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What Do We Do When the Other Speaks Her Own Language: Returning to the Ethics of Comparativism

Introduction

Comparative Literature is a weird discipline filled with weird people. I have noticed that whenever there are college-educated criminals depicted on American television or in the movies, and there is a question of why they are the way they are, someone invariably explains that the miscreant studied (or teaches) Comparative Literature. Other humanists view us as dilettantes, and not in the positive sense of the term. National literature scholars revile us as amateurs of all and masters of no specific canon. Historians ridicule our use of documentation. Scientists cannot fathom what we compare or why we compare it. I must admit that we are partially to blame for our disrepute. Our disciplinary indulgences have contributed to these negative perceptions.

Many of us here today did not start out as comparatists. I, for example, came to this field rather late in my student career, after considerable graduate work in the history of religions. I remember how surprised I was to notice how seriously this discipline took its exegetes. At first glance, Comparative Literature seemed to have a very elaborate pantheon of deities. It was the 80s. In graduate schools all over America, students were being trained to bow down before the altars of what appeared to me to be rather paltry gods – usually francophone, who were not fun to read. They were such puny divinities; these Derridas,

DeMans, and Deleuzes did not even sport multiple arms and heads. Their superhuman powers were negligible. I had spent my youth studying Yahweh and Shiva, these gods of theory did not inspire fear in me (except when I tried to teach them to undergraduates)! Comparative Literature initially struck me as a domain that longed for the sacred – or at least, sought to impose a religious faith on its practitioners.

As a discipline, Comparative Literature is constantly questioning its identity. It does not know what it is. As a post-doc at Cornell during the height of deconstruction, I remember a Comparative Literature department meeting where we discussed “What is Comparative Literature?” I thought, if Jonathan Culler did not know what it was, I certainly was not going to lose sleep over this conundrum. But since my callow post-doc years, I have witnessed the various transformations of our field. The term “permutation” is perhaps too generous, because what I have witnessed in the past thirty years resembles far more a form of shameless promiscuity. Colleagues jump from one theoretical love affair to another, “retool” themselves into each new trend, in their rush to stay “cutting-edge” (or sometimes just to accrue travel funding and a bigger office). The predatory male Marxist became the male Feminist, when he could no longer abuse female students with impunity; the national language department mono-glot became the multiculturalist; those professors who slept with “exotic” graduate students morphed into Asianists; queer theorists became Fat Studies activists, and everyone became postcolonial. The trick was to divine the next trend and be sure to jump on the wave before it crested. The saddest point was when the critic-theorist-reader became his or her own text. Now, there was no longer an aesthetic object to be interpreted but we heard about the reader’s *experience* of some “textuality” rather than any discussion of an art object. By this time, the term “text” was almost always placed in quotation marks. These were the days when some professor’s moribund father’s penis became the text upon which she expatiated (Miller, 1996). We have come a long way beyond merely treating some critics as if they were godlike! The theorists and critics now worship themselves.

Parallel to this movement in increased navel-gazing, there was also the desire, a vestige of the 60’s, to appear always and everywhere politically correct. It was important for critics positioned in First World metropolitan centers

to show that they were connected to and could relate to or “inhabit” the experience of the world’s less privileged. Another carry over from the 60s was that you could become whatever you wanted – all you had to do was claim the desired positionality. Theoretically, the First World could legitimately speak for the other. Whites could channel the Black experience. Asian and African ventriloquists voiced the suffering of the very populations that they oppressed back home, White non-mothers taught courses on the Black and Asian women’s experience of giving birth vaginally. Taking vacations in America made foreign-born critics into “nomads,” Third-World elites coming to graduate school in New York or Palo Alto vaunted their exilic subjectivity, etc. I am really not making this all up. All of a sudden, everyone seemed to be a victim of some epistemic violence and there was a general movement to minoritize oneself. Curiously, these gestures in victimhood by proxy bear witness to a shocking lack of self-reflection that is noteworthy in individuals whose profession it is to interpret. These various trends in Comparative Literature also point to a serious detour in what we might term the ethical component of literary studies. Somewhere, Comparative Literature seems to have lost its way. In many institutions today, it is morphing into something called World Literature, a new incarnation of the old Pentagon construction of Area Studies that was discredited decades ago. Under the guise of democratizing and moving away from Comparative literature’s supposed “elitism,” World Literature theorists claim to engage the world in a serious fashion, but only if that world speaks English or is translated into this idiom. How is this position deemed ethical? Where is there a place in World Literature for the other who insists on speaking her own language? Is it just such questions that I wish to touch upon in this essay. However, I would first like to outline the tradition in literary criticism that addresses the ethical concerns regarding the other. This is a tradition that is rich in the field of literary studies, even if it has fallen out of favor in recent years and is perhaps in need of reassessment. Specifically, I will examine how we might focus on the other from an ethical perspective in this post-ethical age. I begin, then, with a summary of the treatment of the other in philosophical discourse.

I. Configurations of the Other

As far back as Parmenides and Plato, mainstream philosophy has defined the other in relation to the self. Due to their devotion to reason, philosophers have often sought to banish the other to the realm of unreason, relegating it to the domains of art, myth, and religion. Plato approached the other in terms of wonderment (*thaumazein*) and terror (*deinon*). In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates emphasized that the other in the form of strangers, gods, and monsters belonged to the realm of myth, not philosophy. He further noted that philosophy as a rule transcends myths. Nevertheless, Socrates questioned whether he was “a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon or a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature” (230.e). In other words, Plato established the apposition between the monster and the philosopher, suggesting that it was only by exorcising the monster that one can know oneself (Kearney, 2003: 151–52). In the *Sophist*, Plato put the discussion regarding the other in the mouth of the Eleatic Stranger: does the existence of the *xénos* demand the establishment of another category (*héteros génos*) beyond Being? The Stranger argues that all kinds of beings blend with each other. This mixing of the same (*autos*) with the other (*héteron*) makes speech possible (*Soph.* 259e) and enables us to distinguish between what is true and what is false. Without such blending, the other is literally unspeakable and unrecognizable (Kearney, 2003: 153).

Modern philosophy continues the pattern, set in place by the Greeks, of refusing to allow the other to be truly other and not a reflection of the self. In Romantic hermeneutics, as practiced by Schleiermacher and Dilthey, the purpose of philosophical interpretation is to unite the consciousness of one subject with that of another through a process of appropriation (*Aneignung*). Schleiermacher explored the retrieval of estranged consciousness in terms of a theological re-appropriation of the original message of *kerygma* (quoted in Dilthey, 1974: 117). Dilthey analyzed it in terms of the historical resolve to reach some kind of objective knowledge about the past (Dilthey, 1976: 66–105). Hegel historicized alterity in terms of the master-slave dialectic (Hegel, 1994). Marx addressed the question of the other in his analysis of fetishism and ideology (Marx, 1990; Marx and Engels, 1970). In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl identified the other as never absolutely alien, but as always

and everywhere recognized as other than me (Husserl, 1960: 112–17). In each of these philosopher's formulations, the other is viewed by analogy. The notion of the other as alter ego was taken to an even more radical extension by existentialist philosophers such as Sartre (Sartre, 1943: 413–29) and Heidegger, who described the other in the context of their theories regarding inauthentic existence and bad faith (Heidegger, 1962). In all these theories, the other is reduced to the ego's horizon of consciousness and is, as such, always mediated. Mirroring the ego, the other is assigned no intrinsic value beyond its role as a duplication of the same. Not surprisingly, in the wake of the Holocaust, certain critics, most notably Emmanuel Levinas, felt that a reassessment of Heidegger's thought was warranted as was a reevaluation of the transcendent subject.

In postcolonial literary studies, the other continues to be seen in autonomous terms. Now, however, it is understood to function as a gross distortion of the self and assumes a political significance. Narcissistic and aggressive projections onto this other are understood as compensations for a perceived lack in the European "individual." Edward Said's *Orientalism* claimed to reveal the extent to which the other was monolithically constructed to support imperial hegemony (Said, 1978). From structuralism, Said borrowed the notion that individual action, cultural forms, and social institutions can be reduced to stable essential elements. He then was able to view East-West encounters in terms of a Foucauldian drama where a "western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over" (Said, 1978: 3) other cultures enables the actual deployment of European colonialism. Grounded in a hermeneutics of suspicion with its roots visible in the work of Marx, Freud, and Gramsci, Said's critique of orientalism has informed subsequent scholarship. It spawned postcolonial theories, influenced multicultural debates, and invigorated Asian Studies (Figueira, 2008: 32). In fact, it has become the master narrative of cross-cultural encounter where any interpretations of the non-Amero-European other are judged as forms of subterfuge created to consolidate Amero-European power and domination. Individual theorists then added their own blend of spices to this heady brew.

The other can now appear as obsessively reiterative. We should acknowledge here Bakhtin's critique of a hierarchical, centripetal ordering of the world where all authority is vested in a singular hegemonic ideology suppressing

dissent. One can enlist Franz Fanon's perception of the subjugated as a phobic object (Fanon, 1963) or Jacques Lacan's theory of the way in which individual subjects are constituted to support a postmodern theory of alterity (Lacan, 1966). Henry Louis Gates, for example, borrowed from Lacan to map subject formation onto a self-other model (Gates, 1991: 463). Homi Bhabha brought together Freud's concept of the fetish and Fanon's schema of the imaginary to define the colonial subject as the reformed and recognizable other, a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite (Bhabha, 1992). Abdul Jan Mohammed has warned us against the undifferentiated Manichaeic view of the other (Jan Mohammed, 1985). Such postmodern approaches tend to focus on psychologizing modern fantasies of alienation. Their starting point can be situated in a pathologization of the classical era as the origin of a climate culminating in nineteenth-century imperialism. The problem with many of these more recent critical approaches to the other is that they seek to "recreate the past by inventing precursors for the present" (Olender, 1992: 18). While they provide insights regarding the psychological and hegemonic processes involved in cross-cultural encounters, they lack a nuanced understanding of the hermeneutical, historiographical, and ethical judgments that inform the heterological project. It is precisely these types of inquiries that I wish to evoke today.

II. Hermeneutics

Like their classical and early modern precursors, poststructuralist conceptions of the other focus primarily on the self. These recent conceptualizations of alterity, however, seek to assess the psychodynamics of appropriation. They also grapple with the impossibility of portraying the other as anything but a translation of European familiarity with the self. A key difference between these earlier conceptions of the other and poststructuralist formulations is that the latter acknowledges that the process of trying to understand involves issues of appropriation or, at least, creates conditions for colonization. The result of this operation confirms Foucault's assertion that power and knowledge are entwined and recognized as such (Foucault, 1970). It is, however, in this very notion of recognition and, significantly, its relation

to textual interpretation that hermeneutic approaches to the other distinguish themselves from poststructuralist constructions of alterity.

As Hans-Georg Gadamer so succinctly put it in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, “To seek one’s own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of the spirit, whose being is only a return to itself for what is other” (Gadamer, 1960: 11). This movement, represented by the concept of *Bildung*, is particular to hermeneutic understanding. It provides a structure of excursion and reunion (Ricoeur, 1969: 16–17). If the circular structure of hermeneutic understanding is complete, the spirit moves to the strange and unfamiliar, finds a home there, and makes it its own or recognizes what was previously perceived as alien to be its genuine home. Hermeneutic understanding, then, consists of a movement of self-estrangement in which one must learn to engage and know the other in order to better know oneself. Selfhood is, thus, by nature dialogical or suffused with otherness. In fact, in a reversal peculiar to *Bildung*, the movement of the spirit resembles a true homecoming, its point of departure being essentially a way-station and the initial alien-ness a mirage produced by self-alienation.

Gadamer’s hermeneutic philosophy – which stretched back from Heidegger to Dilthey and Schleiermacher – pursued the idea of a reconciliation between our own understanding and that of strangers in terms of a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1960: 273–74, 337–38, 358). For Gadamer, the hermeneutic tradition accepts that understanding is always affected by history, prejudice (understood as pre-judgments or *Vorurteile*), authority, and tradition. While Heidegger viewed the retrieval of our past as a repetition of our potentialities of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962, section 25), Gadamer saw hermeneutics as a recovery of past consciousness (Gadamer, 1960: 305–24) by rendering the past contemporaneous with our present modes of comprehension (Kearney, 2003: 154–55). Ricoeur would develop Gadamer’s notion of hermeneutical consciousness by claiming that the retrieval of one’s destiny only occurs in the repetition of action through narrative.

Narrative is thus indispensable in articulating the intelligibility of human action. However, the same medium that configures human activity also distorts it. The question then becomes: How do we distinguish between ideological and non-ideological narrative, true and false consciousness, genuine and false communication? At one pole of the hermeneutical field, there is the

hermeneutics of belief (hermeneutical consciousness) directed at recovering a lost message and animated by a willingness to listen. At the other pole, we find a hermeneutics of suspicion (critical consciousness) aimed at demystification and animated by mistrust and skepticism. In broad terms, these two hermeneutical positions define how we approach texts. A decade earlier, Ricoeur had recognized this broad spectrum within hermeneutics and sought to engage it, particularly when Jürgen Habermas had challenged Gadamer's formulation of hermeneutics (Habermas, 1980).

In his mediation of what would become known as the Gadamer-Habermas debate, Ricoeur advocated a compromise between what was portrayed as the utopian ideation of tradition envisioned by Gadamer and the critical consciousness approach advocated by Habermas that saw all communication as distorted by ideology. The parameters of this debate need not be elaborated here. All we need to understand is that most subsequent forms of criticism (Foucauldian, post-Foucauldian, Saidian, post-Saidian, colonial discourse analysis, postcolonialism, multiculturalism) opted for a hermeneutics-of-suspicion approach that is indebted to the Habermasian critique of ideology. The hermeneutical model championed by Ricoeur was tossed on the garbage heap, in much the same manner that Ricoeur himself was physically assaulted in May '68 at Nanterre. The Foucauldian quest to unmask some power structure was deemed not only righteous but also more relevant than any call to try and engage in reconciling the two approaches. The critique of ideology was simply too attractive and too rich. There were so many abuses, self-obsessions, and projections of the European sense of superiority and intellectual imperialism that scholars could claim to battle. Moreover, theory could now really pretend to be a viable form of social action. So, scholarship dealing with cross-cultural encounters simply adopted, with varying degrees of efficacy, the critical consciousness stance even though it could be quite self-referential and self-serving. It certainly became repetitive and its empty pretense of effecting actual change has worn quite thin over time. In the last several years, Ricoeur's middle path of charting the ontological and ethical categories of otherness and his advocacy for dialogue between the self and the other, has gained renewed interest, especially since his death in 2005. In the fields of historiography and ethics, Michel de Certeau and Emmanuel Levinas shared many of Ricoeur's general concerns.

III. Historiography

The heterological procedure, as interpreted by Michel de Certeau, presents no simple opposition of the self to the other, but rather a procedure akin to a form of psychoanalysis. Of necessity, the interpreter's representation of the other is contaminated by his or her own intrusive identity. Implicit instances of social alterity precede the interpreter and their effects continue to inform the interpreter's work, inducing forms of unconscious repetition through which the past returns to haunt the present (Certeau, 1986: 4).

For Certeau, the other is thus structurally re-formed as a projection or residue of a legitimate interpretative operation. It becomes a site of uncertainty upon which the dead resistance of the past inhabits and haunts the present. Difference can be seen then not as something created by a given power structure, but by what hegemony fabricates in order to plaster over its former conquests "the forgetting of which organizes itself into psycho- sociological systems and the reverberations of which create possibilities for the present state" (Certeau, 1986: 6). In this respect, the historian becomes not only a sort of psychologist, but also an apologist for the present regime as well as an operator of the forgotten past. Historians and their readers attempt to assimilate the other into the "same" by eliminating resistance through an idealization of the past in utopian visions that haunt history. Certeau suggests that idealizations cannot be avoided; they are present everywhere. His conceptualization of heterology thus brings us to question the ethics involved in any encounter with the other.

IV. The Ethical Dimension

Ricoeur claimed that one of the best ways to de- alienate the other was to recognize and treat oneself as another and the other as (in part) another self. Ethics also enjoins me to recognize the other as someone capable of recognizing me, in turn, as a self that is capable of recognition and esteem. For Ricoeur, it is narrative memory that allows us to preserve the trace of the other (especially the victims of history) who would, if unremembered, be lost to the injustice of non-existence. Through narrative, the other within calls us to act on behalf

of the other without. However, in order to be faithful to this other, one has to have a self and, once again, it is narrative that creates a sense of identity and allows us to sustain a notion of selfhood over time. This developed sense of identity also produces the self-esteem that is indispensable to ethics and serves as a guarantee of one's fidelity to the other.

According to Ricoeur, the indispensable critique of the other is necessary in order to supplement the critique of the self. The hermeneutics of suspicion must, therefore, operate in both directions and on both fronts simultaneously. Real relations between humans demand a double critique of the ego and the alien. The self and the other enter into a dialectic relationship of mutual responsibility. Ricoeur's call for a hermeneutics of action stands in contrast to any deconstruction that seeks to disclose the interchangeable character of others and aliens. It alerts us to the irreducible alterity of all incomers. Ricoeur's hermeneutics thus differs considerably from those theories of alterity based on a Foucauldian conception of power dynamics. It also stands in contrast to the radically minimized role of the self in relation to the other found in the work of Levinas for whom the other does not manifest itself in relation to the ego's horizon of consciousness and subjectivity. For Levinas, the stranger is not relatively other, as in Ricoeur. It is so radically other that I cannot even represent it or enter into a relationship with it. To do so would assimilate the other and, thereby, reduce it to the same. It bears noting that in the postwar period, both Ricoeur and Levinas were the chief proponents of phenomenology in France and both very early on in their publishing careers addressed the ramifications of Edmund Husserl's philosophy.

Husserl's renewal of philosophy through phenomenology can be summed up by the term "intentionality." All consciousness is a *cogito* of something (*cogitatum*). The intentional structure of consciousness can, therefore, be characterized as the interplay between subject and object. In the '30s, Heidegger had transformed this vision of phenomenology by viewing consciousness as rooted in deeper levels of "being there" (*Dasein*). Heidegger conceived of Being in light of the expression *es gibt*. This concept of Being can be understood as a celebration of generosity that bestows light, freedom, and truth to all. It is a formulation that Levinas would transform into his notion of *il y a*. However, Levinas understood the concept of *il y a* as radically different from Heidegger's *es gibt*.

For Levinas, *ily a* is dangerous, generating neither light nor freedom, but rather terror. There is a loss of selfhood through the immersion in the lawless chaos of “there is.” In *On Escape* (2003), Levinas instructs us how to evade it. The source of this light can only be found in something other than Being. I see another as someone I need in order to realize certain individual and personal wants. By looking at the face of the other, I should be able to transform it into a moment of my own material or spiritual property. Instead, the appearance of the other, in fact, breaks, pierces, and destroys the horizon of egocentric monism. The other invades my world; its face or speech thus interrupts and disturbs the order of my ego’s universe. It makes a hole in it by disarranging arrangements and denying any restoration of the previous order. Something present in the other manifests itself and I am chosen to discover myself as someone who is totally responsible for this determinate other and must bow before the absoluteness revealed by its look or speech. In others words, the other makes me accountable for my life. The self is thus linked *ab initio* to the other from which it is radically separated, yet unable to escape. In this manner, Levinas posits the relation of the self and the other as the ultimate horizon that ideally should replace a Heideggerian concept of Being (Levinas, 1969: 333 ff).

To recognize the other is to give. Generosity to the other is, however, a one-way movement (Levinas, 1969: 349). The other is not a member of my community, but a stranger who cannot be reduced to any role or function in my world. To do justice to others, we must come face to face with them, become subordinated to their vocative address, and speak to them. Most importantly, however, we cannot reduce the other to an element of a text about him or her. The other is an interlocutor (Levinas, 1969: 69) not an object of discourse. In radical opposition to Ricoeur’s concept of engaging alterity through mimesis or Certeau’s procedure of manipulating it, Levinas’s other can neither be grasped nor objectified; it cannot be reduced to any textuality or reinscribed in narrative form. According to Levinas, the only possible response to this other is respect, generosity, and donation. Levinas distinguished two possible paradigms for the encounter with the other, the model presented by Odysseus and that of Abraham (Levinas, 1996: 346). What he describes as the Odysseus paradigm is akin to the movement of hermeneutic understanding described by Gadamer, Certeau and Ricoeur and – the movement out, the process of making the other

one's own, and the return. In Levinas's Abraham model, there is irreversible movement. One goes out to the other, but this departure is without return. This paradigm effects a one-way movement. It requires radical generosity on the part of the self and radical ingratitude on the part of the other as opposed to a cyclical hermeneutic movement of recognition and gratitude. In much the same way that Habermas found Gadamer's hermeneutics problematic, Levinas casts doubt on the homecoming paradigm. In terms of a textual economy, the self never really encounters the other, but rather effects a reversion of alterity to the same, the imperialism of the same (Levinas, 1986: 347). To approach the other, armed with a concept of dialogue, one destroys the alterity of the other in the guise of respecting it.

How Can We Read the Other?

There are several points we can take from the hermeneutic, historiographical, and ethical discussions concerning alterity outlined above. Hermeneutical consciousness seeks to engage the other. The critical consciousness approach that has almost exclusively informed the last thirty years of scholarship views such encounters as acts of intellectual and cultural mastery. In this sense, the critique of ideology severely limits the possibility of cross-cultural understanding. Ricoeur proposed a middle path between hermeneutics and the critique of ideology. He had culled from the Gadamer-Habermas debate the firm belief that these creative discourses permit us to recognize that we are confronted both by ideological distortions and utopian ideations. The former strive to dissimulate legitimate power and the latter question authority and seek to replace the reigning power structure. Ricoeur, therefore, acknowledged the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion. It allows us to transform the absolute other into a relative other that we might be able to see as another self. However, Ricoeur also saw, as did Certeau, that the mastery of the self in relation to the other is disrupted before discourse can even imagine itself in control. Following Gadamer, Ricoeur recommended an understanding of hermeneutics that posits the possibility of recovering a text's lost message while maintaining the necessary suspicions aimed at demystifying it.

Underlying this understanding is the belief that our temporality and historicity make sense only when organized in narrative. While Certeau viewed narrative as an operation, a product of place, and procedure, Ricoeur saw it as the product of multiple creative discourses (creative swarms in Certeau's parlance) that contribute to the creation of a "unified" text. Both Ricoeur and Certeau acknowledge that through narrative those in power and those bereft of power exercise a political will that renders data normative. Ricoeur believed that the distanciation involved in reading allows us to hear meaning behind the author's intentions. Certeau placed his faith in our recognizing the shards (traces or residue) that remain when what is repressed returns. It is these interferences that over-determine representation.

Levinas presents us with a radically different perspective on our ability to engage the other. In the first place, he speaks of the irreducibility of the other to any text about him or her. Ricoeur and Certeau set certain limits to our engagement, but they never denied the very possibility of such an encounter. Levinas, however, claims that we cannot grasp or assimilate the other who, in turn, breaks and destroys our spiritual horizon of egocentric monism. Guided by this ethical analysis of alterity provided by Levinas, as well as the historiographical schema devised by Certeau, I propose that in our critical dealings with the other and, more importantly, in all our comparative readings we follow the middle path between hermeneutical consciousness and critical consciousness (hermeneutics of suspicion) that Ricoeur initially deployed in his mediation of the Gadamer-Habermas debate. It seeks to show how a text can be both a success of the hermeneutical process (in the form of some fusion of horizons) *and* a product of ideological discourse to solidify the imposition of power between the self and the other. As such, it offers a fruitful and moral response to what might otherwise devolve into our present situation – where the other is heard only when she speaks English. But, before we begin patting ourselves on the back for having achieved this ethical compromise, perhaps we should reflect also on what Levinas has to teach us today as comparatists. To what extent is it truly possible to engage the other and to what degree are we just fooling ourselves and our others?

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Summary

This article examines the ethical dimensions of the Other, as it is configured in the discipline of Comparative Literature, particularly as it is practiced in the US in the recent proliferation of critical schools that claim to engage alterity in a respectful and inclusive fashion. It begins with a summary of the philosophical employments of the Other dating from the Greeks through Existentialism. It then investigates the role of the Other in the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur and the historiography of Michel de Certeau. Examining how these conceptions of alterity have impacted upon literary studies, attention is then turned to the work of Emmanuel Levinas. How can the thoughts of these various thinkers contribute to and/or reanimate current theoretical approaches to “reading” the Other that appear to have become the goal of literary studies today?

Keywords: comparative literature, hermeneutics, alterity studies, the Other, ethics of literary engagement, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas

Słowa kluczowe: literatura porównawcza, hermeneutyka, studia nad innością, Inny, etyka literackiego zaangażowania, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas