

## Dis-contenting Khayyam in the Context of Comparative Literature: An Invitation to Translating *Rubaiyat* with a Focal Shift from Content to Form

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### ABSTRACT

Since its conception in France in 1877, Comparative Literature, always subject to a critique of Eurocentrism, has been in a state of perpetual crisis. In “The Old/New Question of Comparison in Literary Studies: A Post-European Perspective” (2004), Ray Chow argued for a Post-European perspective in which comparatists begin with the home culture and look outwards to the European cultures, contrary to the dominant approach of doing just otherwise. Missing in Chow’s argument is the position of translation in this post-European perspective. In the 14 years between 2004 and 2018, the grandiose claims of comparative literature have been problematized and addressed; the lay of the land, however, remains predominantly Eurocentric, as it still focuses on content disproportionately. In this paper, through a study of English translations of Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat*, and taking Chow’s argument further, I argue that with its commitment to transfer the form of a text as much as the content, translation studies can further help comparative literature to distance itself from Europe. To exemplify the implication of this, I suggest that a translation of Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat* from Farsi to English would be more faithful to the original if its translations were to focus on the poem’s form rather than the content. I argue that translating with a focus on form would foreignize Khayyam’s poetry, hence an act of resistance against cultural hegemony.

### INTRODUCTION: SHAPE-SHIFTING

There is nothing novel in proclaiming that Comparative Literature is dead; less novel is saying that it is in crisis. In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Spivak asserted that the field of study is no longer feasible (2003), amplifying René Wellek’s previously-held argument that the field is grappling with crises (The Crisis in Comparative Literature (1959), 2009). Henceforth, attempts were made to resuscitate it, to resurrect it. Some, like Rey Chow, set to the task of pruning the field from its European forbear: her article, “The Old/New Question of Comparison in Literary Studies: A Post-European Perspective,” is a conscientious endeavour to truncate comparative literary studies from “European” (2004).

In this article, I argue that the Chow’s approach is a welcome direction Comparative Literature, as a discipline, has taken. However, Chow’s article has one noticeable omission: she does not deal with Translation Studies—a field that I think is vital in this resuscitation project. In the Iranian context, Comparative Literature can move forward through translation studies in one major way: a new emphasis needs to be laid on foreignizing the English translations of Persian literary texts by moving the focus away from solely conveying their content to instead transferring their form. This is

particularly relevant in case of Persian poetry because its meaning is equally expressed through form as it is through content. I will argue this point by studying English translations of Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat* and call for a new translation that centres on adhering strictly to the poems’ meter in hopes of “foreignizing” the text as opposed to westernize it.

### COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AS THE DYING OURANUS: ITS CRISIS AND DEATH<sup>1</sup>

Then his son reached out from his ambush with his left hand, and with his right hand he grasped the monstrous sickle, long and jagged-toothed, and eagerly he reaped the genitals from his dear father and threw them behind him to be borne away (Hesiod, 2006, p. 17).

As a discipline, comparative literature has been subject to contention. In “The Crisis of Comparative Literature,” (1959) René Wellek, having expressed his concern for what he deems an explicit emphasis on influence studies, called for a comparative study that would involve the literary aesthetic value of literatures. Erich Auerbach’s classical work, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, is most representative of that school of thought, which mainly

explores analogies (Gupta, 2015, p. 43). However, the crisis that comparative literature is facing today is one mainly of scope; that is, in the words of Susan Bassnett, today's comparative literature faces the problem that "anything could be compared with anything else, regardless even of whether it was literature or not" (qtd. in Cao, 2014, p. xxiv).

The French might take delight in the common usage of the term "littérature comparée". For its coinage appears to have derived from "a series of French anthologies published in 1816 entitled, *Cours de littérature comparée*" (Wolfreys, 2010, p. 26). By the early 1800s then, comparative literature became a gallic self-conscious study. Therefore, "this typically Gallocentric view of literature and culture exerted a significant influence on the French conceptualization of littérature comparée" (Longxi, 2009, p. 7). In Claudio Guillen's classical work (1993), *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, he acknowledges the gains the French have achieved but proceeds by saying their study was not really a comparative one but studies "based on national literatures—on their preeminence – and on the connections between them" (p. 47). Particular emphasis was placed on the "phenomena of influence" – the influence that one nation's literature may (or may not) have exerted on another nation's. Fernand Baldensperger, Ferdinand Brunetière, and Joseph Texte epitomized this at the turn of the twentieth century (Mukherjee, 2014, p. 39). In addition, M. F. Guyard, who earlier in his career had elevated French comparativism to an extreme "by trying to identify a specifically French origin of influence on other literatures", replied to the influx of criticism directed towards this school of study by infamously proclaiming that "comparative literature is not comparing" (Longxi, 2009, p. 7).

What called for the relative demise of the French School of comparative literature was the tolling bell of the American School. The American School with René Wellek at its front, found fault with the former's Gallocentric studies, pivoting around influences cultures and literatures have had on one another positivistically. Two main outputs, "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" (1959) and *Theory of Literature* (1942), characterize Wellek's opposition to the then trendy French School of Comparative Literature. He specifically disapproves of Paul van Tieghem's understanding of literary study to be a study of sources and influences and states that "only sources and influences, causes and effects, [...] would [prevent] from investigating a single work of art in its totality as no work can be reduced entirely to foreign influences or considered as a radiating point of influence only toward foreign countries" (2009, p. 163). He then proposes a new approach whose focus would be on the "literary work of art" (p. 170), with "an expansive vision of the unity of humanity expressed in the transnational and transhistorical patterns of art" (Damrosch & Melas, 2009, p. xiii)

Some works had already been written in this spirit, such as Erich Auerbach's monumental work (1946) on the issue of representation in Western literature. In striving to be comprehensive, this book discusses realities represented in twenty-nine literary productions of the west through a close historicist scrutiny of their syntax, diction, grammar, and style. In spite of this exhaustive study, "Auerbach says apologetically at the end of

the book, that for reasons of space he had to leave out a great deal of medieval literature as well as some crucial modern writers like Pascal and Baudelaire" (Said, 2003, p. i). As claimed by Gerald Gillespie, in this spirit, and over the next half century in the United States, works of or on comparative literature touched upon what Henry H. H. Remak had called for in his "Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function" (Gillespie, 2013, p. 355) As Remak (1961) himself defines it

"Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression" (p. 3).

With the widening of the scope of literary theory (and literary criticism), this became very true as Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism in addition to Paul de Man's deconstructivisms "began to affect comparative literature" in new ways (Gillespie, 2013, 354).

There is, however, two main challenges the American method of comparative literature (needed and) needs to address. (a) The scope of comparativism envisioned by Wellek and Remak is too broad for a convincing study. In addition, as Ulrich Weisstein (1974) (a proponent of the American School) puts it, "carrying colonization [of comparative studies] that far means, in my opinion, dissipating the very forces that require consolidation; for as comparatists we are not a people lacking space but rather one having too much of it" (p. 27). Therefore, the American school has a problem of scope; a great ship needs deep water. (b) Another imposing issue is the main objective American and contemporary comparative literature seek to achieve, which is to seek commonness among literatures. As Haun Saussy (2011) defines its objective, comparative literature is "the discovery of a common denominator that was there all along" (p. 61). Among the literatures of one civilization, this should not present insurmountable obstacles. It is difficult, however, to say the same of literatures under scrutiny, which have risen from different civilizations. To Weisstein (1974) even, "only within a single civilization can one find those common elements of a consciously or unconsciously upheld tradition in thought, feeling, and imagination" (p. 7). Therefore, in "the study of analogy by the American school, there are many heterogeneous factors, which are often more influential than the factors of 'homogeneity' and 'analogy'", which need to be addressed (Cao, 2014, p. xxi). A simple observation would be that as Meyer Abrams (1971) asserts in his *The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, western art is essentially mimetic (p. 128), whereas, as Earl Miner (1987) states, eastern literature is "affective-expressive" (p. 128). A comparative study of the two should heed "the common denominators" while trying not to ignore their heterogeneous foundations and separate cultural backgrounds (Saussy, 2011, p. 61).

In conclusion, I think that while Wellek is right to disapprove of the French School of comparative literature and its

emphasis on finding literary influences, what he called for, has the potential to culminate in a crisis for the discipline too. His suggestion that there is a need to widen the ambit of comparative practice to include the relationship of literature with other arts, obscures the boundaries of the same practice. Moreover, the commonness that comparative literary practices seek among different literatures (and/or arts) would need to take into account the fundamental differences of the objects of comparison, which may be the fundamental differences in their modes of representation, their language of origin, and the time of their production.

### COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AS APHRODITE: ITS REINVENTION(S)

And when at first he had cut off the genitals with the ada-mant and thrown them from the land into the strongly surging sea, they were borne along the water for a long time, and a white foam rose up around them from the immortal flesh; and inside this grew a maiden. First she approached holy Cythera, and from there she went on to sea-girt Cyprus. She came forth, a reverend, beautiful goddess, and grass grew up around her beneath her slender feet. Gods and men call her [...] Aphrodite. (Hesiod, 19)

When clouds at Nowruz wash the tulip's mien,  
Arise and seek a cup of wine clean.  
This meadow that now becomes your scene,  
Tomorrow all will from your dust spring.  
- (Khayyam)

One might say that Comparative Literature is a Proteus among disciplines. To assert itself, it has always been in negotiation with its preceding being. You need only to skim through its history of development to see how its methodology has been renovating and recreating itself. Since the discipline's inception, its methodology has gone through three main changes. Its initial transformation was when its name appeared on Hugo Meltzl's first journal of Comparative Literature (1877). The contributions of Meltzl and Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett not only culminated in the field's germinating out of an idea but represent how at first its methodology was primarily dominated by "polyglottism" or lack thereof. Its second transformation occurred when the methodology culminated into the two questions of whether we need to compare factually or aesthetically (1950s). The third and the most ethically fruitful transformation dealt with the question of whether or not it needed to engage in politics (1990s to the present). No matter how it transforms, it appears as though change is the constitutive part of the being of Comparative Literature.

As a field of study, Comparative Literature has undergone great intellectual and institutional shape-shifting. There's an acknowledgment among scholars that the first concentrated written effort was made by the cofounder of the first journal of Comparative Literature, Hugó Meltzl of Lomnitz (2009), whose journal, *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universalium*, has on its cover the subtitle, "Comparative Literary Journal" in 10 languages. Indeed, although most articles were written in Hungarian or in German, Meltzl and his partner, Samuel Brassai, had designed 10 languages to be the of-

ficial language of the journal. Thus, as his introductory essay indicates, Meltzl's approach towards Comparative Literature was an adherence to "the principle of polyglottism" (Meltzl, 2009, p. 44). Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, however, did not take pains to adhere to that principle and instead mechanically compared translated texts as he did original ones. His greatest contribution to the discipline, though, was not in his detached scheme for the field's methods, as he writes in "The Comparative Method and Literature" that "we find our main reason for treating literature as capable of scientific explanation," nor was it the commonly accepted claim that he came up with the discipline's name in English, but in his ground-breaking shift from solely comparing literatures written in European languages to include those written in Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian, and Chinese, among others (2009, p. 59).

The next great transformation of Comparative Literature happens perhaps more than half a decade after the establishment of the discipline and when the French enter stage. The chair of Modern Comparative Literatures at the Sorbonne, Jean Marie Carré (1951), warned against the "anarchic" method of Comparative Literature of his time, which as he put it, was "to compare just anything with anything, no matter when and no matter where" (2009, p. 159). Instead he asked for a more concrete way of comparing literary pieces on the basis of facts, like the history of a piece, its writer's fortunes, travels, and as such. As such, Carré and the French invoked the next shift in the discipline and provoked René Wellek to announce that there is a crisis in Comparative Literature. He found fault in the former's methods of inquiry in its "positivistic factualism" (p. 164) and writes that "true literary scholarship is not concerned with inert facts, but with values and qualities" (p. 168). Instead he called for a more "aesthetic" conception of a work of art "as a diversified totality" and to study texts on the basis of analogies rather than on influences (p. 170).

Since the inception of the discipline of Comparative Literature in 1877 until when René Wellek contended that it was in a crisis, the discipline, was mostly defined and redefined through its changing methods of inquiry. After the fleeing of intellectuals from Europe to United States during the Cold War, however, the field's identity has been more or less defined by its inclination (or lack thereof) to engage in political discourse. While the Greene and the Levin report were in Bernheimer's words "a desire to demonstrate the essential unity of European culture" after the world wars, Bernheimer's own report (1993), was a call for more inclusivity beyond European borders and for multiculturalism (p. 41). As such, as Spivak correctly puts it, the discipline of Comparative Literature came to be "in politics". Henceforth, Spivak, and before her, Bruce Robbins (1992), became more concerned with the ethical repercussions of the methodology on the political landscape. Robbins explores ways cosmopolitanism can be redefined to escape transmitting Western hegemonic values to other parts of the world. In "Comparative Cosmopolitanism," he attempts to tackle this challenge in three major ways. First, he suggests that by finding agency in a text, we are conforming to our own political and textual contexts. Second, that we need not transmit agency as a de-

fense of the local, for that is in itself, an act of generalization. And third, in order to escape from projecting western values, we need “difficult generalizations” that are not prescriptive but description (Robbins, 2009, p. 316). I find his attempt to escape the role Comparative Literature practices had been assuming—the escape that Wellek had said were “myths and legends, ... ideas which nations have of each other” (p.163), the escape that doubled with western hegemony can be, to say the least, dangerous—a solemn endeavour to make the methodology of Comparative Literature more ethical. However, in “Comparative Cosmopolitanism,” there is an incongruity between what he is trying to convey and the style with which he does so. While we might read this incongruity as part of his call for “difficult generalizations,” it is difficult to connect this to the dangers of what he assumes our cosmopolitanism (in its negative sense) has produced, namely, “our brutal ‘ignorance’ of Middle Eastern culture which permitted the personification of Iraq as Saddam Hussein” (p. 312). If we are, in his own words, “to educate future citizens of the world rather than future world policemen” (p. 326), the least we can do is to try and reach a broader audience and in a style which is accessible to current citizens.

Spivak adds to the literature with as much concern for the political repercussions of engaging in the methods of Comparative Literature as Robbins. Unlike Robbins, though, she attempts to depoliticize the discipline. However, I think the chapter “Crossing Borders” of her *Death of a Discipline* (2003) further enmeshes the discipline in political discourses. In the said chapter, this happens in two major ways. First, the title of her chapter refers to the borders Comparative Literature must cross, and she writes “Comparative Literature must always cross borders” (391). One might assume that her image for the depoliticization of the discipline must then solely correspond to the interdisciplinary vision Comparative Literature has always been keen to embrace but her mention of borders is immediately followed by *border* in the political sense: “I have remarked above that borders are easily crossed from metropolitan countries [...]” (p. 391). Her diction, then, also denotes geo-political boundaries. Second, her demand for a “coalition” (p. 394; emphasis mine) among the disciplines of Comparative Literature and Area Studies might in fact result in the inadvertent politicization of the former. While her call for such a coalition is for Comparative Literature to borrow the “quality and rigor” Area Studies exhibits in its methodology, and while she does concede that Area Studies has been “tied to the politics of power,” in practice it would prove difficult if not impossible to separate a discipline’s methodology from its subject matter (385). This is analogous to the effort to separate the form from a literary work’s content. Thus, if Comparative Literature were to embrace, imitate, or borrow Area Studies’ methodology, the former’s subject-matters, which are characteristically elusive, might fall into the hands of “the power elite,” hence further politicized (p. 385).

Since the establishment of the discipline of Comparative Literature, its methodologies have been constantly transforming. It first was a methodology that was primarily concerned in whether we need to analyze the original or the translated text. Then it became involved with whether or not

we need to analyze these texts on the basis of facts or on their aesthetic bases. Finally, it delved into the political repercussions of comparing. All these twists and turns indicate that change seems to be intrinsic to the discipline’s methodology. Therefore, it might be best to observe and appreciate these shifts and as Khayyam invites us, enjoy the meadow before it turns to dust again, to which I would like to add that there is pleasure in beholding dust too, as anyone who has seen the silence of a desert’s shifting sand dunes can confirm. There is always the question: what if it ceases to reinvent itself? I think if Comparative Literature fails to renew itself it might fall into the limbo of the Cumaean Sibyl, who was granted immortality but forgot to ask for perpetual youth, and shrank into withered old age and with that, her authority too declined.

### COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AS EROS: ITS LOVE FOR THE “OTHER”

“Eros accompanied her” (Hesiod, 2009, p. 19).

“There are certain sores in life that, like a canker, gnaw at the soul in solitude and diminish it (Hedayat, 2013, p. 16)

If comparative literature could speak, it would probably say something in the same vein the narrator of Sadiq Hedayat’s magnum opus, *The Blind Owl*, says. Since its conception, comparative literature has been plagued by similar existential threats; like Hedayat’s painter, constantly pestered by the annihilating force of death. Its spokespersons, scholars of the field of comparative literature, have done justice to address these issues – issues that question the viability of the field. Is comparative literature an approach, a method, or a discipline? Is “polyglotism” a necessary constituent of the field, or is the comparative study of the texts in translation just as feasible? Is it essentially a positivistic endeavour or an aesthetic one? Since it was born in Europe (its discipline, at least), is it Eurocentric, or should it move away from its European origins? Does it need to engage in political discourse? Is it an “operating table” or a widening gyre? And, is it necessary, after all?

For one, Rey Chow (2004) finds fault with two of Comparative Literature’s premises when she argues that multilingualism has become a prerequisite for the discipline of comparative literature, while it need not be. Drawing from Foucault’s assertions in *The Order of Things*, that modern literary language has become self-referential, Chow implies that comparative literature’s insistence on multilingualism is simply its effort to distinguish itself, from national literature, for example. Second, she argues that the predominant mode of comparison in the field is a “hierarchizing frame of comparison” (p. 297). This frame of comparison, she contends, is (a) depreciative of literatures that are not produced in the west, and (b) one that aims to “transcend national boundaries,” while it fails to notice that non Western literatures lack the privilege to transcend national boundaries (p. 297). Thus, she invites us to devise a new term for comparative literary studies.

Enter “post-European” (p. 298). Chow uses this term to designate what ensued from the encounter of the European with the native/indigenous community, the manifestations of

which she proposes to study through the articulations of the latter. For comparison to be disinterested, it must destabilize the “culturally superior” European perspective (p. 299). Chow attempts to shift from the European perspective to a post-European one by starting with “the home culture and ... look[ing] outwards, rather than with the European model of literary excellence and look[ing] inwards” (p. 303). As such, there would be no need (and in fact, it would be fallacious) to insist on multilingualism, for the monolingual studies of countries who have had such an encounter are themselves comparative projects.

This piece was published at approximately the same time ACLA published its fourth “state of the discipline” report. Like the writers of that piece, Chow is concerned about the state of the discipline in an “age of globalization”. Her worries about the discipline still being Eurocentric are well-founded and her suggestions to move away from this seems feasible.

However, after 14 years since the 2004 report and the publication of Chow’s article, although the grandiose claims of comparative literature have been problematized and addressed, the language of the field is still predominantly European, i.e. most articles of or about comparative literature are in the English language. How can *this* be addressed? Is it not problematic that Chow is signalling at the need for a post-European perspective, while she is writing from a European perspective? After all, what is language if not a perspective?

In the same regard, Chow makes no mention of the position of translation in this post-European perspective. Tejaswini Niranjana (1992), however, aptly underlines the significance of translation in a postcolonial context because it can serve a perfect site for problematizing issues of representation, power, and inequalities between peoples, races, and tellingly languages (p. 1). Niranjana argues that translations portray the colonized for the colonizer in a way that would explain why the former were colonized by the latter, a justification for the process of colonization (p. 2). I want to emphasize the underrepresented understanding of Niranjana with a personal account, a talk I had attended in 2016. It was delivered by a professor of sociology. The topic was how three travelogues by European writers can help us better understand Iranian ethics and their religious lifestyles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A question I had, but out of courtesy for the speaker never asked, was would it not have been more relevant if we had investigated how those travelogues can help us better understand European lifestyles? The travelogues were indeed written in French by Frenchmen and for the French. The only thing Iranian about them is their subject matter, which was transposed by a foreign viewpoint.

In many regards, translation is a travelogue. The translator travels to foreign lands, catches a glimpse of the foreign text, and endeavours to return it with her to her homeland (mother tongue) as souvenir. The translated text then purports to tell the homeland reader of foreigners. As such, translation is a Daguerre diorama. It tells us much more of the translator’s tradition (and in the case of Daguerre, of European scientific breakthroughs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) than

what it can tell us of the traditions of the source. What it shows us are shadows dancing on the walls of a cave. As Liz Medendorp (2013) writes, “The translator... necessarily translates from a subjective ideological perspective conditioned by the collectively constructed ideological system of the *habitus*” (p. 24). Let us take the example of Omar Khayyám’s *Rubaiyat*. The text was first translated into English by Edward Fitzgerald in 1859. According to Zare-Behtash, the translation did not sell well for more than two years until Dante Gabriel Rossetti discovered it in a bookshop and introduced it to prominent friends (Zare-Behtash, 2012, p. 214-5). Who would have known, Zare-Behtash inquires, that those same neglected volumes would sell more than seven thousand dollars a century later? After Fitzgerald’s infamous translation, more than 13 translators have tried to render the poems into English, one of whom was Robert Graves. By comparing Fitzgerald’s translation with Robert Graves’ we can understand how British culture of literary translation has evolved from 1859 to 1967. As Niranjana demonstrates, Fitzgerald’s remarks about *Rubaiyat* are telling of his colonial mindset that held a dichotomy between the civilized Britons and the primitive Persians whose poetry was not poetry enough until it was manipulated and translated into English (58-59).

Both translations are crudely infidel to the source and both were translated as a result of a high demand by the target-language speaker and pressure from editors. The earlier translation is a deliberate “transmogrification,” as Fitzgerald himself professed, since most of the quatrains are paraphrased and some even cannot be traced back to the original. The second translation was purportedly based on a manuscript, but it was later discovered that the manuscript was forged and Graves had knowledge of this forgery. So his translation, too, is at best unreliable. The most pressing question that arises then is: why was there such high demands to translate the text in the 1850s, if it would necessitate the transmogrification of the source and how does that compare to the demands to translate it in 1967 when there would be a need to falsely base the translation on an authentic manuscript?

The role comparative literature plays in Chow’s transition from European to post-European is that of an operating table—a discipline that can still function as the platform on which objects can be *equally* compared; clearly languages do not benefit from equal power status. However, since 2004, the table seems to have transformed into a gyre. With each spiralling up and away, comparatists can see how it has evolved. And how like the falcon, it can no longer hear the falconer.

## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AS HUMA<sup>2</sup>: THE SHAPE IT MAY TAKE NEXT – A CONCLUSION

“Your nest is love, O Immortal Huma;  
Cling love tight, and nestle in its straw” (Rumi).

In the literary polysystem, translation of “marginalized” literatures into “dominant” languages has often been an activity that has sacrificed the former’s form for the sake of convey-

ing its content. Persian poets heavily rely on the meter of their poems to convey meaning. More often than not, the meter of these poems is overlooked in their English translations and a disproportionate attention is paid to their contents instead. For instance, in Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, it is equally important to faithfully transmit the form of the poems. Khayyam was not only a poet, but a mathematician, an astronomer, and a philosopher. Yet, it is the poet that is emphasized, but even that too has been often mischaracterized, and most importantly exoticized in the West (Aminrazavi, 2005, p.1-2). With all his tempting simplicity, he chose the meters of his poems almost mechanically to befit the meaning he wished to relate. The numerous English translations of his *Rubaiyat*, have overlooked this and instead simplified his form into a westernized equivalent, the quatrain. A new translation that strictly adheres to *Rubaiyat's* meter, studied alongside earlier translations with their insistence on getting content across, can greatly enhance the readers' understanding of this Persian masterpiece. Moreover, such a translation would in turn "foreignize" the *Rubaiyat* rather than help to westernize it, or further exoticize it. First formally defined by Laurence Venuti, foreignization in translation is a practice which seeks to retain the foreignness of the source language when it transitions into the target language. When translating from Farsi to English, not only does foreignization become an act of faithfulness to the source text but "a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism" (Venuti, 2008, p.16). When translating Khayyam, this is another reason why there needs to be such translational shift from content to form, from adherence to an easily manipulated subject matter to observance of meter, rhyme, and rhythm.

With all its rises and falls, ebbs and flows, the tale of comparative literature is nothing short of the tale of the ubiquitous mythic figure of the phoenix: It has been proclaimed to be in crisis; as a discipline, it was pronounced dead; and from its ashes rose other disciplines. These newer fields of study have been met with the same criticisms that hounded comparative literature. Amongst them has been the call to distance the fields from their origins, Europe. Rey Chow and others have heeded the call. Translation also needs to further itself from Europe. When translating a non-European text into a European language, say, from the Farsi language into English, most translators succumb to their readers' tastes. They attempt to convey the non-European source language's content into the European target language. To say the least, this distorts the former's contents. In this article, I proposed that in translating Farsi poems into English, paying attention to the poems' forms is past due. By translating with such a focal shift, the texts would become foreignized and distanced from Europe. As such, the field of study would find another shape to flourish in and like Huma live on

#### END NOTES

1. The tale of Comparative Literature has been nothing short of a mythology; and by mythology I do not mean an empty vessel to be filled in with a story manipulated to further an argument—which all mythologies ultimately are, at least according to Foucault—but an arche-

typal ideal that is repeated throughout history. I will use mythology in this article as a thread weaving together ideas I investigate. Comparative Literature died. From its remnants sprang Beauty, from whom Love was born. What will come of it now?

2. In Ancient Persian Mythology, Huma is the deity who grants immortality. She is sometimes personified as the bearded vulture, also known as lammergeier, but one that, like the phoenix, never dies: it burns and springs from its own ashes. The bird is a recurring image in Persian Sufi poetry.

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