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Comparative Modernist Performance Studies: A Not So Modest Proposal

Julia A. Walker and Glenn Odom

A field survey of recent scholarship in comparative studies, modernist studies, and performance studies, this article maps a new field at their intersection. Calling for the alignment of core concerns and the correction of disciplinary blind spots, the authors propose a comparative model for the study of global modernisms that treats culture not as an object of analysis but rather as a performative process of making meaning. This article outlines a method that acknowledges the different experiences and conceptualizations of historical modernity, the processes of modernization, and modernist strategies of representation around the globe. It argues that, by putting those different experiences and conceptualizations into relation with each other, we can produce a synthetic—but necessarily provisional—heuristic for understanding the modern condition. Emphasizing the performative function of scholarship, the article concludes with six guiding principles to bring the field of Comparative Modernist Performance Studies into being.

In a moment when Snapchat has rendered the experience of even the present as exceeding one's grasp, we find ourselves conjuring the now-distant memory of Fredric Jameson's theory of postmodernism as "an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place."¹ We agree with Jeffrey Nealon, who recuperates the fundamental thrust of Jameson's analysis to identify our "post-postmodern" moment as an "intensification and mutation within postmodernism (which in its turn was of course a historical mutation and intensification of certain tendencies within modernism)."² As scholars of theatre and performance studies,³ a field dominated by analyses of contemporary performance, we are struck by the persistent presentism of our discipline.⁴ In recent issues of the top five general interest journals in the field, for example, 70% of

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the articles are on contemporary topics.⁵ And, of the 130 PhD dissertations listed in the most recent compilation published by *Theatre Journal*, an overwhelming majority—roughly two-thirds—focus on contemporary topics.⁶ This is not to say that contemporary performance cannot be historicized; rather, it is to say that it should be. Rebecca Schneider, one of our most adept historians of the present, has remarked upon theatre's "essential imbrication in and as history," while Michal Kobiałka identifies the historiographer's task as recognizing the performative conditions that shape the enunciation of any historical narrative.⁷ Yet as Patricia Ybarra laments with regard to publishing pressures affecting the current state of the profession, "history takes time."⁸

In this moment, when global positioning systems constantly recalculate our spatiotemporal coordinates, we are also struck by the field's emphasis upon the situated and the local as opposed to the comparative. It is as if we can only experience time and space in the performance of the here and now, when we used to cognitively map them through the self-reflexive movement of a proscenium frame (whether literal or metaphorical) that doubled one's experience of both. We wonder: have we also entered an age that has forgotten how to think relationally? After all, even the term *relational* has become reified into an aesthetic principle.⁹ Sometimes it is difficult to know whether the field is diagnosing or reproducing the symptoms of the post-postmodern. If, as Nealon observes, the contemporary moment is characterized by the intensification of the postmodern, then, as he argues, we likewise need to intensify our analyses of the economic, social, and political "*relations* that were born of the mutations within capitalism."¹⁰ Thinking both historically and relationally means understanding how those relationships have developed in space and over time to create the conditions of the present moment.

In reflecting on the current state of the field, we ask these questions neither to moralize nor to condemn current scholarship (much of which we find exciting, as noted below), but rather to invite a reassessment of the equation many scholars once drew between "postmodernism" and "performance." In his widely used textbook, for example, Richard Schechner explains that "performativity as understood by performance studies is part of, or closely related to, postmodernism. One of the decisive qualities of postmodernism is the application of the 'performance principle' to all aspects of social and artistic life."¹¹ And though, in his critical introduction to the field, Marvin Carlson notes that the relationship between the two terms is "highly complex," he also quotes Michel Benamou approvingly to claim that "performance is 'the unifying mode of the postmodern.'"¹² While performance studies (PS) took disciplinary shape in the postmodern moment, the field was perhaps too quick to identify itself with both the periodization and the stylistic movement, collapsing one into the other and claiming both in its name. Without wanting to deny the significance of much of the work that came out of this period,

we wish to disentangle questions of periodization from questions of method in order to better assess the function of each.

What if, for example, we enlarged PS's historical frame around the postmodern and post-postmodern periods to include modernity writ large, understanding our current moment as "late modern" within the world-historical epoch of capitalism? This would mean engaging more directly with the field of modernist studies (MS), which usefully distinguishes among the related terms of *modernity*, *modernization*, and *modernism* to separate questions of periodization from questions of social experience and artistic expression. Doing so would allow us to look for continuities as well as breaks within this longer historical period, especially now that the term *postmodernism* has fallen into critical disuse since the new modernist studies (NMS) found evidence of its stylistic traits within works traditionally identified with classic high modernism. Even so, a "postmodern" or "post-postmodern" critical vocabulary will remain useful when speaking of specific developments within this larger historical frame of the modern.

What if we also reframed the already global compass of contemporary PS by situating local case studies of performance in relation both to other such studies and to larger patterns that could be abstracted from and among them? This would mean engaging more directly with the new comparative studies (CS), which cautiously avoids the false universalisms practiced by its parent formation, distinguishing among cultures to compare experiences and meanings while trying to avoid the imposition of categorical imperatives that bear a cultural bias from the West and/or global North.¹³ Doing so would allow us to look for the breaks of uneven development as well as the continuities of artistic practices appearing in different cultures.

As with PS and the terms *performance* and *postmodernism*, the fields of MS and CS are likewise energized by debates over core concepts such as "modern," "modernity," and "modernism" on the one hand, and "world" literature and the "global South and East" on the other.¹⁴ Following MS scholar Susan Stanford Friedman, we wish to encourage expansive, open-ended explorations across these fields and so have left these core definitions open, hoping that the interdisciplinary conjunction we propose will illuminate and refine such concepts in new and productive ways.¹⁵ This includes the definition of "performance," which, despite our abiding interest in theatre, ritual, and social performance, we expand beyond even the broad-spectrum approach to include the metaphorical staging of epistemological categories as necessarily provisional. We do this to acknowledge the fact that performance has been taken up by other disciplines, reorienting methodologies and fields of study away from "objects" of analysis to processes of meaning making. Within these expansive definitions, scholars have already begun working at the disciplinary intersections we propose. Bringing the focus of modernist and performance studies together, for example, are recent books that: 1) expand

traditional artistic canons to include performance-oriented events;¹⁶ 2) recuperate figures previously missing from those canons;¹⁷ 3) excavate untapped archives to document the often elusive performance work of even well-known artists;¹⁸ 4) reconsider established figures in theatre and performance history in relation to sociopolitical modernity;¹⁹ and 5) seek to redefine institutional frameworks, disciplinary approaches, and/or critical terms of analysis.²⁰

A similar intersection exists between the fields of comparative and performance studies in the conjunction of intercultural research, including books that propose to: 1) schematize or reframe patterns of intercultural exchange;²¹ 2) trace the historical and contemporary global circuits and flows of cultural influence;²² 3) document and analyze the performance practices of understudied cultures/regions in terms of indigenous knowledge;²³ 4) interrogate the institutional frameworks, disciplinary approaches, and/or critical terms of intercultural analysis;²⁴ and 5) generate new interculturally inflected artistic practice aimed at specific cultural contexts.²⁵ Joseph Roach's World Performance Project, conducted at Yale between 2006 and 2012, carefully contextualized a wide array of performance texts within a global framework and interrogated the connections between those texts. In doing so, it not only exposed US audiences to works from the global South and East but also invited a critical consideration of the inclusive canon that resulted within the Western academy. Phillip Zarrilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, and Carol Fisher-Sorgenfrei's textbook *Theatre Histories* has expanded that initiative into the English-language classroom, countering the Western bias of traditional historical narratives by offering a global purview of performance cultures, while asking students to reflect metacritically on the range of interpretive methods the editors bring to bear on their own historical narratives.²⁶ As groundbreaking as all of this work is, however, the need to synthesize it demands a more systematic integration of all three fields—both to enhance our understanding of cultural responses to modernity and its globalizing thrust and to historicize the critical categories that currently define the study of performance.

To outline this new model of what we are calling comparative modernist performance studies (CMPS), we turn to the three vectors laid out in Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz's influential assessment of MS scholarship, "The New Modernist Studies."²⁷ In that 2008 *PMLA* article, Mao and Walkowitz delineate a "vertical" vector challenging the traditional division between high and low culture, a "spatial" vector expanding the field's borders to allow for a more global reach, and a "temporal" vector that stretches back to the mid-nineteenth century and arcs beyond the "core period of about 1890 to 1945" to include "the years after the middle of the twentieth" century.²⁸ To date, MS scholarship has been more robust along the vertical and spatial vectors, but we believe our model can invigorate inquiries along the temporal vector as well by bringing a PS methodology—with its focus on movement, process, and change—to bear upon questions of periodization.

Using the temporal vector to map experiences of historical modernity, the spatial vector to locate modernization's sites of impact, and the vertical vector to plumb the representational crises of modernism, we identify both a primary logic and the dialectical energies that propel this logic to produce variations within each vector. In doing so, we borrow Fredric Jameson's distinction between a singular logic of modernity and its multiple manifestations, locating experiences that have been identified with "Western," "classic," or "high" formations in relation to a richer and global range of experiences. By establishing multiple points of relation along these three vectors, we thus avoid the ahistorical and undifferentiated grab bag of the broad-spectrum approach on the one hand, and the center-periphery binary that structures an implicit hierarchy of cultural value with its tacit temporal logic of "advanced" and "backward" formations on the other.

In building this comparative model, we also turn to the situated worldviews proposed by comparatist Eric Hayot, who emphasizes the importance of understanding individual works in relation to the field of world literature. His *On Literary Worlds* (2012) outlines a comparative method that limns the contours of each work's "aesthetic world"—the fictional world created by the text—while setting it in relation to "cosmological shifts" in the modern worldview.²⁹ By showing the distinct and situated nature of literary worlds and proposing a scale of their relations, Hayot clears a space for a grassroots-generated and truly global model of modernism to emerge.³⁰ This is in keeping with what Ric Knowles calls an "ecology" of performance, which he explains as a rhizomatic model of intercultural scholarship "that understands the multiple performances of difference, local and global, as processes," including the performance of scholarship itself.³¹

Importantly, this includes a recognition that theories are situated too. All three fields have a tendency to treat Western theory as if it were a universal means of generating universal insights: although CS does well to recognize the limits of literary translation, the limits of theoretical translation are all too often overlooked, especially when Western theories are applied unquestioningly to the rest of the world.³² Jon McKenzie, Heike Roms, and C. J. Wan-ling Wee have recently cautioned against the monolithic application of Schechner's broad-spectrum approach—what they call "US PS"—to performance cultures around the world.³³ Offering a sample of alternative approaches from other global quadrants, they take a step in the right direction. But such alternatives also need to be set in relation to the larger theoretical frames they invoke. Thus, in addition to mapping the relationality of individual case studies within a global field of cultural production, our model proposes to map—and test—the theoretical methods and terms of analysis used to understand them. Following anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff, we emphasize discontinuities and breaks, insisting upon the need to recognize different epistemological systems that exist in different parts of the world.³⁴

With such differences in mind, we thus propose a model of CMPS that illuminates its own heuristics by subjecting them to a continual process of critical redefinition. As each individual case study is added, in other words, incidental characteristics may be bracketed out, allowing for the isolation of the persistent foundational features of core terms such as *modernity*, *modernization*, or *modernism*.³⁵ Or, if such traits do not exist, a series of family resemblances may emerge where clusters of shared experiences illuminate that conceptual totality.³⁶ Such “totalities,” of course, always are recognized as provisional, even as they also are recognized as necessary to the project of cognitive mapping. Our model thereby redefines all three master terms in light of the multiple experiences and conceptualizations of a changing world, inclusive of all but privileging none. With movement thus made visible, our model not only foregrounds the performative function of cultural criticism, but also reveals the continuous unfolding of modernity, modernism, and the modernizing process from a comparative perspective that is both historicist and global in scope. What follows is a sampling of scholarship at the convergence of all three fields and the outline of a synthetic model that seeks to rectify disciplinary blind spots by aligning core concerns. We conclude by abstracting from that model six guiding principles for further exploration with the hope that other scholars will join us in defining the field of comparative modernist performance studies.

The Temporal Vector

The three vectors that Mao and Walkowitz outline in their 2008 survey map the growth of the field in the wake of MS scholarship that expanded the traditional definition of modernism to include first popular and then more global works in its canon. This newly expanded field—now deemed the “new modernist studies”—has recontextualized the older canon of modernist works by exposing an elitist and Anglo-American bias within a critical configuration that brought modernism into visibility in the 1930s and 1940s. That older canon is now commonly specified as “classic high modernism” and is considered to be merely one (albeit highly influential) manifestation among other so-called alternative modernisms. Yet, despite the move to redraw the temporal boundary closer to our own moment, Mao and Walkowitz’s open-ended periodization reveals the field’s lingering ambivalence toward including so-called postmodernism within its purview, even if the effect of the new modernist studies has been to reclaim for modernism many of the attributes of the postmodern. Relative to scholarship on popular and global topics, contributions challenging the temporal parameters of (classic high) modernism are few. The temporal vector is flexible, it seems, only when extended to works produced in the East and global South, retracting toward the “core period of about 1890 to 1945” when works from the West are considered. This schizophrenic periodization is often justified on the grounds that (classic high) modernist works from this time

frame give expression to a coherent “sensibility” that is distinct from that of the postmodern moment,³⁷ while works from the global South and East presumably continue well into “the years after the middle of the twentieth” century to express an identifiably modernist sensibility.³⁸ This has led to the problematic—and much contested—assumption that non-Western formations are “backward,” when in fact they reveal a very complicated historical awareness of both the temporal delay of modernizing processes within the industrial periphery *and* an expansive spatio-temporal experience of the “now” in the twentieth- and now twenty-first-century present. Enlarging the temporal parameters of MS by way of CS would allow for these supposedly “backward” formations to be reframed within the context of a late modernism from which they anticipate a postmodern response.

Even within the North and West, cultural evidence for a more elastic periodization of modernism abounds. While MS has reclaimed for modernism the stylistic attributes associated with postmodernism, PS has reclaimed for postmodernism the sensibility of modernism. Specifically, we refer to the avant-garde posture that Martin Puchner ascribes to PS in his perceptive analysis of the journal *TDR*. Reading it as a manifesto that seeks to performatively enact the critical vision that Schechner outlines in its editorial pages, Puchner situates the journal within the context of the historical avant-garde and its putative last stand in Situationism.³⁹ For Puchner, Situationism did not mark the “failure” of the avant-garde, as Peter Bürger has famously maintained;⁴⁰ rather, its post-1968 energies have simply assumed other forms.

Puchner’s argument is part of a larger discussion within MS to reevaluate Bürger’s influential assessment of the avant-garde. James Harding and John Rouse have also contributed to that discussion, pointing out the marginalization of performance within traditional critical narratives of the avant-garde.⁴¹ Expanding that canon temporally and spatially as well as vertically through the essays in their edited collection, they propose a reorientation of the field that is congruent with Mao and Walkowitz’s vectors of expansion. Of course, this raises a question about the relationship between the terms *avant-garde* and *modernism*. But, as Ástrádur Eysteinsson has recently observed, the difference is little more than a phatic metacritical distinction between contemporaneous cultural phenomena that are variously allied or opposed.⁴² Following Eysteinsson, we take *modernism* to be the more capacious umbrella term, under which works may be variously grouped for comparative purposes, including those by artists who self-identified with the historical avant-garde.

Within this enlarged temporal framework, then, we can see how an avant-garde movement like Situationism sits on the temporal dividing line between the current field configurations of MS and PS, demarcating the historical endpoint of the modern in MS, and the beginning of PS. If Puchner is right, then the contemporaneity—or “presentism”—of PS scholarship should be regarded as evidence

of the field's commitment to continuing the larger project of modernism into the future. And if Harding and Rouse are right, then MS needs to exorcise the lingering bias against performance that, as one of us has shown elsewhere, was anchored in a very specific historical formation of (literary) modernism.⁴³ If we thus reconcile both fields' periodizations and align their core concerns, then, in bringing MS and PS together, we can build a new model of modernism that allows for a more perceptive analysis of art (in its fully global compass) and the problems of late capitalism that it helps to diagnose.

Within our CMPS model, the temporal vector expands across the chronological range of historical modernity, tracking the fluctuating start and stop dates of its several periodizations that necessarily vary due to the uneven experiences of modernity. As such, it represents the dynamism and stasis of historical consciousness, which Jameson, following the German philosophical tradition of Hegel, takes to be the defining feature of the period of modernity.⁴⁴ According to Jameson, modernity is marked by the dialectic of "period" and "break" in an epistemological gestalt of the synchronic continuity of a moment, which can only be understood in contradistinction to those moments from which it marks a chronological break. While acknowledging that the act of periodizing varies (with starting dates ranging from the Protestant Reformation, the conquest of the Americas, Descartes's *cogito*, the French Revolution, etc.), Jameson implicitly challenges Matei Calinescu's post-Marxist dismissal of the periodizing move itself, maintaining that "we cannot not periodize," and arguing that so-called alternative modernities are critical manifestations of a single phenomenon.⁴⁵ But, as noted above, in insisting upon a singular modernity, Jameson does not disallow for the multiplicity of *experiences* of modernity (as its multiple periodizations would suggest).

Many analyses of those alternative or "adapted" modernities draw on Charles Taylor's "cultural theory" of modernity, which suggests that a singular modernity gives rise to different cultural phenomena based on premodern conditions in a given setting. This is meant to attend to the specificity of indigenous responses to the quite real hegemonic capitalistic undercurrents of modernization.⁴⁶ And, indeed, those responses vary, as we discuss with regard to the spatial vector, below. S. N. Eisenstadt was the first to observe that Max Weber's influential theory of modernization does not apply uniformly, even among highly industrialized societies in the West, and especially not to the developing world, where it cannot "systematically explain the great variability of dynamics of these new modern civilizations—the concrete patterns of change which have been taking place in different traditional societies and the relationship of these patterns to their respective historical experiences on the one hand, and to the new situations created by the spread of modernity on the other."⁴⁷ Such sites, he argues, may yield alternatives for understanding the relationship between societal modernization (which he characterizes as a normalizing force) and cultural modernity (which is often resistant to its hegemonic imperative).⁴⁸

As recent work on some of those specific cultural modernities in MS and CS, not to mention interculturalist studies within PS, reveals, such alternatives demand to be included in our account of modernity. But while all three fields have embraced the multiplicity of global modernities, they have not necessarily acknowledged the “respective historical experiences” of those cultures. Insofar as these multiple, little-*m* modernities are experienced by specific cultures, each with its own historicity or conscious historical awareness, we might then see them as multiple manifestations of Jameson’s singular phenomenon of a capital-*M* Modernity. Doing so would require not simply acknowledging multiplicities but also mapping them in relation to each other in order to arrive at a dynamic sense of Modernity’s historical self-consciousness in the dialectical play of its periods and breaks.

This configuration of the temporal vector does not privilege Western modernity over its implied “alternatives”; rather, it emphasizes historicity and the relationality of that experience across cultures. In making this suggestion, we take inspiration from MS scholar Jed Esty’s *Unseasonable Youth* (2012), in which he engages Jameson’s singular model with a sensitivity to the experience of modernity outside of the West. Here, Esty argues for a dialectical understanding of the relationship between “a singular-modernity model that projects a global narrative of modernization and an alternative-modernities model that describes a detemporalized map of raw cultural difference.”⁴⁹ Recovering the lost genre of the modernist Bildungsroman, he considers its preoccupation with narratives of stunted growth as evidence of an increasing historical awareness of the uneven economic, industrial, and political development of the colonial world. For Esty, these works posit modernism as the dialectical unfolding of a historical consciousness, which is contingent on movement between so-called Western centers and their global peripheries.

Such an insight accords with Elin Diamond’s analysis in “Modern Drama/Modernity’s Drama.” Noting that August Strindberg and Bertolt Brecht exploit the theatrical redoubling of time, she argues that these modern dramatists stage complications of history, historicity, and historical consciousness. In her readings of Aphra Behn’s early modern plays and Zora Neale Hurston’s folkloristic performatives, Diamond reveals the extent to which Western modernism gestures toward its colonial other, and the colonial other gestures back.⁵⁰

In a recent issue of *PMLA*, CS scholar Djelal Kadir has similarly argued that literary history—and, indeed, history more broadly—must be understood through comparative practice. For Kadir, the historical epistemes and ideologies that shape literary practice can only be understood when they are decentered, and the idea of difference inherent in comparison is the best way to accomplish this parallax perspective. Such a comparative approach challenges the tendency for “world history [to be] tautologically plotted by certain master narratives of historiography that claim total explicatory power over the fortuities of history and historical life.”⁵¹

In suggesting a necessary relationship between the West and “the rest,” scholars like Esty, Diamond, and Kadir posit a model of mutual engagement. What we propose is a further elaboration that brackets the concept of “modernity,” admitting a multiplicity of experiences of historicity in order to distill a workable heuristic that accounts for modernity’s uneven development. As noted, the temporal vector within MS has privileged the 1890–1945 period of classic high modernism. And, within that configuration, a Hegelian model of historicity has tended to dominate most accounts of modernity, generating a small profusion of case studies within mostly Northern and Western locales. Nonetheless, there are differences to map, even within the West, as recent analyses of Scandinavian modernism suggest in pushing against the 1890s starting date of that classic high modernist formation.⁵² As more studies—particularly of Southern, Eastern, and indigenous experiences within the North and West—appear, this vector will complicate our picture of how the temporality of modernity has been experienced. Still, we can take a cue from the work of Esty, Diamond, and Kadir to find evidence of such experiences in the temporal arts, where continuities and breaks are formally encoded if not also explicitly thematized to reveal an awareness of historicity. An interesting case in point is the work of MS scholar David Trotter, who juxtaposes the medium of film against the novel to consider how the subject-object duality of modernist consciousness appeared in new forms at the beginning of the twentieth century. Focusing on early film documentaries (known as “actualities”), he notes that their ability to capture the direct gaze of a passerby in the street startled viewers into an uncanny recognition of their own scopic subjectivity. With the continuity of their own viewing experience interrupted by the break of a gaze turned back upon itself, these viewers were invited to regard their subject selves as the object of another’s contemplation. According to Trotter, such experiences prompted modernist authors to explore alternative literary forms for representing subjectivity in their experimental novels.⁵³

Of course, perceptual synthesis—the experience of navigating between vicarious identification and critical contemplation—existed in the theatre long before film. What was new about the medium of film was the paradox created by the stop-motion action of film, whereby a series of static images is given the illusion of movement through the phenomenon known as the “persistence of vision.” The early film technology of Muybridge’s zoopraxiscope, Edison’s kinetoscope, and the Lumière brothers’ cinematograph, in other words, provided a ready metaphor for the experiential continuity and conceptual break that contemporary phenomenologists—those documentarians of modern experience—came to theorize as the historicity of self-consciousness. It represented the unfolding *durée* of lived experience simultaneously as a performance mimetically unfolding in time and as a visual image that could be conceptually grasped as an object of contemplation. What set this dialectic of continuity and break in motion may have been the phenomenon

of a subject taking its own consciousness as an object of thought (as Jameson by way of Heidegger suggests), but it was a dynamic that was given new visibility by a modern technology that represented such movement in and as performance.

The Spatial Vector

Like the temporal vector of modernity's expansion, the spatial vector is marked by a dialectic of continuity and rupture: modernization, the motive force of this expansion, ranges within and across cultures, overcoming space to bring far-flung peoples together (e.g., through technologies such as the railroad, telegraph, and telephone), even as its centrifugal energies thrust people apart. As with modernity, a new consciousness awakes to the encounter with other cultures, reforging identity out of difference, where bonds adhere or dissolve relative to the social units that come into play. Although cross-cultural contact clearly predates modernity, modernization accelerates its dialectic of identity and difference in a way that makes the conditions of social cohesion both newly visible and clearly relative—rather than necessary—to group formation. The demographic shift from kinship networks within traditional communities to the elaborated infrastructure of urban industrial societies revealed the contingency of social bonds (giving rise to the discipline of sociology) and made the individual visible as such. As the elemental unit of social aggregation, the individual was now confronted by the possibility of isolation—from others, from meaningful labor, even from one's own self—introducing the concept of alienation that would become one of modernism's fundamental tropes.

Often in the name of greater social cohesion and efficiency, the process of modernization restructures social relations, but the countercurrent of incommensurability is always present as well. Following Jameson on Modernity, we might wish to speak of multiple and uneven processes of modernization as the material manifestations of the continuities and breaks in a singular logic of Modernization. Continuity, however, is a spatial conception—whether pertaining to the literal geography or to the “imagined community” of a region, nation-state, continent, or hemisphere.⁵⁴ Accordingly, its breaks are spatial, too, imposing divisions between such regions, nation-states, continents, and hemispheres, or—typically—between the peoples of those places, effecting conceptual distinctions (e.g., cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic) among them. Here, again, we emphasize the multiple *experiences* and, pace the Comaroffs, *conceptualizations* of modernization around the globe, offering a relational model that effectively decenters the North and West from our understanding of Modernization, even if many of its technologies derive from those hemispheres. The key to this reframing is the social experience of Modernization, where individual and group formations are shaped and reshaped by a dialectic of identity and difference. That dialectic is put into motion by various processes of modernization, which do not so much determine social formations as stimulate the negotiation of various—and shifting—identifications.

Modernization's uneven development has stimulated a recognition by all three fields—CS, MS, and PS—of the political power dynamics that shape the cultural encounters that give rise to these shifting identifications. After an initial period of intercultural research was dominated by the search for artistic universals, scholars in PS turned to postcolonial theory to explore the colonial legacy often implicit in acts of intercultural exchange.⁵⁵ We have seen this turn in intercultural scholarship, from Rustom Bharucha's interrogation of the colonial dynamics inherent within the idea of a "target" culture borrowing and adapting material from a "source" culture, to Christopher Balme's tripartite model of cross-cultural influence that attends to inter/intracultural practice for both indigenous and foreign audiences, to Alexander C. Y. Huang's recent suggestion to treat not just texts but whole cultures as narrative systems. In MS, the uneven global reach of Modernization was first mapped by Dilip Gaonkar, whose *Alternative Modernities* (2001) was soon followed by Laura Winkiel and Laura Doyle's *Geomodernisms* in 2005, along with subsequent monographs on situated modernisms around the globe.⁵⁶ For its part, CS has radically and necessarily restructured its identity over the past fifteen years to reflect the multiple locations and experiences of difference, adding classical and contemporary work from outside of Europe to its formerly universalist canon of literature, and considering translations and adaptations of canonical texts as new forms in circulation throughout the contemporary world. As David Damrosch points out, comparative literature may have started as Goethe's project of finding a master narrative for "world" literatures, but, in its current iteration, it has become more attuned to historical and cultural differences among texts and experiences, while the discipline of world literature acknowledges such differences as existing within a world system.⁵⁷

As Hayot has recently argued, however, CS cannot simply add non-Northern and non-Western authors and artists "into an already existing theory of modernism whose center remains European."⁵⁸ To do so, cautions Elizabeth Povinelli, risks reinscribing the model of a "settler modernity" that evaluates all local expressions according to a Northern/Western standard.⁵⁹ Didier Coste calls for a new global comparison that is specifically attentive to difference, noting that CS's prior impulse to find universality amid cultural difference was more relevant when the world had not yet been homogenized by globalization.⁶⁰ Similarly, in her arguments for focusing on the "untranslatable" (in both its literal and metaphorical sense) comparatist Emily Apter warns against critically reinforcing a concept of transnational comparison that forgets how the material shape of national borders, checkpoints, and the inequalities of exchange affect the global flows of cross-cultural circulation.⁶¹

But if we understand cultures to be not static "things" but rather shapeshifting constellations of group affinities that dynamically remake themselves, including through acts of exchange, then we might find a way out of this impasse. That is, if the transnationalism of CS and the cosmopolitanism of MS reimaged the concept

of “culture” through the lens of PS, then individual acts of expression could be understood as both situated within specific material conditions and multivocal in the (often incommensurable) meanings they generate for different audiences. After all, cultures are neither internally consistent and stable wholes nor the “property” of political domains whose geographical borders define them as a set of coherent practices.

We can see such a performative turn in recent studies of transnational circulation that have begun to question the ontology of the supposed cultural “object” exchanged and rethink it instead as a performative assemblage. Anthropologists Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, for example, challenge the assumption that cultural artifacts are imbued with preestablished meanings that are merely transferred from one place to another. They invoke the concept of performativity to emphasize the *movement* of exchange as constitutive of the meanings thereby generated, suggesting that those meanings, in turn, animate the “cultures of circulation” that propel their movement.⁶² Lee and LiPuma shift the locus of meaning from the “things” exchanged to the process of transaction, inviting us to attend to the various effects generated by the uneven conditions governing such cross-cultural transactions, as Apter urges. They note, for example, important differences between noncapitalist and capitalist forms of exchange. Where relations of kinship and community are “indexically recalibrated” through gift exchange in the former, society as such is constituted in the latter by the abstract relations of exchange that obtain between individuals as such.⁶³

Similar pressures of de-reification are being exerted from within the boundaries of the nation-state, as cultures once mapped monolithically onto geopolitical entities are beginning to be recognized as compendia of multiple and internally inconsistent expressive practices. Working from within a Japanese academic context, CS scholar Karatani Kōjin suggests the necessity of simultaneously analyzing the essentialized and often nationalistic self-portrayal of a culture, and placing a fluid understanding of that culture within a global framework.⁶⁴ Within PS, Aparna Dharwadkar persuasively argues that Indian modernism—with its regional, religious, ethnic, and linguistic variety—might be better understood through a frame of *intraculturalism* rather than a postcolonial-inflected *interculturalism*.⁶⁵ And from the perspective of MS, art historian Elizabeth Harney recognizes how a work’s national and transnational implications can nest together in complicated ways. In her work on contemporary avant-garde manifestations in Dakar, she demonstrates how such works can be read not only as “postcolonial constellations” that draw from a transnational context but also as challenges to “local models of modernism promoted by the Senghorian state.”⁶⁶ As these studies suggest, the move to rethink the monolith of “culture” challenges the internal coherence of geopolitical entities as well as the borders between them.

Yet still missing from many models of intercultural exchange is an account of language and how identity and difference are constituted through the circulation

of meaning within and between specific linguistic systems. As Dharwadker notes, the Hindi word “adhunikata” denotes both modernity and modernism,⁶⁷ making the sort of distinction that is crucial to MS scholarship problematic, especially if we are to fine-tune our definitions of these key terms with reference to global experiences and vocabularies. Dharwadker thus calls for an “expressive or lexical dimension”⁶⁸ to be added to Mao and Walkowitz’s vectors. We concur and, toward that end, cite the “Manifesto Lexicon” as an important initiative from Performance Studies International (PSi), which aims to create an online “multilingual lexicon” that functions “as a manifesto of critical discourse, multiplying our perspectives and understandings of what Performance Studies is.”⁶⁹ Calling upon scholars around the world to submit “a term or a group of terms that are relevant to Performance Studies” in their original language(s), it seeks to generate an international vocabulary of analysis that bridges social differences even as it acknowledges irreducible nuances that cannot dissolve the bond between speakers of a specific cultural-linguistic system.

Recognizing how specific terms inform specific ways of conceptualizing performance, this lexicon exemplifies the situated “worldedness” of Hayot’s model. But, in assembling a global vocabulary, it also demands that we attend to the performative work of translation in creating aesthetic forms, as comparatist Ignacio Infante has recently argued.⁷⁰ Expanding upon Jahan Ramazani’s transnational model of poetic modernism, Infante considers how multilingualism and translation function as movements through which poets negotiate the experience of otherness. He argues that the poet’s encounter with alterity—the experience of understanding the provisionality of social bonds—is already a part of the compositional process that gives shape to modernist poetic forms.

We might consider the recent development of translation and adaptation studies into distinct fields of research as evidence of an emerging awareness of modernization’s centrifugal effect upon social bonds. Not that translation hasn’t always been acknowledged as necessarily provisional; “*traduttore, traditore*,” as the expression goes. But the generation of *theories* of translation and adaptation (where the formal constraints of genre are imagined to be roughly analogous to those of language), suggests a further dismantling of literary modernism’s bias against performance in the necessary recognition that meaning is a systemic function of whole cultures and not just the semantic function of individual words or the analytic relationships between words. Meaning, in other words, resides as much in practices and relationships—i.e., performances—as in texts. We might thus see translation and adaptation studies as analogous to intercultural studies, and the creativity of translation and adaptation as likewise correlative to the aesthetic practice of intercultural performance; where the former analyzes, the latter gives expression to the consolidation and dissolution of social identities and the shifting boundaries of difference.

The Vertical Vector

Tracking movements from “high” to “low” forms of cultural production, the vertical vector charts the singular phenomenon of Modernism with its own multiple manifestations, or “modernisms.” This is where the new modernist studies has made its strongest mark. Indeed, over the past fifteen to twenty years it has revealed closer-than-expected connections between classic high modernist art and popular forms of expression that their creators both engaged and refused. As David Chinitz has demonstrated, for example, T. S. Eliot’s highly allusive and thus supposedly elitist poetry also enacts a kind of love and theft of African American expressive culture in borrowing jazz idioms and speech patterns from blackface minstrelsy (which was itself a corrupt “borrowing” of those forms).⁷¹ Such connections have changed the traditional narrative of classic high modernism by revealing larger cultural forces at work in the shaping of canonical artifacts (even if the cult of the master artist—e.g., Eliot, Woolf, Joyce, Pound—largely persists). But if MS remains bound to the idea of the Romantic genius, CS often practices a double standard, as Shu-Mei Shih has pointed out, whereby the works of individual non-Western authors are deemed “exceptional” (and to be admired for their “universal” significance), on the one hand, or taken as representative of a “systematic” cultural aesthetic (and to be read as a national allegory), on the other.⁷² As her analysis suggests, the expansion of the spatial vector into the non-Northern and non-Western world has revealed how the standards by which cultural value is measured remain grounded in Northern/Western assumptions about what constitutes art. To speak of “high” and “low” forms of cultural production is to presuppose a hierarchy of cultural value that is itself a function of social differentiation between “artists” and “hacks” on the side of production and “connoisseurs” and “consumers” on the side of reception—distinctions that are predicated on technologies of mass reproduction, such as the printing press (in literature), photography and lithography (in painting), tool and die (in sculpture), phonography (in music), and film (in theatre and dance). As with intersecting temporal and spatial vectors, the vertical vector is thus mutually implicated in the other two.

To tease them apart and consider the vertical vector on its own terms, we need to isolate the fundamental dialectic that powers the engines of Modernism. Channeling the spirit of the avant-garde, we propose it to be the movement of representation between the poles of art and life. Although modernist criticism has tended to emphasize the pole of art within the practice of Western artists (think of Wagner’s chromaticism, Van Gogh’s tactile daubs of paint, Pirandello’s characters, Stein’s repetitions, Wigman’s abstract gestures, etc.), such artistry is only meaningful in relation to the life it represents. But if such a life can only be known through an analogic relationship between sign and referent, signifier and signified, as theories of representation insist, then the artwork’s only recourse is its own self-reflexivity or mediumicity, which is the signature of the modernist formation

identified by Clement Greenberg. This double displacement (where whole systems of representation turn in upon themselves to align with the pole of “art”) attests to the fact that the problem of representation is, indeed, modernism’s fundamental dialectic. In its accelerated self-reflexivity, Greenbergian modernism reveals why it does not necessarily apply to other (often non-Northern, non-Western) forms. Again: this is not to say that other modernisms are “backward” if not elaborated in the same way; only that this double displacement is a particular symptom of those cultures in which it appears. Even within such cultures, the grounds for adhering to Greenberg’s definition of modernism are changing (suggesting that a so-called postmodern critical vocabulary might indeed prove useful). As Shannon Jackson has recently observed, contemporary North American performance art often explores the difference between the material “medium” of a work of art and the social, institutional, and physical conditions of its “support,” effectively reintroducing the conditions of “life” into the viewer’s contemplation of the work’s aesthetic value.⁷³

Historically, Greenberg’s model has been used to value works at the “high” end of the scale, neglecting those closer to the “low” pole of self-reflexivity, suggesting the symptomatic repression of not only the verisimilar logic of a persistent realism but also what it stands to represent—the material conditions of life under capitalism—which remain visible nonetheless in the surviving tropes of “alienation” and “innovation.” Consider, for example, the work of Candice Breitz, a contemporary South African visual artist, who combines anthropological images of Africans with images taken from fashion magazines, pornography, and contemporary photographs. The anthropological images represent the idea of the everyday life of “the other,” with the fashion magazine representing attempts to elevate that everyday life into a pedestrian form of high art, and the pornographic images reminding viewers that both anthropology and fashion are forms of fetishization. The occasional appearance of an unstaged picture from someone’s daily life within this montage challenges the idea of unmediated access to both an art distinct from life and a “pure” form of life. While Breitz’s work speaks to an international audience on a visceral level, the controversy surrounding *The Spear*, a painting of President Jacob Zuma done in the style of mid-twentieth-century socialist realism, with the genitals of the leader exposed, speaks to a very local and specific manifestation of this tension between life and art.

As this and other such examples of non-Northern, non-Western modernism suggest, active movement between the poles of “art” and “life” makes for a dynamic experience of reception, keeping processes (including the process of resistance) in play. A schema that allows for comparison between such examples and the Western formation we have come to know all too well allows us to see the difference between process and reification. It also invites us to diagnose the reification implicit in the “autonomy” of classic high modernism, which functions not only to preserve bourgeois values from their contradiction in capitalist production—what Herbert

Marcuse calls “affirmative culture”—but also to arrest the dialectical movement between poles. When modernist expression is reified at the representational pole of “art,” it figures the repression of “life” that its stasis enacts. By insisting upon its own auratic power, it also obscures the crisis in productive agency that haunts mechanically reproduced art (and is symptomatic of capitalism generally). Interpretive agency is likewise forestalled insofar as reified art arrests hermeneutic engagement with its supposed autonomous form.

Of course, there are important differences between art that forestalls interpretation to announce itself as “art” in order to legitimize its credentials within an institutional framework and work that, in calling attention to its provisional status as “art,” enacts what John Roberts calls the “suspensive” function of the avant-garde, moving between art and nonart in order to clear a space that “is the very condition of its renewal.”⁷⁴ “Untitled” (2003), a performance by Andrea Fraser in which she sells herself to an art collector for a night of sex (thus representing the “prostitution” of art within the commercial network of galleries and museums) would seem to illustrate the former even as it also poses as institutional critique. As Peggy Phelan remarks in her stinging assessment, Fraser got “a big payday” and “a lot of press”; the collector “got to be both patron and collector (and he appears to have enjoyed the sex)”; and the gallery got a video, the value of which rose upon its exhibition as a work of art.⁷⁵ The installations of Santiago Sierra, on the other hand, exemplify the latter tendency. In his piece “Workers Who Cannot Be Paid, Remunerated to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes” (2000), for example, refugees sit inside cardboard crates scattered around the exhibition floor, as if waiting to be opened and presented for the aesthetic pleasure of visitors to the gallery. By Jackson’s analysis, Sierra exposes “the reductive operations of social inequity by mimicking their forms.” In doing so, he both engages debates in art criticism about the anthropomorphism of minimalist objects (the industrial material and scale of which often requires unskilled as well as skilled labor) and implicates the viewer in an act of aesthetic consumption that depends upon a larger system of economic and geopolitical relations in which undocumented workers are exploited.⁷⁶

When, as in Sierra’s work, modernist expressions move toward “life” and away from a purely self-reflexive insistence upon their own status as “art,” they figure a crisis in the knowability of lived experience, and enact the desperation of securing the conditions of a sustainable life. Cultural performances such as activist demonstrations—a specific form of modernist expression, as Tracy C. Davis has noted—serve as our example here.⁷⁷ From late nineteenth-century British suffragettes to early twenty-first-century Black Lives Matter demonstrators and beyond, activists have used theatrical strategies to stage alternative social realities in order to make those possibilities real. Judith Butler has recently described such actions as “performative assemblies,” insisting upon the reclamation of public space as a form of bodily “speech.”⁷⁸ Reclaiming public space as a theatre of action, such

performances dramatize real-life conditions as such, bringing them into visibility with the intent of enacting material change. Such performances defy the logic of reification and autonomy and are thereby often rendered illegible as “art,” calling instead upon process to challenge a static status quo. This is why Schechner’s call for a broad-spectrum approach, enlarging the discipline’s focus to include cultural—as well as aesthetic—performances, was initially met with resistance from some PS scholars who questioned the status of such practices as “art.”⁷⁹ It is also why traditional scholars of classic high modernism have difficulty admitting proletarian literature, program music, and social realist images into its canon.⁸⁰ With this perspective in mind, we might wish to reconceptualize the theory upon which the vertical vector’s center pivots, replacing Greenberg’s value-laden distinction between avant-garde and kitsch with the efficacy contest between realism and experimental forms of representation that is known as the Brecht-Lukács debate.

After all, if art enacts a vision of the real (its “worldedness,” in Hayot’s terms), then it is our responsibility as audiences and critics to assess the world that it creates in relation to the world we know. While it may be that not all activism is art, that which mobilizes the materiality of the human body in a way that foregrounds the ideas governing its existence in order to challenge or reshape those ideas would seem to qualify, especially insofar as it materializes what Roberts calls those “points and fissures in actuality where new cultural relations and forms of organization are possible or emergent.”⁸¹ If such examples of cultural performance have been illegible as (modernist) art, it may be not only because their content lists toward the “life” pole but also because their formal strategy of representation—i.e., mimesis, an action used to represent an action—does not lend itself to reification. Of course, the mimetic forms of theatre, dance, and film are typically recognized as art, but only because social and cultural performances such as street activism have retroactively indexed the proscenium frame that newly seals their autonomy. Indeed, for much of modern history, these recently elevated “art” forms were considered merely popular entertainment (and so existed on the “low” end of a vertical scale that calibrated art in terms of cultural value).

The modernist cultural phenomenon of activist street performance not only allows for mimetic forms such as theatre to be recontextualized as art within cultural history but also reveals the emergence of a self-conscious awareness of the accelerating dialectic of art and life. Of course, as with the dialectics of subject and object, and of identity and difference, the dialectic of art and life has an ancient history. But, as with periodicity and cross-cultural contact, representational self-reflexivity intensifies in the modern era, accelerating the spinning whirligig of its dialectic to produce a dizzying experience that is distinctly modern. This propeller was again set in motion by performance—most notably, the performance of gender and sexuality by Aestheticists such as Oscar Wilde for whom art was life and life was art.

The vertical vector, then, best functions not as a measure of implicit cultural value but as a scale of high/low degrees of self-reflexivity, in which modernist works are self-conscious representations, powered by a dialectical movement between art and life, that reveal ways of knowing and acting upon the modern world. Works that trend toward the “low,” emphasizing the pole of the life that is represented over the representational palette of the artistic medium used, are not inferior to works arrayed at the “high” end of the scale; rather, they simply deploy different strategies for integrating knowing with acting. Our task as critics is to assess such praxis—that old idea whose New Left invocation might be worth retrieving for our own moment—and to enact it critically in our own lives. Not doing so risks succumbing to the logic of reification that we seek to diagnose. Doing so, by contrast, restores the promise that art and cultural criticism can help us understand—and change—the world in which we live.

CMPS—A Summary Schematic

Given the intertwining purviews and concerns of CS, MS, and PS, we call for the three fields to be brought together, with the contributions of each supporting the development of a comprehensive model for a comparative analysis of the processes, experiences, and indeed performances of global modernity. Wishing to call this new field of study into being, we propose the following intentionally open-ended principles as a provocation to further exploration:

1. That CMPS is historicist, always recognizing the historicity of modernity, including the present moment;
2. That CMPS is grounded in phenomenological experiences of modernity, even as it seeks to comprehend those experiences through epistemological frames;
3. That CMPS is global in scope and comparative in method, seeking to understand the experiences of modernity and its modernizing processes in relation to those that develop differently in other geopolitical and cultural regions—querying similarities and differences to understand Modernism and the related terms of *Modernity* and *Modernization* as variable and adaptive processes;
4. That CMPS treats the “objects” of its analysis as, and in relation to, specific social and cultural processes that produce meaning. Building upon points 1, 2, and 3, above, CMPS borrows the situated focus on social experiences from CS and PS, and the insistence on mapping them in relation to historical processes from MS, treating both “culture” and “period” as provisional heuristics that enable a critical gestalt;

5. Accordingly, that CMPS understands *all* terms of analysis that render living processes as objects of study—e.g., periodizations, definitions, categories, epistemes, and models—to be necessarily provisional;
6. But that CMPS also understands that such periodizations, definitions, categories of analysis, epistemes, and models may be employed in provisionally static form to offer useful synthetic insights into the conceptual totalities of Modernity, Modernization, and Modernism, not to mention the overlapping fields and methodologies of CS, MS, and PS. We propose CMPS as one such category.

In effect, we are calling for a self-conscious reassessment of each field's grounding assumptions in order to bring them into critical realignment. Recognizing that important new work in each of these fields has begun to do just that, we have cited some of it in these pages, having learned much from scholars in all three fields. Nonetheless, we believe that such critical reassessments can be enriched further by situating these studies within a more synthetic and genuinely interdisciplinary framework in which the defining concepts of Modernity, Modernization, and Modernism are interrogated through a comparative mapping of global experiences and dynamic cultural forms. Situating these comparative case studies along a set of shared temporal, spatial, and vertical vectors, a CMPS model emphasizes Modernity as a historical process that is global in scope, helping us map our own relationship to this still-unfolding epoch.

Notes

We would like to thank Annelise Wasmoen and the anonymous readers of this essay for their invaluable comments and suggestions for revision. We would also like to thank Dustin Iler for his research assistance.

1. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1991) ix.

2. Jeffrey Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2012) ix.

3. Given that aesthetic performances such as theatre and dance are included in the broad spectrum that is the purview of performance studies, we refer to the field as a whole by that term, abbreviating it as "PS" throughout the rest of this essay.

4. We are not the first to identify this trend. In 2005 Tracy C. Davis founded the "Performance in Historical Paradigms" initiative at Performance Studies International (PSi), adding two to three sessions per conference to cultivate research in historical performance and historicist approaches toward performance, more generally.

5. This figure is meant to be suggestive only. We recognize that many of the journals sampled were special issues, reflecting topics of contemporary *scholarly* interest, and have tried to distinguish between articles that drew their evidence primarily from contemporary performances and those that were either purely theoretical excursions and/or cited pre-1980s performances as evidentiary case studies. Also worth noting are several articles that *historicize* contemporary performance in the way

we advocate, even if they were not statistically representative of the articles on contemporary topics. The journals sampled were *New Theatre Quarterly* 32.1 (February 2016), *Performance Research* 21.1 (2016), *TDR* 59.4 (Winter 2015 [T228]), *Theatre Journal* 64.4 (December 2015), and *Theatre Survey* 57.1 (January 2016).

6. Andrew Gibb, James Beekman Bush, and Amanda Espinoza, eds., "Doctoral Projects in Progress in Theatre Arts," *Theatre Journal* 67.2 (May 2015): 383–89.

7. Rebecca Schneider, *Theatre & History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 49. Michal Kobialka, "Historiography," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 18.2 (Spring 2004): 122. See also his "Theater/Performance Historiography: Politics, Ethics and the Now," *Modern Language Quarterly* 70.1 (March 2009): 29. The field has an important metacritical tradition of reflecting on the complicated relationship between theatre and history, beginning with Bruce A. McConachie and Thomas Postlewait's landmark edited collection *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1989), continuing with Postlewait and coeditor Charlotte Canning's *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2010), and including, most recently, the collection coedited by Michal Kobialka and Rosemarie Bank, *Theatre/Performance Historiography: Time, Space, Matter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

8. Patricia Ybarra, "History Takes Time," *Theatre Historiography: Critical Interventions*, ed. Henry Bial and Scott Magelssen (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010).

9. See Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Le Presses du Réel, 2002). For a critique, see Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 51–79. For other uses of the term "relational" (to which we are largely sympathetic), see Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001), in which he seeks to redirect object-oriented thinking toward a greater emphasis on process, or what he calls "interaction-in-the-making" (9), and Shu-Mei Shih's "World Studies and Relational Comparison," *PMLA* 130.2 (March 2015): 430–38, in which she calls for the study of an integrated world literature that compares works in relation to the vectors of both time (history) and space (the field of power relations).

10. Nealon xi (our italics).

11. See Richard Schechner with media editor Sara Brady, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 129. This is the first sentence under the header "Postmodernism," following brief discussions of speech-act theory (Austin, Searle, and Derrida), and reality TV in Schechner's chapter on "Performativity." There is no mention of Herbert Marcuse, whose phrase "performance principle" he borrows even as he eviscerates it of its sting.

12. Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (1996; New York: Routledge, 2004) 137.

13. Our choice to call the field "comparative studies" as opposed to "comparative literature" reflects the field's recent move to broaden its disciplinary purview to include other kinds of cultural production, shifting its unifying focus from literature per se to comparative theory more generally. In this instance "comparative" serves as an umbrella term for comparativity (the comparison of comparative techniques), the transindigeneity movement (which seeks to promote a nonuniversalizing method of comparison), and other emergent relational practices. These approaches are explicitly different from one another, and this difference puts them in conversation as contrasting elements of one field.

14. For a summary of terminological debates within MS, see Susan Stanford Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 8.3 (Sept. 2001): 493–513. For a more comprehensive history of modernism as a critical concept, see Ástrádur Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990); and Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers, *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015). Within CS, see Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2013).

15. This is in keeping with Friedman's call for a "transformational planetary epistemology." See "Planetarity: Musing Modernist Studies," *Modernism/Modernity* 17.3 (September 2010): 471–99.

16. See, for example, Günter Berghaus, *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Olga Taxidou, *Modernism and Performance: Jarry to Brecht* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Shane Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009). These and the following citations are meant simply to illustrate the trends we have identified and are offered as suggested reading for scholars wishing to extend their research beyond their home fields.

17. See, for example, Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Penny Farfan, *Women, Modernism, and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006); Juliet Koss, *Modernism*

after Wagner (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010); and Carrie J. Preston, *Modernism's Mythic Pose: Gender, Genre, Solo Performance* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

18. See, for example, Rebecca Rovit with Alvin Goldfarb, eds., *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999) and *The Jewish Kulturbund Theatre Company in Nazi Berlin* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2012); Arnold Aronson, *American Avant-Garde Theatre: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Kerry Powell, *Acting Wilde: Victorian Sexuality, Theatre, and Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009); Meta DuEwa Jones, *The Muse is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to Spoken Word* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2011); Soyica Colbert, *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance, and the Stage* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2011); Iris Smith Fischer, *Mabou Mines: Making Avant-Garde Theatre in the 1970s* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2011); Koritha Mitchell, *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance and Citizenship, 1890–1930* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2012); Juliet Bellow, *Modernism on Stage: The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013); and Paige A. McGinley, *Staging the Blues: From Tent Shows to Tourism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014).

19. See, for example, David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003); David Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2009); Kimberly Jannarone, *Artaud and His Doubles* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010); and Matthew Yde, *Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism: Longing for Utopia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

20. See, for example, Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005); James Harding and John Rouse, eds., *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2006); James Harding, *Cutting Performances: Collage Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010) and *The Ghosts of the Avant-Garde(s): Exorcising Experimental Theater and Performance* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2013); Mike Sell, *Avant-Garde Performance and the Limits of Criticism* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005) and *The Avant-Garde: Race, Religion, War* (New York: Seagull, 2011); and Claire Warden, *Modernist and Avant-Garde Performance: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2015).

21. See, for example, Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999); Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, *Performance and Cosmopolitics: Cross-Cultural Transactions in Australasia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeare: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia UP, 2009); Ric Knowles, *Theatre and Interculturalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

22. See, for example, Patricia Ybarra, *Performing Conquest: Five Centuries of Theater, History, and Identity in Tlaxcala, Mexico* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2009); Laura Nielsen and Patricia Ybarra, *Neoliberalism and Global Theatres: Performance Permutations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Erika Fischer-Lichte, Torsten Jost, and Saskya Jain, eds., *The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures: Beyond Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Sharon Marcus and Katherine Biers, eds., "World Literature and Global Performance," special issue of *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 41.2 (Winter 2014); and see Christopher Balme, Catherine Cole, and Tracy C. Davis, eds., *Transnational Theatre Histories* series with Palgrave Macmillan, beginning with Marlis Schweitzer's *Transatlantic Broadway: The Infrastructural Politics of Global Performance* (2015).

23. See, for example, Margaret Litvin, *Hamlet's Arab Journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2011); Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Denise Varney et al., eds., *Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific: Regional Modernities in the Global Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Diana Looser, *Remaking Pacific Pasts: History, Memory, and Identity in Contemporary Theater from Oceania* (Manoa: U of Hawai'i P, 2014); Glenn Odom, *Yorùbá Performance, Theatre and Politics: Staging Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

24. See, for example, Phillip Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Min Tian, *The Poetics of Difference and Displacement: Twentieth-Century Chinese-Western Intercultural Theatre* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2008) and *Mei Lanfang and the Twentieth-Century International Stage: Chinese Theatre Placed and Displaced* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Jon McKenzie, Heike Roms, and C. J. Wan-ling Wee, *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theatre, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010), and *DMZ Crossing: Performing Emotional Citizenship along the Korean Border* (New York: Columbia UP, 2014).

25. See, for example, Gao Xingjian, *Gao Xingjian: Aesthetics and Creation*, trans. Mabel Lee (New York: Cambria Press, 2012); Suzuki Tadashi, *Culture is the Body: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2015).

26. Phillip Zarrilli et al., eds. *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* (2006; New York: Routledge, 2010). It is worth noting that Zarrilli et al. enlarge their historical purview to include prehistoric cultures, and our model is focused specifically on the world historical epoch of modernity. While we have learned much from the comparative studies of colleagues working on ancient, medieval, and Renaissance/early modern cultures, we believe that the animating energies of those periods differ in intensity if not necessarily in kind from those that have propelled the experience of change that has marked the modern period.

27. Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA* 123.3 (May 2008): 737–48.

28. 738.

29. Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 7.

30. As Hayot eloquently concludes, his method leads "not to a complacency about the inevitable limitations (and falsehoods) of the transhistorical, but to a heightened awareness of the choice of operative historical concepts as a fundamental decision in the practice of criticism" (194). Hayot's work also resonates strongly with work by scholars of the global South. Notably, Roberto Schwarz offers a variation of Marxist literary critical methods as a means of resituating literary history in the Brazilian context in *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (New York: Verso, 1992).

31. Knowles 61.

32. Cf. Gail Finney, "Elitism or Eclecticism?: Some Thoughts about the Future of Comparative Literature," *Symplokē* 16.1–2 (2008): 215–25.

33. McKenzie, Roms, and Wee 6.

34. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving toward Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2012). Specifically, they claim that the global South is in a privileged position to offer theoretical insights beyond those posited by a closed Western system, given that philosophies in Africa and elsewhere have developed in their own distinct ways and often provide solutions to otherwise intractable problems within Enlightenment thought.

35. For example, case studies from Germany (the Saxe-Meiningen Players), Russia (the Moscow Art Theatre), and China by way of Japan (the Spring Willow Society) can be compared to illuminate how late nineteenth-century theatre artists responded to the modernizing force of the railroad. With important differences, all three groups developed a "realistic" performance technique that leveled the vertical hierarchy of traditional social relations by metaphorizing the horizontal relations mapped by the railroad. See Julia A. Walker, *Modernity and Performance: Enacting Change on the Modernizing Stage*, manuscript in process.

36. For example, intercultural theatre highlights interactions between cultures as it creates new theatrical worlds. Western academic and theatrical debates over interculturalism have taken specific forms—forms that are substantially different from those that emerge when examining intercultural theatre, the worlds created by intercultural theatrical practice, and related debates in Africa and Asia. A model that emphasizes the contrast between and overlap among global cultures generates a multiplicity of interculturalisms that provides a groundwork for a synergistic (as opposed to alternative) definition of modernity and a more truly global understanding of globalization. See Glenn A. Odom, *Theatre, Globalizations and Intercultural Worlds*, manuscript in process.

37. Arguments about a unifying *modernist* sensibility have appeared in response to Jameson's study of postmodernism, which famously identifies that period's characteristic sensibility as "the waning of affect." See Jameson, *Postmodernism* 10.

38. Indeed, as is true of European modernity and the ubiquitous deployment of the term "early modern," there are many earlier moments that scholars have identified as modern in the global East and South—most notably in the Arab world and in China. For a summary of this argument, see Shu-Mei Shih, "World Studies" 432.

39. Puchner 253. Associated with Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Situationism was an avant-garde movement that used Brechtian techniques to stage street protests against a capitalist society that turned active citizens into passive consumers of a "culinary" spectacle.

40. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (1974; U of Minnesota P, 1984).

41. Harding and Rouse accuse traditional critical narratives of the avant-garde of an "antiperformative bias" (1).

42. Ástráður Eysteinnsson, "'What's the Difference?' Revisiting the Concepts of Modernism and the Avant-Garde," in Sascha Bru et al., eds. *Europa! Europa?: The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009) 21–35.

43. Julia A. Walker, *Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre: Bodies, Voices, Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 58–83. As she demonstrates, T. S. Eliot, along with Harvard mentor George Santayana, explicitly rejected the aesthetic theories of François Delsarte and his followers in the expressive culture movement by locating meaning exclusively within the verbal register of a poem, rather than across the verbal, vocal, and pantomimic registers of its realization in performance. Eliot's theory of "impersonality" is a direct (if also tacit) refutation of the Delsartean "law of personality."

44. Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (New York: Verso, 2002).

45. 29.

46. Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001), 172–96. For an example of recent work, see Odom, *Yorùbá Performance*, which discusses the Yorùbá concept of "Ìfàgbòntàayé" in relation to both the indigenous worldview from which it derives and as an active process of cultural resistance and adaptation in the face of the forces of modernization that are transforming contemporary Nigeria.

47. S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Patterns of Modernity* (Washington Square: New York UP, 1987) 4.

48. See also S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

49. Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012) 196.

50. Elin Diamond, "Modern Drama/Modernity's Drama," *Modern Drama* 44.1 (Spring 2001): 3–15; repr. in *Modern Drama: Defining the Field*, eds. Ric Knowles, Joanne Tompkins, and W. B. Worthen, (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2003).

51. Djelal Kadir, "What Does the Comparative Do for Literary History?," *PMLA* 128.3 (May 2013): 644–51.

52. See, for example, Elisabeth Oxfeldt, *Nordic Orientalism: Paris and the Cosmopolitan Imagination, 1800–1900* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005); Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theater, Philosophy* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006); Leonardo Lisi, *Marginal Modernity: The Aesthetics of Dependency from Kierkegaard to Joyce* (New York: Fordham UP, 2013).

53. David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007).

54. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983; rev. 1991).

55. For universalizing approaches to intercultural performance, see Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point: Forty Years of Theatrical Exploration: 1946–1987* (London: Methuen Drama, 1989), and Eugenio Barba, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (New York: Routledge, 1991); for postcolonial approaches, see Diana Taylor, *Theatre of Crisis: Drama and Politics in Latin America* (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1991), Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), and Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 2000).

56. Dilip Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001); Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, eds., *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005).

57. David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003).

58. Hayot 5.

59. Elizabeth Povinelli, "Settler Modernity and the Quest for an Indigenous Tradition," in Gaonkar 24–57.

60. Didier Coste, "Is a Non-Global Universe Possible?: What Universals in the Theory of Comparative Literature (1952–2002) Have to Say about It," *Comparative Literature Studies* 41.1 (2004): 37–48.

61. Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2013).

62. Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity," *Public Culture* 14.1 (2002): 192.

63. 200.

64. Kōjin Karatani, *History and Repetition*, ed. Seiji M. Lippit (New York: Columbia UP, 2012) 56.

65. Aparna Dharwadkar, "Modernism, 'Tradition,' and History in the Postcolony: Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram kotwal* (1972)," *Theatre Journal* 65.4 (December 2013): 467–87.

66. Elizabeth Harney, "Postcolonial Agitations: Avant-Gardism in Dakar and London," *New Literary History* 41.4 (Autumn 2010): 731–51.

67. Dharwadkar 486.

68. 470.

69. "Psi Manifesto Lexicon," *Performance Studies International*, <<http://www.psi-web.org/about/psi-manifesto-lexicon/>> (accessed 16 Aug. 2016).

70. Ignacio Infante, *After Translation: The Transfer and Circulation of Modern Poetics across the Atlantic* (New York: Fordham UP, 2013).

71. David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003).

72. Shu-Mei Shih, "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition," *PMLA* 119.1 (January 2004): 16–30. Shih actually outlines five modes of recognition: the return of the systematic, the time lag of allegory, global multiculturalism, and the exceptional particular as four modes with enduring blind spots, and a fifth—postdifference—as one she recommends. It affirms difference within a unified field of global literature "that critically examines its own construction by suspiciously interrogating all claims to universalisms, while acknowledging that any criteria emerging from these interrogations will be open to new questioning" (29). We regard our proposal as heeding her call for an ethics of postdifference.

73. Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 32–33.

74. John Roberts, "Revolutionary Pathos, Negation, and the Suspensive Avant-Garde," *New Literary History* 41.4 (Autumn 2010): 725.

75. Peggy Phelan, "Marina Abramović: Witnessing Shadows," *Theatre Journal* 56.4 (December 2004): 569–77.

76. Jackson 60–61; see also Bishop 79.

77. Tracy C. Davis, "What is Activism?," paper presented at Ibsen and the Play of Politics, a conference held at Johns Hopkins University, May 2, 2014.

78. Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2015).

79. See, for example, Ted Wendt, "Issues: A *TPQ* Forum," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 10.3 (1990): 248–56. In his contribution to this *TPQ* forum, an essay titled "The Displacement of the Aesthetic: Problems of Performance Studies," Wendt laments the loss of a specifically aesthetic set of questions and values in the shift to a cultural focus on performance.

80. Within literary studies, scholars of proletarian fiction have long been challenging the canon, if not always the definition, of classic high modernism. See, for example, Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929–1941* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1993); Caren Irr, *The Suburb of Dissent: Cultural Politics in the United States and Canada during the 1930s* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1998); Michael Szalay, *New Deal Modernism: American Literature and the Invention of the Welfare State* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000); Alan Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2002).

81. Roberts 729.