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Inter-literary Communities and Decolonization: New Approaches to Comparative and Cultural Studies

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I believe that colonialism is... the curse of Europe,
which has damaged all other worlds.

Armando Gnisci

I.

The publication a year ago of Armando Gnisci's *Per una storia diversa* [1] is a timely and auspicious event in the Italian literary and cultural panorama. Much like his two earlier books,[2] this one takes also the form of an extended pamphlet, a compact theoretical sketch, or even better, of a series of Theses on literature, literary history, and the role of critique and cultural studies in general. But before suggesting ways in which *Per una storia diversa* can contribute to an evolving of critical concepts in a number of fields, or compare it to French and American counterparts, I would like to try a quick exposition of what the author says.

I believe that like no other age before today literature works toward keeping communication among human beings and cultures alive by means of an incessant translation of the past and the possibilities of the worlds created in all the languages. (12)

Having stated his ethico-theoretical premise, and accepted the interconnective social role of literature (or literary language, or letterarieta), the author discloses his view according to which all the "worlds" are related or likely to be available for readaptation, for "translation," a key term as we will see. In seeking for a "lingua mentale comune,"[3] the author reiterates the "special quality" of literature, redefining literariness as the

Irreducible communicative quality of what is human, and not a separate, nameless and irreducible aesthetic quality. Such it was considered by theories called "intrinsic," immanent, formalist, [end page 203] idealist, structuralist and post-structuralist, from Croce to Wellek, from Jakobson to Barthes, up to the post-modern idle chatter [chiacchera post-moderna]. (12)

The author clearly positions himself in the realm of post-metaphysical critique, that is, a vantage point which allows one to see how the dominant theories on the status of the work of art of the past two centuries were predicated upon the assumption of a universal, a supra-temporal or supra-sensorial *eidos* or *Begriffe*. [4] Beyond that, if the Dominant of our *Zeitgeist* seems to be embodied in the word/concept globalization, then literature too must be seen in its planetary dimension. Clarifying that he has no intention of readapting the Goethian ideal of *Weltliteratur*, which is essentially an "European Ideal" (14-6), and making sure that when he speaks of an ethico-political function or force in literature he doesn't necessarily mean a "return" to some emasculated conflictual Marxist ideologheme, Gnisci describes the role and function of literature at a time when the social, political and symbolic workings of power have made it impossible to continue thinking in stale, dichotomic, self-deluding ways:

Literature of the worlds, or better yet, Worlds' Literatures, speak of a poetics to come, resembling the first sparks of Romanticism but freed of Eurocentrism and from the hegemonic bourgeoisie comprador. It doesn't think in terms of an ecumenical and geopolitical library consisting of works, genres, themes and cultural relations. The Poetics of Worlds' Literatures proposes instead to oppose the globalization being carried out by mass culture within the "mystical body" of the universal market issuing from a Northern World and now covering the entire planet. This poetics intends to realize itself by educating the oppressed and acting as a utopic drive. Indeed, it aims at becoming a mobile and uncontrollable – unforeseeable, Glissant would say – zone of the conversation between worlds: it would be one of the common places of their resistance. (14)

It can be seen how this idea of literature is self-consciously critical but not paranoid, as it accepts a critique which validates literature's educational or at least exemplary value, perhaps unwittingly readapting the *Bildung* theory of acculturation and growth. But, once again, this proposal does not fall into the dualistic and exclusionist paradigms of recent or Modern memory. Literature will act as a utopian drive, but not in the sense of propagandistic and catechistic novels, hailing the heaven-on-earth future of communist nations or Nazi millenarian glory. As a forward-force apt to [end page 204] explore limits and hypothesize world-views, literature does not necessarily have to degenerate into formulaic party-approved silent persuaders. After demonstrating how certain ideas about literature and literary history have permeated the elitist hegemonic European-grounded paradigm – and here Gnisci takes issue with Brunetiere, Valerie Larbaud, Curtius and Auerbach[5] – the critic suggests that what ought to be studied are rather "interliterary communities," which would allow us to draw a different map without the concocted but inexistent category of "Western" or "European." Interliterary communities are defined on the basis of affinities and relationships of geography, culture, history, "as with the Balcan, the central-European, and the Northern communities, and others" (17).

Inspired by the work of Dionyz Durisin[6], Gnisci develops a methodology of identifying "interliterary centrisms" which extend across existing national and political borders and spheres of influence. In this perspective, the notion of a European literature or even a comparative literature grounded in its Italo-Gallo-German "source" or "master trope," is sidestepped and rendered useless. Or at least susceptible of new configurations giving voice to those who remained silenced until now. This is something that some fringes of comparative literature, at least in the United States, should find attractive. In fact, inspired partly by his Slavic colleagues (among whom figures also Yuri Lotman), Gnisci believes that writers and the cultures they represent are often linked not just by the adopted national languages,[7] but also and perhaps more deeply by customs, ethnic appartenance, political agendas, regional mythologies and class lineages.[8]

Several epistemological and hermeneutic steps follow from these premises. If literature remains the space for non-hallucinating utopias, the land of symbolic exchange and questing, it can rightly be considered the locus for some form of resistance to the onslaught of World Market capitalism and the coercion upon three quarters of the peoples of the world to adopt a fundamentally Euro-American (economically driven) ethos. Literature, and the critique of literature, ought therefore to start from the assumption that it recognizes the past five centuries as the ascension of and domination of the world by European powers, and that its function is not just critical reassessment of these and other little known facts, but of providing a terrain for a cleansing of the soul or a decolonizing of the mind. The critic distinguishes between colonialism as the trademark of European domination – in its various stages from exploration to mercantilism, from various historical annexations to 20th century colonization, from imperialism to post-World War Two decolonization, and finally on to our present stage, globalization – and colonization as a mental

process born by the extremes of the media society and electronic [end page 205] capitalism. This allows the critic to recognize the effects of a colonized mind or artwork even within the de-colonized context, and viceversa. And it allows him/her to go beyond or a latere of such a dominant process of self-identification and self-transcendence as European literature, since there have always already co-existed more regional, more trans-linguistic and certainly polyethnic communities.[9] Because Europe is also the Europe of countless minorities and marginals, of nomads and vagrants, refugees and rebels, and pilgrims, and fallen aristocracies, and heretics of all stripes. Focusing on such literary productions asks for addressing the multifarious inter-action, and accounting for this multiplicity in the first place, thus experiencing complex exchanges (translations into different genres, for instance, or the introduction of new expressions, new symbols), around key geopolitical or urban centers, as this is much more representative of the complexity of past societies, and closer to the fiber of the everyday.

Such given the context, this book promptly disregards the methods and ideologies of all sorts of belated modernisms. But let's take a closer look. The very analysis of contemporary literature in terms of how far or how wide it has gone into the story of colonization and imperialism, poses incredible challenges to literary histories still deeply rooted into and legitimated by the National Literature Department concept:

The so-called post-colonial literatures must be understood as such beginning with colonization: the post means a quo. Only in this way is it possible to avoid confusion and realize a truly decolonizing discourse. We can call post-colonial literature both the literature of the colonizer and that, in the same language, of the colonized because "post" means "beginning with the origins of colonization" and not "beginning with the end of colonization," as much recent Anglo-american and even in part French post-colonial theory seems to imply. (26)

It is true that too many critics have employed the terms colonialism and imperialism in such a generic and nearly formulaic a way as to imply the near absence of distinctions and peculiarities of loci, or centers, or switching stations in the very diversified struggles of the European powers over their African, American and Asian counterparts. This certainly lends ammunition to the traditionalists who accuse cultural studies of what they used to accuse comparative literature, namely, that is was too generic, scattered and superficial. I can name studies in travel literature which, in their effort to prove the formulation of a principle, span far and wide across [end page 206] territories and continents under the legitimizing precepts of a wholly abstract and arbitrary paradigm.[10] I take Gnisci's indirect admonition to literary critics still confined to national literature departments as urging us to essay to use literature (read it, explain it in class or in the newspapers) in order to enter into and question different realms in the cultural history of a people. In the Italians' case, for example, literary histories could read or re-read the canon in terms of how it was shaped by the curia, or by ethnic prejudices, or by trans-Italian peoples and ideologies. It is not too long ago that dialect poetry was banned from the list of "I Maggiori," and it is well known that entire generations of critics (mostly during the historicist-idealist hegemony) studied the Middle Ages without knowing anything about the Islamic world and the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Most of this finds its origin in that nineteenth-century European-nationalistic esprit that determined the final taxonomies and grammars for the vast majority of professions and learning fields and, at a deeper level, the legitimization of a special class of epistema. The process is well known to readers of Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Stanley Aronowitz and Edward Said, to mention the usual suspects. In some areas of social interaction, these scientific and ideologically lopsided grids and their corollary values were literally imposed on the rest of the Globe, from Tasmania to Vladivostok, from Tierra del Fuego to Alaska. With the following mystification/demonization of the Other – to be read in the plural (the rebels, the emigrants, the mestizos, the refugees) –, the appropriation of lands and the exploitation of humans at the same

time. Given these premises, it is refreshing to read a critic who actually cares what happens or has happened to real people around the Globe during the time of Euro-American ascension to world power.

Another interesting point of Gnisci's theory is the differentiated assessment he makes of traditional European national literatures on the basis of how they dealt with their colonization-decolonizing dialectic. In a way, and once again, he is showing how the very concept of a unitary European literature is a suspicious (though in the main dominant) critical fiction. Placing great emphasis on the transformations brought about by the actions of a class, a people, or a tradition, Gnisci isolates three groupings with distinct characteristics.

The Hispano- and Luso-American continent has elaborated and long since vindicated its proper content. I think this is the greatest and most exemplary "conquest" and production of de-colonial and decolonial identity in the modern history of worlds. From Bolivar to Marti to Che Guevara, to the rebelling Ecuadorian indios in the year 2000, this identity has struggled toward the reunion...of the [end page 207] diversity of this great hybrid race [razza meticcia], which goes from Mexico to the Straits of Magellan, as the young Che used to say: from the mapuche to the yoruba stolen from Africa, from the Incas to the Spaniards, from the Caribbean to the poor European immigrants (as the Argentine Ernesto Sabato underscores). A formidable mixture reunited – unlike the superficial, disparate and conflictual American melting pot. This formidable mixture is gathered together [riunita] speaking a single continental and "mother" tongue; and through whose writers and revolutionaries succeeds in tearing off its own slave mask, alienated by the gaze and by the power of European "civilization." [11] (35)

With these critical insights in mind, Latin America becomes both an exemplary historical figura and a theoretical concept that applies outside its specific history. For Gnisci, the cultural evolution and/or metamorphoses of the South American countries literally demonstrate that a certain kind of decolonization has always been going on, and that we could quite conceivably make that into a social model, in short, use their past to "learn" how to handle today's cultural dilemmas, by understanding that particular inter-literary (and obviously trans-national) community:

At the end of the fifties of the 20th century Spanish-speaking America... emerged in the freedom and the self-construction of itself as "New World of Worlds." Its decolonization did not entirely aspire to a struggle for power over the other worlds, as it did for example with the extermination of the aborigines, or with the "new imperial subject" of the North Americans; on the contrary, when it did succeed in expressing its best it marked the opening of a communitarian and fraternal, and often "too human," discourse, which achieved the unveiling of the plurality of the worlds in the world, gave dignity to the vindication of their differences, has invented the very dialogue itself and richly greeted the arrival of the maestro. (35-6)

It does not surprise us to go on and read that Latin America is ultimately "an authentic marvel" of how a culture can invent itself from within and that their literary and cultural unconscious bespeaks of a long-protracted struggle for emancipation and self-government, but with full social and symbolic acceptance of the variety of worlds present in the territory;

Francophone and Anglophone cultures are instead caught up in an incomplete postcolonial process or, alternatively, resolve the [end page 208] problem with a "new imperial and colonial power" that can guarantee power, fame and world success. But it will not be a New World of Worlds... [12]

On the other hand, and to complete the picture of the "European imperial nations," which are "since forever colonial,"

Italy and Germany have removed until today their colonial past and they even seem bent on ignoring the possibility that they may have on their hands a Post-Colonial Issue to deal with. (46)

Finally, the author spends many pages in attempts at defining his idea of a Worlds' Literature, which "expresses the capacity of literature to translate itself and of translating worlds" and which he develops in the second chapter, "Archipelago."

Given the above premises, the arguments in chapter two develop certain themes which may be relevant to several different critical schools. Here we find that literature can be read pedagogically, "to educate human beings to sense... which means the sense of existing, the sense of being in a world made up of worlds, the sense of having a mind that asks itself questions and that questions others" (57). In the same vein, we may trace in literature what the author calls the "freely human" [liberamente umano] which permits every individual to develop one's own poetic, one's own (hi)story. Furthermore, much like music and dance, endlessly evolving and absorbing inputs from the greatest possible and disparate cultures, the concept of literature as translation allows for the expression of an infinite variety of beings, which not only reiterate the freeing power of the imaginary, but which protects us from the "Single Thought." [13]

II.

Everyone is afraid of having to admit one day
that we are not absolute entities,
but things that change.

E. Glissant

The rest of the book touches upon the myth of universals in European culture, the radical (and perhaps too often neglected relevance of the) contribution to the respect for difference by people like Fanon and Sartre, possible explanations for the resurgence in xenophobia and racism, and the demographic realities of a changing Italy and Europe.

There is no doubt that Gnisci's multi-prong approach to comparative studies in literature and cultural studies resonates positively with certain [end page 209] authors, movements and ideas of the past decade. It can clarify issues and set agendas within the nascent Italian Cultural Studies group, most of whom are North-American Italianists.[14] It picks up the discourse of self-definition of the disciplines called Italianistica and Comparative Literature, both in America and in Italy.[15] And it addresses core-issues concerning colonization as a sort of systematically removed "tragic flaw" of European consciousness, and globalization as the ultimate threat against which a de-colonizing attitude is the ultimate defense. In this view, the notion of literature as a manifold act of translation acquires paradigmatic and emblematic value. In the act of bringing something across a boundary (of any sort: stylistic, linguistic, class, political, geographic, religious ideals), we generate a wide palette of meanings. Let us think of the classic example of the King James Version of the English Bible. The translation of this book introduces definitively into English consciousness the theology of Judaism. It stabilizes the language and to all effects is the starting point of the standardization of grammars and style. It introduces mythologies and exemplary lives and events which, as Northrop Frye has demonstrated, instituted the Great Code in the (Euro-American) West. But it also introduces, as all translations inevitably do, to issues and peoples and traditions which, were it not for our stilted critical grids, protocols and political correctness, are there to be analyzed and accounted for. In this sense, we cannot but agree with Gnisci that we can be de-colonizing critics from within the countries that are marked by profound

colonizing ideologies. On the other hand, literature as translation of symbols, experiences, images that originate in a different world ought to be read, experienced and taken precisely as a different positioning, an alternative situation. Here imagination can help and integrate rational processes. When reading Francophone Caribbean literature, I engage in the inter-play and rhizomatic exchange of images and ideas that involve several ideological and epistemological domains, such as are contained in “French language” and “French literature,” “colonization,” “slavery,” “exploitation,” “invasions,” and “financial subjugation.” Suddenly I am seeing and thinking from within those relations. I can essay to consider my own cross-cultural world and, going from reflection on to refraction, perceive my own universe of values and things differently. The point is that literature as essentially transference can thus be studied on the basis of what major tropes or deeper metaphors are predominant, but this necessarily, albeit paradoxically, cuts through linguistic barriers, better yet, language barriers. This is the case of Jewish literature, which we find written in several dozen languages. But if we bring this concept of inter-literary communities, or this notion of literature as being primordially a translation, then the avatars of traditional national literature department [end page 210] feel threatened. But we have been asking, for years now: on what grounds is one to exclude foreign immigrants in Italy who succeeded in expressing themselves well in Italian? And on what grounds is one to exclude writers who identify themselves as Italian, or hyphenated Italians, or who write about and from within Italy, but in a different national language? This brings the argument to reconsider Deleuze’s notion of the de-territorialization of literature in history, and investigate how it affects its style and political content. Finally, and consistent with the theory of the Worlds’ Literatures, it would be useful for European historians to rethink the notion of relation. I feel that the success of an inter-literary critique ought to engage the theoretical possibilities of the term “relation.” Gnisci of course refers to the importance, in rethinking colonial and post-colonial discourse, of Eduard Glissant’s work on the poetics of the “different,” which develops the critical metaphor or figura of the archipelago, and is focused upon the cruciality of the idea of relation. But I would like to suggest that this critical aperture can be developed still further, by interrogating thinkers from within the Western Tradition.

In Western societies we learn that the absolute is Absolute Being, and that being cannot exist unless it is thought of as absolute. Yet the Presocratics already held that being is relation, that is, being is not an absolute but a relation with the other, relation to the world, ultimately relation with the cosmos. It is to Presocratic thought that we are returning to. In a more secular way, to what the Environmentalists are saying: “If you kill the river, if you kill the tree, if you kill the sky, if you kill the earth, you kill humankind.” In other words, they are establishing a relation between human beings and their environment. I believe that the notion of being and of the absolute of being is linked to the notion of identity as “sole root” and its claim to exclusivity. If, however, we conceive of identity as rhizome, that is, as a root that webs with other roots, then what becomes important is not a presumed absoluteness of each root, but the way, the manner in which it came into contact with other roots: in short, relation. A Poetics of Relation seems today more intriguing and cogent than a Poetics of Being.[16]

I find in this passage an opening to late Taoist thought, in particular Chuong-Tzu, and one to existential phenomenology (a post-Kantian, Merleau-Ponty, maybe even Enzo Paci, version). Having an understanding of the multilayered and translational and relational nature of the work of art can thus propel two fields of inquiry: first, the changed and changing nature of the alleged object of study, namely the cultural artifact, its newer definitions, deployment, public and prices, all of which interface with and influence how the layers, the translating and correlating, will be realized, and made into something “out there.” And second, it ought to compel reflection on the methodology and theoretical presuppositions of the [end page 211] interpreter. Having seen that Gnisci is fundamentally in agreement with Glissant on the cruciality of relation and therefore of reference, of otherness, then the hermeneutic issue becomes: how do we assess (read, interpret)

without interfering, without bias?[17] Going against the grain, I suggest that phenomenology can come to the rescue, primarily because we can now accept the self-consciousness of the viewer, the awareness – brought out especially in ethnographic studies – of being a necessary and in part a constituting element of the object under scrutiny. Claims to objectivity have long been proven chimerical. Relation theory and indeterminacy are connected, and in fact require even more discursively rigorous (albeit floating) moorings. Otherwise said, the critic of the literature of relation must position him/herself on the frontline, so to speak, and intervene in the critique and creation of a discourse from a clearly visible, even if slippery, locus. We can all recall the militant commitment of a Pier Paolo Pasolini, who never shunned declaring exactly where he stood when he launched anathemas to the establishments. True to the historical roots of cultural studies, such an approach politicizes the intellectual and research interests of the critic. This includes a call to arms to rethink the sense and structure of fields of learning, and academic departments. And in Italy, today, looking into and dealing with the complexity and seriousness of Italian involvement in colonization and imperialism creates unsettling situations and predicaments, which explain why this issue, as we saw above, is mostly ignored or, better yet, dealt with mere repudiation and denial. Much like what happened in the United States, where the literature of immigration has for years been shunted to sociology and ethnography departments, so in Italy literature of immigrants and minorities is becoming a cause for alarm.[18] If we recall that Gnisci has also produced journalistic pieces on how the very history of Italy has been written, for the past century, as if colonization and its imperialistic offshoots were epiphenomena of the national allegory, then it becomes clear why some of his ideas and research met with some resistance, from the local to the national level. The implementation of the pedagogical and institutional aspects of Gnisci's proposal spells out long and arduous uphill struggles. Some of these may have to be won in part before intellectuals can even begin to think of a syncretic "storia diversa." But at least these options are out there, and the debate is finally underway. [end page 212]

Notes

[1]. Armando Gnisci, *Per una storia diversa*. Roma: Meltemi, 2001.

[2]. I am thinking of the polemic *Noialtri europei*, and the more theoretical *Creoli meticci migranti clandestini e ribelli*. Roma: Meltemi, 1998.

[3]. The search for an underlying common idiom can be tricky to pursue, as it may easily slip into rationalist or transcendental philosophies. I feel Gnisci's theory displays some yet undeveloped Viconian possibilities as "lingua mentale comune" recalls Vico's "universali fantastici," which allowed for a comparative mythography across centuries and civilizations without falling into metaphysical claims.

[4]. I disagree that Barthes falls into that category, and I certainly do not think that all the theorists of postmodernism have written "idle chatter." See for instance the work of Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, David Harvey, Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, Adelino Zanini, Pietro Barcellona, Mark Poster, and others who (though they may have not even used the word "postmodern") have actually revolutionized critical thinking, across disciplines, such as Michel Foucault. For a theoretical-historiographic view – after Heidegger, after Derrida – which could lead to an "epochal" turn in the understanding of contemporary culture, see chapters three and four of my *Prefaces to Diaphora. Rhetorics, Allegory and the Interpretation of Postmodernity*. W. Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1991.

[5]. For a brief historical overview of the development of the major theories in comparative studies, see F. Sinipoli's article, "Dalla comparazione intraculturale alla comparazione interculturale," in Armando Gnisci and Franca Sinipoli, eds., *Manuale storico di letteratura comparata*. Roma: Meltemi, 1997: 14-60.

[6]. See Dionyz Durisin, *Theory of Literary Comparatistics* (Bratislava: Veda, 1984); see also Sinipoli, op. cit., 34-40.

[7]. It would be interesting to apply Gnisci's theory to the much debated and still unresolved question of whether Italian-American literature written in English, ought to be considered marginally relevant to a critique of canonical Italian literature in the peninsula.

[8]. I wonder whether the following may be illustrative for Gnisci's argument: Italian literary history (obviously relying on different paradigms than Gnisci's) has, for the past thirty years, almost forcibly invented the category of (high Modern) Cultura Mittel-Europea, to which a number of writers from the Veneto and Friuli regions of Italy have been assimilated. [end page 213] This means "grouping" writers like Slataper, Michelstaedter, Svevo, and more recently writer-critics such as A.M. Ripellino and Claudio Magris, as representative of a particular sensibility or intelligence, with strong though subtle legitimizing echoes of the cultural paradigms of the Hapsburg Empire. In a traditional Italian literary history one might find side by side authors such as Pirandello and Svevo who, though both canonized as emblematic of the turn-of-the-century crises in the European mind, and both relying on the ideological attacks on that same middle class which writes the national allegory, have probably very little in common. There is little evidence they influenced each other (at least meaningfully) and we might say they were not part of the same inter-literary centrism.

[9]. On the polyethnic composition of European territories until the 19th century, see William McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1986.

[10]. See for example Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire. Postcolonial Theory in Transit*. New York: Zed Books, 1999.

[11]. For lack of space I cannot get into more detail here, but Gnisci's necessarily brief mention of the notion of hybrid or mestizo culture is a key point of his whole enterprise. I think that it would certainly bear fruit if compared to and expanded in relation with those, among others, of Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and leaving Modernity*, trans. C.L. Chiapari and S.L. Lopez (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995); and Serge Gruzinski, *La pensee metisse* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

[12]. On the problem of how self-definition of the status and boundaries of cultural studies is affected by what conception of francophonie one is working with, see Jean-Marc Moura, *Litteratures francophones et theorie postcoloniale*. Paris: PUF, 1999.

[13]. In the original, "pensiero unico." I don't know whether Gnisci was quoting, tongue-in-cheek, the work of Jean-Marc Chardon, *La pensee unique. Le vrai proces* (Paris: Economica, 1998). As with the work of Moura, Gnisci's theory resonates with that of Chardon, and may spur new critical pathways in media studies, culture studies, and the dynamics of globalization.

[14]. See David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), and the recent gathering of papers in Graziella Parati and Ben Lawton, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies* (Boca Raton [FL]: Bordighera, 2001). Discussion on these texts will be picked up elsewhere. [end page 214]

[15]. I must once again defer discussion on the lively exchange concerning the status and future of Italian studies and comparative studies that took place in the last few years around ACLA and the “Bollettino 900.”

[16]. Eduard Glissant, *Poetica del Diverso*. Trans. Francesca Neri. Roma: Meltemi, 1998: 26.

[17]. The theoretical evaluation of relation bears upon our conceptions of space, place, and spacetime; the critic's decisions here impact upon any adequate but subsequent understanding of the social dynamics of late modernity, as we can see in David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. London: Blackwell, 1996: 190-9 and 251-64.

[18]. Gnisci writes: “This ‘new history’ demands a different disposition toward the other which is irreducible to the ancient resources of Christian charity or of secular solidarity... What is needed is a different and absolutely new ‘virtue.’ Above all a critical one: to finally recognize that the xenophobia against all immigrants is a ferocious symptom of the return of what is repressed, the fear of the threat of vengeance of the conquered upon the conqueror...” (73).