

**SILK ROAD IN LITERATURE — LITERATURE ON THE SILK ROAD. A JOURNEY  
FROM EUROPE TO CHINA AS A ROAD TO GLOBAL CONCEPTUALIZATION  
OF CULTURE**

**“MYTH” OF CHINA IN “WORLD LITERATURE”**

The problems that I am going to discuss in this essay oscillate around the question of the possibility of factual particularization of a specific cultural perspective, and the global image of the world funded on this perspective, yet without the necessity of its essentialization (understood as the domain of rigid distinctions between what belongs and what does not belong to a given culture, or what fits and what does not fit within the given perspective). The context here is the geopolitical location, as well as cultural-ideological influences, resulting from a specific position in the global space.

In the theoretical coordinate system laid out here, the idea of a “silk road” appears as a conceptual space between the image of the western culture-civilization “center” and the moving margins of its influence. The fluidity of the latter is determined by the symbolic or geographical proximity of the other end of the “Silk Road”, namely: China — or rather its literary mapping/processing, and thus the imaginary “opposite pole” of globalization.

By presenting a literary picture of China (or the “silky” trace of its global presence) as a cognitive borderline for understanding literature, its “circulation” in the world and the image of the world contained within it — and thus for perceiving globalization from a literary point of view — I am referring directly to the transcript of a talk that J.W.Goethe had had with his secretary, Peter Eckermann, on January 31, 1827, and during which he drafted an initial concept of “world literature” (Eckermann, 1997 [1835], 209–214). Goethe made a mention of “a certain Chinese novel” (*einen chinesischen Roman*), which not only attracted him, but turned out to be not as “alien as it might have been” (*als man glauben sollte*). In reference to Goethe’s comparisons to European texts, David Damrosch took this stance as a prelude to a comparative strategy of looking for “similarities,” “differences,” and “like-but-unlikes.” (Damrosch, 2003, 11–12). However, Goethe’s first apotheosis of Chinese culture, which he praises for the richness of literary traditions, does not lead to the thesis of the need to learn Chinese and to read Chinese works, but on the contrary: to the interpretative turn to archetypes of his own culture, which Goethe identified

with the legacy of ancient Greeks. This situation has in my opinion twofold consequences for contemporary literary theory and comparative literature. Firstly, the mere mention of China in Goethe's statement, which constitutes, in essence, a founding act of the theory of world literature, attests in part to its status as an integral component of the *Weltliteratur* system. Secondly, however, this is an ambivalent status since Chinese literature would, indeed, participate in the process of global exchange of texts and cultural and aesthetic values, but at the same time the image of China as a *pars pro toto* of global strangeness indirectly indicates the potential direction of the spread of the world literature system and simultaneously the limit of its influence in its Western, "Eurocentrist" shape.

The continuation of the interest in China as a potential source of foreign cultural inspiration, stressed in Goethe's post-romantic concept, focusing more on integrating it into the present image of the world than transforming the latter by way of this inspiration, should be sought in the sort of modern "myth" of China that seems to be present in European literature of the first half of the twentieth century. The framework of this (hypothetical) myth is delimited, on the one hand, by the image of China as a social system characterized by the absolute dominance of the general over the individual, and whose enormity exceeds the cognitive ability of the individual — as in Franz Kafka's novel, "The Great Wall of China", where the workers' faith in the purpose of construction is sustained, although no one ever managed to see the whole of the enterprise (Kafka, 1993 [1920], 65–68). On the other hand, the "myth" is constituted by fear of the expansion of this homogenizing cultural and social order, and its expressive (though grotesque) literary explication can be found on the last pages of Witkacy's *Insatiability*: Marshal Wang, commanding the Chinese invasion of Europe, first condemns the leading European individualist, general Kocmoluchowicz, to death, and then asks him for a hand of the future widow, in the name of the project of creating a new yellow and white race, "before which unknown possibilities unfold" (Witkiewicz, 2003 [1930], 455). The image of modern "myth" of China is also complemented by the motif of unique or even secret knowledge hidden behind the barrier of Chinese script and language, visible e.g. in Walter Benjamin's *One-way street* — in his reflections on Chinese calligraphy as a way of experiencing text, and not merely assimilating its content (Benjamin, 2011 [1928], 14–15). The above examples prove the presence of China's modern myth in the global system of signifiers — but the explicit textual embedding of it into "local" systems of the signified calls into question the correlation between literary representations and the Chinese cultural reality.

Spreading the cognitive activity between the analysis of one's own cultural backgrounds and attempts of individual reconnaissance in the space of global strangeness, perceptible in Goethe's

work, in the contemporary theory of world literature becomes the assumption of the hermeneutic position of the interpretive or comparative subject (Damrosch 2009, 3). Thus, the identification of China's modern myth in Western literature while reflecting on the contemporary, cultural meaning and interpretative value of the "Silk Road" phenomenon seems to lead the reflection towards the verification of the assumptions of this "myth". At the same time, however, as a form of generalization, i.e. as a translation of the strangeness experienced in a text or a culture into the criteria of the base culture of a comparatist or an interpreter (Damrosch 2003, 288), the "mythologization" of the cultural image becomes a starting point for hermeneutic reasoning. The "myth" itself also constitutes a specific aspect of cultural-linguistic reality — as already Roland Barthes has argued, writing about his evasion of the real and unreal dichotomy (Barthes, 1970 [1956], 47–48), and consequently also the logical opposition of truth and falsehood. The "myth" then determines the object of mythology to the same extent as the cultural context in which it arises — and its positioning in the global space.

However, deeper reflection on the global positioning of a given cultural perspective in the context of the Silk Road, highlights the problem of contemporary decomposition of the West and the actual shift of the "nucleus" of globalization overseas from Europe. To this in turn could be attributed the formation of a specific, modern "myth" of America — which in the realm of *global studies* is manifested by the simplifying identification of globalization with Americanization, while used in the *Weltliteratur* studies could appear as parallel to the above described modern "myth" of China. Historical "Silk Roads" (because it was by no means a single track, Uhlig 2007 [1986], 53) connected the Far East generally with the West, but especially with Europe. Understanding the "Silk Road" as a cultural phenomenon — and analyzing its theoretical utility from the point of view of globalization studies — raises the question on the contemporary status of Europe among the global determinants of the cultural image of the world. Admittedly, there will be no place to answer this question in this essay, nevertheless I will try to conclude with an indirect suggestion for possible direction of further analysis.

#### FOOTNOTES TO MARCO POLO

Paraphrasing Alfred N. Whitehead's famous claim that "all European philosophy consists of footnotes to Plato", it can be assumed that any writing in the literary context of the "Silk Road" are the footnotes to Marco Polo. Although his *Description of the World* (Polo, 2010 [1296]) was not the first European report from the Far East journey, the cultural heterogeneity of the text (which will be discussed later on), as well as the resonance achieved by this text in the Western culture, suggests presenting it as a kind of archetype for any literary descriptions

of cultural contact between the East and the West. Moreover, despite the lack of direct references to the former history of the “Silk Road”, the *Description of the World* has one more feature favoring viewing them in mutual context: trade — constituting both the reason for travel, and the origins of the story. The influence of trade relations on the perception of the world in its “description” reveals interpretative ties with two aspects of Polo’s text, which come to the fore in the context of contemporary globalization research.

The first one concerns the already stressed question of cultural-literary “myths”. On one hand, in case of *Description of the World*, it concerns certain secondary mythologization of the text in the reception process. In this way I define the effect of radical disproportion between the “description” of China and the Mongol Empire, and the convictions of contemporary European audience, that supposedly made Venetians belie Polo’s accounts even when he was lying on his deathbed (Guadalupi, 2003, 36). The impression of untruth that must have accompanied even the honestly prepared descriptions of the Khan’s Shangdu/Xanadu glamorous court (LXXV) or the splendor of the city of Kinsai (CLIII), today’s Hangzhou, together with the fairy-tale attractiveness of the descriptions, seems to give them the status of a quasi-oriental “myth” whose derivative could well be the *Kubla Khan* of Samuel T. Coleridge (1816). On the other hand, the question of the cultural “myths” in *Description of the World* refers to their exploitation in the text, and more often than not, as Laurence Bergreen observed, in their creation following disruption of already existing “myths” (Bergreen 2008, 101). By these earlier myths I mean the description of the kingdom of Prester John — a descendant of one of the Three Kings, who, according to the legend popular in twelve-century Europe, was to rule the Christian kingdom in the Far East (LXIV–LXVIII, in fact, it was the Nestorian Keraite state); the state of Gog and Magog (LXXIV), who according to the legend were to be blocked from the rest of world with a great wall by Alexander the Great (XXIII), and who were identified by Polo due to phonetic similarity as the “Ong” and “Mongol” people; or the description of Madagascar, according to which the island was to be inhabited by a bird larger than elephant, “the gryphon” (CXCII), identified by the researchers with so-called elephant bird — long extinct in the days of Polo, but still alive in the Arab tales adapted by the explorer as the Roc. In the 20th century literature, that — present in the *Description* — tendency (since it is difficult to call it a conscious creative intention) for the creation of relatively autonomous realities, as it were in the boundaries of existing norms of probability, was artfully transformed by Italo Calvino in his *Invisible Cities*. However, while in Polo’s work those norms seem to be shaped by the same legends that his story exploits, the contemporary work turns the tendency into a convention: each and all of the title cities, in the “description” of the novel’s Polo — the hero, are independent microcosms with separate cosmolo-

gies — and their “impossibility” from the point of view of universal norms of probability and rationality becomes a real condition for their existence in the narrative (Calvino 2013[1972], 54).

The other interpretative aspect of the *Description of the World*, whose relevance manifests itself in the age of globalization, is the issue of “translating one’s self” — to use the concept of Mary Besemeres (Besemeres, 2002). This problem has been narratively highlighted by the aforementioned Bergreen, in the literary exegesis of intentions and experiences that have or could have lain at the roots of the story of a Venetian traveler. The modern biographer convincingly demonstrates the dependence of the Polo’s worldview on the subsequent stages of his story from his current location in the geopolitical space — i.e. proximity to the Great Khan’s court (Bergreen 2008, 213). As a result, the story seems to go along with the personal development of its narrator / hero: from the youthful fascination of the Mongol empire, combined with the strategy of a specific “mimicry” (Bhabha 1994, 85–92) on the Khan’s court, through doubts caused by eyewitnessing the devastating effects of bloody Mongol expansion, to the stage of mature skepticism and the rational acceptance of cultural differences (Bergreen 2008, 284), when Polo was to be distinctly moving from Christianity towards Buddhism (292–296) — which aspect of the story was, in the biographer’s view, skillfully masked first by Rustican of Pisa who wrote it down, then by other Christian copyists (372). At the same time, however, Bergreen notices in the available reports of Polo’s travel the testimonies to the superficiality of his cultural self-translation, too.

The conclusion which I think is to be drawn from the above contradictions concerns the dialectical entanglement of cultural perspectives and the world images produced by them — whereby, because of the risk of interpretative anachronism, it is to be assumed that this is not so much a conclusion from the *Description of the World* itself, as from reading its contemporary literary representation of a fictionalized biography. Stating the continuous, despite the partial self-translation, perception of the Mongolian community through the lens of European norms and hierarchy (170), the biographer finally comes to the conclusion that the traveler has developed a hybrid identity (345) — a conclusion which would surely be supported by contemporary studies of literature emerging in the cultural and linguistic border regions (Seyhan 2000, Trigonakis 2007). If, however, were we to treat the persistence of certain Western perceptions in Polo’s narrative as a sign of partial rooting of the narrative in the Western image of the world, then the field for such hybridism turns out to be the space of dialectical tear of that image — and searching for such a way of describing it, which, despite the accumulation of cultural differences, would provide relative coherence. In this context, sort of conventionalisation of the narrative by Rusticello, and consequently the transformation of the journey into an “epic” (Bergreen 2008, 329–330), appears as a form of dialectical ordering of the world from a culturally defined per-

spective, which, in the fictitious (since literary from then on) reality created by the *Description* of this world, on the other side of the “Silk Road”, corresponds to the idea of *pax mongolica*. From today’s point of view, both images of the world appear equally heterogeneous: the first, due to the multiplicity of available (and missing) translations and editions of the *Description*, the second, due to the intrinsic fragility of Kublai Khan’s power and the internal friction (also cultural) that his empire had to struggle with (139–144). What’s most important, however: notions of a known world based on them seemed to be quasi-monads, only to reveal the ability to know the cultural “otherness” as long as it was possible to include that otherness in the frame of prevailing patterns of perception<sup>1</sup>.

The “myth”, understood as a perpetuated image of another culture, seems to be truer than truth — as in Kafka’s novel, the “power” of the local “beliefs or imaginations” (*Vorstellungs- oder Glaubenskraft*) makes one doubt in every message of the world, as long as it undermines their truth (Kafka 1993 [1920], 76–79). The mutual placement of the East and West within separate cosmologies brings to mind the ancient ideas of the Romans about the origin of silk, and of the Chinese about the origin of cotton: the first thought that the silk threads were growing on trees (Uhlig 2007, 18), while the second assumed the existence of an animal — “water sheep” — which would spin cotton threads (Kajdańska, Kajdański 2007, 51–54). At this point, the analysis of cultural translation and the literary experience of alienation would suggest a return to the problem of myth.

The merging of those interpretation threads requires, however, a reference to the hermeneutic method, a figure of which — in the face of earlier self-translation — seems to be the return of Marco Polo to Venice. Hermeneutical activity of the subject differentiates the dialectical image of the world, shaped within the influence of the given “center” of culture and civilization; subverts its “myths” or highlights their cultivating potential, while the artistic or literary effect of this activity becomes itself a field for dialectical activities — while differentiating or confirming the initial image of the world. However, the prerequisite for the emergence of an intercultural

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<sup>1</sup> The gradual penetration of Marco Polo’s writings into the general picture of reality from the perspective of pre-modern Europe, while at the same time subjugating their contents to the transforming conventions of mapping the known world into a certain ordered whole, is witnessed by the maps dating from before the Great Age of Discovery. In the *Catalan Atlas* of Abraham Cresques (1375), the legends of Alexander the Great and Gog and Magog, duplicated and positioned by Polo in the geographical space, were fitted into the then objective state of knowledge — and even Kublai Khan was presented accordingly to the medieval convention of depicting the European monarchs. In the later Fra Mauro map (1459), the contribution of the *Description of the World* is also visible and fits into the broader Christian cosmological vision, rooted in the medieval *mappae mundi*. Cf. Nebenzahl 2011, 38-39, 48-49.

dialectic seems to be a modern “flattening” of the image of the world — the disappearance of symbolic hierarchies other than political or financial — what Bergreen convincingly proved in relation to the thirteenth-century Venice, *de facto* becoming in his view an example of the first European global city (Bergreen 2008, 20–24). By risking the disparity of interpretation tools applied to the medieval work, Marco Polo’s biographer in fact re-writes his description of the world as a contemporary text, both in its literary assumptions and interpretative potential. Thus, he opens the door for the use of his conclusions in the analysis of texts and the (literary) culture of the Age of Globalization.

The “flatness” of the world presented in the Bergreen’s biography of Polo, indirectly placing the *Description of the World* between the Venetian “center” of trade and the eastern “centers” of power in Xanadu and Khanbaliq, seems close to the contemporary theory of globalization. However, it must be borne in mind that modern horizontal, symbolic, political and economic influences and dependencies are accompanied by “multilayered” and “multinodal” anarchist tendencies (Cerny, Prichard 2017, 3), which undermine the status of nation states and frustrate attempts to organize global reality from the level of international institutions. The global reality, shaped according to this system, is as “flat” as it is “rugged” — due to the disproportionate nature of political, historical, social and economic contexts (5). In the realm of literary theory, analogous way of perceiving global reality was presented by Gayatri Spivak in her concept of “collective” humanism (Spivak 2003, 23–27) — leading to the idea of “planetarity”, which, according to the researcher, should exclude the concept of “globality” from comparative and literary reflection (81). This ethical project of the unification of humanity within the framework of a supralocal community of experiences, founded on mutual understanding and social empathy on one hand (31–42), and a sense of shared responsibility for the inhabited planet on the other (71–74), perforce would also presuppose the cleavage of images of the world that are based on separate cosmologies or socio-political-cultural models. Since it’s them, as the images of the world at the opposite ends of the “Silk Road” in the context of Marco Polo, that would be a clear manifest of thinking in the paradigm of holistic “globalization” — and consequently an example of symbolic usurpation. However, such an assumption is not confirmed not only in the modern reception of the *Description of the World*, but also in modern reports of travelling along the “Silk Road”.

Of the latter, I would like to briefly mention the reportage books: *The Horse That Jumps Through Clouds* by Eric Enno Tamm and *The Shadow of Silk Road* by Colin Thubron. The first of the authors follows the footsteps of the last tsarist spy in central Asia, baron Gustaf Mannerheim, whose route from the Caspian Sea to Xi’an coincides with the “Silk Road”. The half-spy,

and half-reportage narrative in Tamm's work takes on the form of the palimpsest history of politico-economic influences and dependencies within the described areas — starting with so-called “Great Game”, which Britain and Russia played for domination over China at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Tamm 2014, 49). The other narrative, focusing directly on the “Silk Road”, presents it as an essentially heterotopic space: filled with signs referring to long-forgotten “centers” of civilization and flooded with meanings derived from cultures that once had been threaded along it. But as far as Tamm clearly exposes the almost physical experience of changing political context along the space covered — as if the traveler's body would be constantly responding to more oppressive forms of governance (18) — Thubron ineptly masks the cultural positioning of his perspective under the erudition of an educated European. Contrary to Tamm, in whose description the journey begins at the Western end, and along it the narrative as if gradually delves into the opposite, Chinese pole of globalization, Thubron begins the story from the Xi'an — the oldest of the great Chinese metropolises, the past capital and historical starting point of “Silk Roads”. Therefore the narrative is intended to literally follow the Chinese silk towards Europe, and in practice, since the branches of the “Silk Road” are the “nerve-ends of the world” (Thubron 2007, 10) — it turns out to be following the footsteps of culture in general. At the time when the narrator confesses to learning Chinese exclusively from Latin transcriptions (42–43), however, all artificiality of this artistic conception is revealed, since this confession is made in the interior of a “Confucian temple”, among the steles covered with ancient inscriptions — that is, in the symbolic nucleus of an allegedly studied society — which turn out to be completely unreadable for the narrator. If we should remember the Benjamin's reflection on the mystery of the Chinese sign, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, such a narrator's position in relation to cultural space being described may be reminiscent of superficial observation with the eye of a non-engaged observer. Ultimately, despite the perceived blur of one's own identity, as a result of the overload of the individual cognitive apparatus with global diversity (234), Thubron's text, in spite of his intentions, exposes cultural constraints as a limiting perspective. On the other hand, in the case of Tamm, experience of the barriers of foreignness, difficult to transcend even despite the specific “self-translation” as a result of the change of name to a Chinese one (Tamm 2014, 161–162), brings cognitive advantages: a premonition of the cultural “otherness” in Beijing, a city only appearing to be Americanized (384), and the realization of the potential of symbolic subjugation by Chinese culture of the alleged cultural-civilization influences of the West — an example would be the project of “Modern Confucian Democracy”, which would absorb the western political norms, basing on traditional Chinese political thought (400). Exposed in Tamm's relation is also the protean character

of the modern “Silk Road” — the long string of Russian trucks loaded with Chinese counterfeits (109), as well as the “trail” of multilateral conversions (133), or the “black trail” of soot resulting from the abuse of fossil fuels (375–376).

Finally, the two narratives of the “Silk Road” reveal a specific convergence of the ideas of the “global” and the “planetary”. The interplay of meanings — the parallel of cultural dialectics — forms a holistic picture of global reality, verified from the point of view of the narrative’s subject. Both perspectives — the holistic and the somehow “bottom-up” — define each other’s limits, and the right discourse on globalization emerges from the point of their intersection, in the dimension of experience. Understanding the globalization — its, in turn, cultural and literary aspect — requires balancing on the frontiers of the “global” and the “planetary”, of dialectics and hermeneutics. The phenomenon of the “Silk Road” allows us to translate this requirement into theory.

#### **GLOBALIZATION “MONADS” AND “FAMILY RESEMBLANCE” OF GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES**

I believe that this holistic picture of global reality, formed at the intersection of cultural dialectics and individual experience is best described using the notion of a monad according to Leibniz. I realize how risky this idea is, given that the radical secludedness of the monads, which, according to paragraph 7. of the *Monadology*, “have no windows” (Leibniz, 1991 [1720]), seems to stand in clear contradiction with the common tendency to perceive globalization as a domain of multilateral influences and mutual transformations, and thus with the equally radical openness of any imagined cultural identities. However, the Leibniz’s philosophy great potential for globalization can be found in paragraphs 13 and 60, telling us that each individual monad contains an image of the multiplicity of all others (as in William Blake, who “saw the world in the grain of sand”), and that the relevance and detail of this imagination — the degree to which the individual elements of that holistically grasped reality can be known — depends on the location of the monad in relation to the other monads that make up the whole world. Such an assertion can easily be attributed to the theory of globalization as a thesis about the dependence of an individual image of the world on the current cultural and philosophical position of the subject, and his / her cultural competence and predisposition to cognitive adaptation of the globalizing context in that image; to find the basis for this “in yourself” — if you use the formulation from the *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Leibniz, 2001 [1704], 52). Another argument for adjacency of the *Monadology* to the *global studies*’ area of interest is provided by way of understanding in its context the space, which, as the Polish translator of the work, Henryk Elzenberg, deduced from Leibniz’s letters to Clarke, appears as a phenomenon (Leibniz, 1991, 21), while

“place” is nothing more than “relation of coexistence” of things (25). This proposal fits perfectly into practice of alternative mapping the geographical space according to its perceived cultural, political etc. proximity (see Appadurai 1996, Rybicka 2014). Paragraphs §8. and 9. of the *Monadology*, treating of similarities and differences between monads, furthermore allow us to perceive the images of the world from the perspective of the individual “place” within it, as rooted in the cultural dialectic of globalization and general human experience (and therefore never deprived of common features with others), and at the same time, in the individual experience of globalization — an attempt to understand the world and experiencing its non-intelligibility from the perspective of personal positioning in it (that is always to some degree different than other images). So once again I reiterate that the monad in this view is neither a culture nor a world, but its and their individual and contemporary *perception* (§14).

This objection, in my view, tentatively overcomes the cardinal obstacle, which for the use of monad in the theory of globalization seems to be their mentioned, programmatic “closeness”. The monad in Leibniz’s works is the so called *simple* substance, i.e. devoid of any components (§1), and as such cannot emerge as a result of “assembling” other substances (§5). The practical impossibility of externally influencing the monad, as each appearance of external relations is in fact their inner image, allows one to understand the process of forming a definite picture of the world around a particular “reigning” monad (§70, here the kind of a worldview dominant) as a phenomenon related to epiphany. The processes of cultural transfer and intertextual connections (in the case of both literary and cultural texts) appear as the domain of context — an “aggregation” of particular elements of global reality. The individual *perception* of such “aggregation” — a derivative of the assertion that every “complex thing”, in this case: a definite fragment of reality, is an “aggregate of simple things” (§2) — seems, however, qualitatively different from the ordinary sum of components of the given image of the world; it is a product of reworking the context within the (inner) experience, which gives to *perception* its individual character.

In a cursory analysis, it is impossible to solve all the problems that would be related to the analysis of the literary and cultural dimension of globalization through the lens of *Monadology*<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, I propose this idea as an outline of a potential research project, the necessity of which is revealed by earlier reflection on the cultural phenomenon of the Silk Road — not so much as geographical space, but the imagined sequence of individual and cultural images

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<sup>2</sup> Among other things that would be the fact, that in case of the monads any experience is exclusively an inner experience — inner projection of external relations — would force, first, a necessity of critical verification of the intertextual theory on the ground of phenomenology (if we were to concentrate on the textual image of the world), and second, at least temporary replacement of any cultural “influencology” by theories of radical interpretation (Davidson) and radical translation (Quine).

of the world, spread between the two symbolic poles of globalization: the West and the East. The modern reinterpretation of the concept of monad would also be an important contribution to answering the question posed in the introduction, about the possibility of particularizing a cultural perspective without falling into cultural essentialism. In this context, an example of the interpretative usefulness of the term would be the poem of *Silk Road* by Jerzy Kronhold. The world of this text is Polish province; it's located far from the main cultural and civilizational centers, but the road to the railway station still appears as a distant branch of the silk route, and the memories of the railwayman travelling to the neighboring towns seem to be the Marco Polo stories. This world, though cramped and hermetic, creates its own cosmology in the form of images of symbolic proximity or distance from the outside: on one end of the axis there are the Three Kings who have “traveled this way” and on the other “silkworms, dreams of Xanadu” (Kronhold 2014, 10–11).

Imaginations of symbolic closeness or remoteness to individual cultural myths, that is, in fact, creation or reproduction of the cultural cosmology within the image of the world, looks like a kind of play with culture and its (and our own) global positioning; a play embedded in the literary and artistic image of the world as a monad, or “multitude in unity”. In the face of — resulting both from the Leibniz theory and the present state of research on the globalization — the planetary diversity of images of the world (which may seem almost (!) infinitely different on one hand, and infinitely similar on the other), it seems reasonable to refer to these cultural games in the category of “family resemblance” according to Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 2004 [1953], §66–71). In view of the considerations carried out so far, family resemblance of the images of the world — both in the scale of culture and globally — use of the Wittgenstein category seems to be the most appropriate method of mapping the cultural landscapes of globalization. In this kind of mapping, the idea of a cultural frontier would be present only as a hermeneutic category, and a possible attempt to trace global changes at a macro scale (see: Moretti 2007) would not risk losing an individual, singular image from the field of interest. This would be not allowed by properly administered monad theory (as always separate, even if close and similar).

The research method proposed here seems also to be most appropriate for the above-mentioned research on the status of Europe, blurred within its borders among the global reference points. If we assume after Ulrich Beck that the notion of real or potential “Europeanisation” of the global space cannot imply direct influence, but the regional design of the socio-political space, compatible with global cultural change (Beck, Grande, 2009 [2004], 197–198), then we should, as I think, translate the well-known formula of “provincialization of Europe” by Dipesh Chakrabarty in the catch-phrase of “reasonable provincialization”: recon-

ciled with the fact that the originally European cognitive and philosophical categories were finally freed from the interpretative influence of Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000, 12–13), in the name of drawing right conclusions from their (perceptible in the global space) re-interpretations and adaptations. In the spirit of this research, it seems necessary to carry out the, barely hinted here, comparative research on the cultural “myths” rooted in European projects of “modernity”, aiming at the manifestations of global strangeness. The natural extension of such research would be a comparative analysis of cultural predispositions for the critical or interpretive exploitation of these “myths,” while rejecting or suspending belief in their objective truth; for perceiving them as sources of meanings, values, and at times identities, or as a pretext for critical analysis of culture.

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