's Alternative to All 'Posts'"; and Louis Simon, "The Politics of Complex Faith: Wilson Harris's *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*." Some critics find the allegation that Harris's fragmentation make him a postmodernist to belie a Western prejudice, including: Henry, *Caliban's Reason*; Maes-Jelinek, "Europe and post-colonial creativity: a metaphysical cross-culturalism"; and Ian Adam, "Marginality and the Tradition: Earle Birney and Wilson Harris." These texts note that in addition to predating postmodernism, Harris's fragmentation reflects the fragmentation of Caribbean society due to the lingering impacts of imperialism.

[23] For information on the process of alluvial and hard-rock mining in Guyana, see Sukrishnalall Pasha, Mark D. Wenner, and Dillon Clarke, "Toward the Greening of the Gold Mining Sector of Guyana: Transition Issues and Challenges."

[24] For more information on the development of the postcolonial Guyanese state see Dennis Conway, "Misguided Directions, Mismanaged Models, or Missed Paths?" in *Globalization and Neoliberalism: The Caribbean Context* 29–50.

[25] See also Marcus Colchester, "Guyana: fragile frontier" 41–44.

[26] Lomarsh Roopnarine, "Wounding Guyana: Gold Mining and Environmental Degradation."

[27] See also Slemon, "Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History" 159; and Paul Sharrad, "The Art of Memory and the Liberation of History: Wilson Harris's Witnessing of Time" 104.

[28] Murray-Román, "Rereading the Diminutive." Other critics note that Harris's repetition-with-difference makes possible palimpsestic perspectives on the same event; see Harris, "Interview with Wilson Harris" 133 and "Quetzalcoatl and the Smoking Mirror (Reflections on Originality and Tradition)" 13; Lewis, "'The Infinite Rehearsal' and Pastoral Revision" 87; Peter Hitchcock, *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form* 88; Kutzinski, "New Personalities: Race, Sexuality, and Gender in Wilson Harris's Recent Fiction" 72; Louis Chude-Sokei, "Wilson Harris: An Ontological Promiscuity"; Mitchell, "The Seignory of Faust: Gnostic Scenery in *The Infinite Rehearsal*"; Kutzinski, "Realism and

Reversibility in Wilson Harris's *Carnival*"; Niblett, "The Unfinished Body: Narrative, politics, and global community in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*"; Burns and Knepper, "Revisionary '-scapes' of globality in the works of Wilson Harris" 128; and Maes-Jelinek, "Ambivalent Clio" 89. Such multiple perspectives resist the notion of an attainable view of the whole; for more information, see Maes-Jelinek, "Ambivalent Clio" 95, "Another Future for Post-Colonial Studies?: Wilson Harris' Post-Colonial Philosophy and the 'Savage Mind'" 4, and "'Immanent Substance': Reflections on the Creative Process in Wilson Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal*"; Shaw, "Art and Dialectic in the Work of Wilson Harris;" Henry, *Caliban's Reason* 103 and "Wilson Harris and Caribbean Philosophical Anthropology"; and Burns, "Creolization and the Collective Unconscious: Locating the Originality of Art in Wilson Harris' *Jonestown*, *The Mask of the Beggar* and *The Ghost of Memory*."

Conclusion:

[1] Of course, the politics of prize-winning complicate this assertion. IBM reported in 2018 that the Man Booker Prize is biased toward books with male protagonists, and only 14 Nobel Prize for Literature winners are women. The editors of *n + 1* note that publication and prize-winning have homogenized the books that do, and can, circulate to different cultures, especially in books that fetishize past disaster: "In the absence of political prospects, writers have produced backward-glancing narratives of trauma … World Lit trauma thematics mar the work of a number of acclaimed Jewish novelists, with characters discovering the source of everything in the Holocaust." Additionally, as James English asserts in *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*, the organizations that award these prizes both recognize and shape literary style; recognizing one writer's unique prose leads to a valorization of similar techniques (in English's case, that of ambiguity) in other works as well. See also Graham Huggin, "Prizing 'Otherness': A Short History of the Booker" for a discussion of the way the Booker shapes literary taste and reinforces its own understandings of literary value.

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