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‘Minor’ Languages, ‘Broken’ Translations: On Brazilian Reworkings of an Albanian Novel

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Abstract

This essay approaches the challenges of global translation in the 21st century from what might still be considered a somewhat uncommon example: a direct translation of Ismail Kadaré's 1978 novel *Prill e thyër* (Broken April) from the original Albanian into Brazilian Portuguese in 2001. Not only does it examine and compare lexical elements in the source and target texts and the usage of translator's notes, but also, and perhaps more importantly, inquiries into how translation scholars actually arrive at projects for research, which methodological, theoretical and ideological tools remain at our disposal, and which conventional frames of reference might be subjected to greater critical scrutiny. It then goes on to examine one case of cinematic adaptation of the work in question as an additional point of comparison, the 2001 film by the Brazilian director Walter Salles, with a focus on the ways the story line is changed. The implications of this narrative shift serves to initiate an open discussion on whether academic work in translation can truly encourage greater intercultural communication, both now and in the future.

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Fragments of a vessel to be glued back together must match one another in the smallest detail, although they need to match one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel (p. 78).

Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator"

1. Introduction: Revisiting Understandings of Translation, Language and Brokenness

With all due respect to Walter Benjamin's well-known conceptualization of broken vessels, "pure language" and the ultimate goal of translation, what is one really talking about today when one speaks of 'language' on one hand, whether in its supposedly pure or imperfect human forms, and 'languages' on the other, greater or lesser, especially when it comes to translating to or from so-called less commonly taught or minor languages? Where does one even draw the line between major and minor, if there even is a line to be drawn, and how do we chart its variation between different national cultures and global regions?

To give just a few examples: in the Americas, linguistic politics are visible in signage, media, and other forms of visual and auditory information. In the US, what can be considered a major language has most often been reduced to English and Spanish, and in Canada, to English and French. In Latin America, Spanish and Portuguese are accompanied by English translations much less frequently, with indigenous, migrant, and other minority languages in many cases increasing their visibility in recent years across the Americas. In the European Union, English has practically become a *de facto* official language, with four other languages also considered major (French, German, Spanish, and Italian) usually completing the picture; minor EU languages, while official, simply do not command the same attention.

In East Asia, the situation is comparable to some extent; in Japan, one needs only to look at signage to see what languages come first (Japanese and English, which are second-tier; Chinese and Korean, and in some areas with large migrant worker populations, Brazilian Portuguese, and Spanish, though this may be less and less the case as these populations continue to return to South America in ever greater numbers). Most others are, for all intents and purposes, invisible in comparison; it is easy to forget that Japan's closest neighbor is not Korea, China, or the US, but actually Russia. Once again, in the Middle East one sees much the same situation: whether in Iran, Turkey or the Arab World, translation is primarily one between national language and English, with other European languages clearly less important, to say nothing of those languages of neighboring countries, much less of the sizable migrant communities in the country itself, which are often ignored not only in the mainstream cultural milieu, but in the academic and political arenas as well.

With so much attention devoted to translating between national languages and a single major global language (usually English, but often also between other widely spoken global languages), it is no wonder that lesser-examined relationships, even between close neighbors, can become either neglected or begin to be carried out in this global *lingua franca*. One thing is clear: as our position shifts from place to place around the globe, so does our understanding of what a 'major' language is, what the 'minor' or 'secondary' languages are, and which 'other' languages, if they considered at all, are relegated to the margins of the conversation.

There is nothing really new about this, however; because of the amount of time and attention that is given over to developing major translational channels, translating from one less commonly known language to another has traditionally been fraught with difficulty, with literary or other texts from regions outside of Western Europe and North America often relying on a pivot language such as English or French to facilitate the global flow of literary and other cultural information. While often making an initial connection possible, such second-hand translations have

not only discouraged in-depth understanding among languages and cultures of the peripheries, but have often aided in the retrenchment of the cultural capital of traditional Western clearing houses of world literature, such as London, Paris, and New York, along with the elite Western universities that contribute to their network of power and authority.

2. New Ways of Getting from “A” to “B” in Global Translation

With this tradition of second-hand translations between global regions such as Latin America and Eastern Europe in mind, this talk will compare two direct translations of the 1978 novel *Prill e thyër* (Broken April) by the Albanian author Ismail Kadare, the first into French in 1982 by Yusuf Vrioni under the title *Avril brisé*, and the more recent version into Brazilian Portuguese by Bernardo Joffily, published in 2001 with the title *Abril despedaçado*. After giving some sociopolitical and historical background into how the leftwing political militant, Joffily, came to learn Albanian in the 1970s, I will go on to discuss how the cultural specific elements in the Albanian source text are dealt with in the Brazilian Portuguese translation using the French translation as a benchmark, and point out what if anything in the translated text is particularly Brazilian, especially with regard to style and vocabulary.

I should probably begin with the all-too-common warning among comparatists, if not other literary and cultural scholars aware of the endless web of cross-reference that intertextuality invariably creates, that his project is still, and if the challenge of learning Albanian is any indication, may forever remain a work in progress, and I am not quite sure how far I would have to go with this research and study before I can longer call it that. This realization reminds me that this essay is just as much, if not more so, a means of provoking discussion on the current understandings of appropriate forms of methodology for research in translation and adaptation studies as it is simply a presentation of research in and of itself; after all, what I am interested in exploring here, not only for me but for the benefit of emerging scholars in the field, is how we as specialists in translation or

other forms of transcultural contact arrive at an idea for a research project and follow through with it. What often begins as a series of questions about how a particular act of translation originated, and imagining the background and context of that act, can draw us in any number of different directions that go far beyond textual analysis or mere comparison of an original literary text with any subsequent foreign-language translations that may eventually emerge from it.

As I have discussed elsewhere in a 2011 article on the role of translation in Turkish and Mediterranean understandings of modernity, there are invariably countless dimensions of any translation project that remain inaccessible to a single translation studies scholar, be it on the basis of language or lack of expertise with certain areas of theory or methodology. This is precisely why, as in the past, I feel compelled to reiterate my call for a renewed awareness of the need for ever greater methodological diversity in the field, something that I consider to be in increasing danger as institutional power in the discipline is increasingly concentrated at fewer and fewer sites, accompanied a continually tightening ring of interconnected scholars indebted to each other through what I have called elsewhere the politics of strategic quotation. For those of us here on the edges of this all-too-unequal disciplinary consolidation, and especially in countries outside of these privileged loci of discussion, study and research, there is more at stake than ever.

So let me give you some background as to how I got here; in August of 2013, in my final days before leaving for Qatar to teach a series of graduate seminars on translation theory and methodology, I was browsing through books at the Livraria Cultura on the Avenida Paulista in São Paulo, one of Brazil's largest and perhaps most iconic bookstores, located on one of its economic capital's iconic main thoroughfares; its importance is such that Brazilian contemporary cultural critic Lucia Sá's book on the contemporary Latin American megalopolis took the greater part of its literary corpus from the shelves of this bookstore, along with those of the Librería Gandhi in Mexico City (Sá, 2007, p. 8). To be honest, what I was really looking for at that moment were contemporary Brazilian novels, but

instead what ended up catching my eye was a recent 2001 translation into Brazilian Portuguese of the 1978 short novel *Broken April* by the Albanian author Ismail Kadare; add to this that ever since a short visit to Albania two months before, I had been wanting both to learn more of the Albanian language and read the country's best known author. It was only when I finally arrived in Doha (and spent twelve days traveling in Iran with actual time to read) that I finally had the chance to delve into the translated novel I had brought with me from half a world away.

The work has been made even more famous by the 2001 film version by the Brazilian director Walter Salles; while the film is to a great extent freely adapted from the original, it retains the same title in Portuguese. Given these numerous divergences from the novel, one would probably be justified in saying that its new title in English translation, *Behind the Sun*, was a deserved change. Evidently, the success of the film has done much to increase the popularity of Kadare's work in Brazil, making this and subsequent translations of his work into Brazilian Portuguese a viable option for the publisher.

The novel follows the final month in the life of a young man from rural mountainous region of northern Albania, Gjorg Berisha, as he is drawn into a circle of revenge that is at the heart of a seventy-year-old blood feud between rival clans that has already claimed forty-five lives. As a *gjak*, literally 'hand' in Albanian, he will have to avenge his fellow clan member by killing his assassin, within a set time limit of one month, the Broken April of the title, one that will interrupt his youth and end his life. He will have to travel on foot across the region to pay a tribute, or 'bessa', to a local warlord, and then, upon his return, will become a target for the next *gjak* chosen by the rival clan, all according to the local law, called 'kanun.'

This plot is not without its complications, however: it also traces the visit to this remote area of two newlyweds on honeymoon from Tirana, the author Bessian Vorps and his wife Diana, who are presumably looking for inspiration in traditional Albanian folk traditions. What is perhaps less expected is the intense attraction that develops between Diana

and Gjorg Berisha out of the short chance encounters in which they exchange glances with one another. While the novel itself could easily provide more than enough thematic and stylistic material for a discussion much longer than the amount of time I am allotted here, I am just as interested, if not more so, in the kinds of hybrid and cross-cultural narratives that not only literary translations but also other subsequent forms of artistic adaptation continue to encourage.

At first I was skeptical that a novel from a language and culture such as Albanian could actually be a direct translation, as so many translations from Central and Eastern European languages into Brazilian Portuguese have all too often been made not from the original, and any direct translations that do exist are usually done by immigrants from these countries or exiled intellectuals; while Brazil is known for sizable immigrant communities from a number of Central and Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Poland, Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, and even Bulgaria), Albania is not among them.

So I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the translation had, in fact, been carried out directly from the Albanian original by a Brazilian translator: a man by the name of Bernardo Joffily. Immediately I was confronted with a rush of questions, some of which had seemingly little or nothing to do with the text itself, such as: how had someone with a clearly Brazilian name come to master Albanian? In short, what was the translator's story, and how might this biographical information provide a narrative counterpoint to the novel itself? Such questions about the life stories of translators have been considered an important subject of study for some time, but one question that has not been given equal consideration is how the lives of translators become interwoven into the fabric of the hermeneutic potential of these life stories, not merely on their own as they are so often categorized and interpreted, as part of a textual juxtaposition that can perhaps best be placed under the academic rubric of comparative literature.

Bernardo Joffily: a man with two names, and at least two lives. One was his assumed name, Guimarães, given to him during the resistance

to military dictatorship in Brazil in the 1960s and 70s. It is a name that in the Brazilian context cannot easily be detached from its own set of associations with one of Brazil's best known authors, João Guimarães Rosa whose 1956 novel *Grande Sertão: Veredas* [Eng. trans., *Devil to Pay in the Backlands*] is significant precisely for its descriptions of the Brazilian Northeast, if not for the creative ways in which it did nothing less than reinvent the Brazilian literary language in the late Modernist period. The translational parallels to come between this region of Brazil and northern Albania might be seen as prefigured in this choice of literary name as political *nom de guerre*.

The idea of sending 'Guimarães' off into exile in Albania, if only as a radicalized body double, also brings up the unpleasant reality of how rare this event of cultural transfer is, be it literal, symbolic or figurative, as many of Brazil's most important authors such as Guimarães remain untranslated into languages other than those of Western Europe. When will these works of literature finally find expression in other languages spoken in that broad cultural continuum of languages and cultures to the East, perhaps only beginning with Albanian and other languages of the Balkans to extend onward into Turkish, Arabic, and/or Persian?

In any case, after Joffily's subsequent political exile in communist Albania, one of Eastern Europe's most isolated and repressive Cold War regimes, he became a translator and announcer in Radio Tirana along with his wife. Upon their return to Brazil, he continued his political involvement in the Communist Party of Brazil (Youtube interview) and online leftwing journalism (www.vermelho.org.br). Upon closer examination, then, it became clear to me that Bernardo Joffily had been given in exile not only a unique opportunity to learn about Albanian culture, but also the singular chance to act as a living linguistic and cultural link between Albanian and Brazilian cultures.

It is probably unnecessary to mention that this translation is only one of a number of countless translations into dozens of languages of Kadare's literary work, an oeuvre already spanning over half-a-century. Perhaps the most culturally influential remain those into

French, as this is the country where he was first published outside of Albania and where he arrived as a political exile in 1990; this is perhaps why these French translations that have accompanied his work since even before his departure have so often served as pivot source texts for subsequent second-hand translations into other languages, even into English. The fact that even the English translations depend on the French translation instead of the Albanian original make Joffily's translation all the more unique.

In contrast, Kadare's most recent translator into English, David Bellos (2005), even goes as far as to say in a short essay that to this day he knows only "the tiniest scraps of that strange and difficult tongue". Apparently, it was only when he began reading Kadare himself that he recognized him as "a writer of the first importance, with an *oeuvre* that was wide-ranging, coherent, intricately connected...". Hopefully I am not being overly harsh here in my criticism, but it does seem that there is something overly discouraging, and even something strangely naïve, about these comments regarding the source language and culture that cannot but remain somewhat foreign to this translator. Not only is his dubious characterization of another language as somehow too "strange" or "difficult" to learn somewhat questionable (after all, Albanian is, like French, German, Portuguese, Greek, or Farsi, still an Indo-European language), but also the fact that it was only when this professor of French and comparative literature was asked to translate his work himself that he learned about this author's importance on both the Parisian and world literary scene. The question that arises here is not only how much linguistic knowledge is necessary to understand the nuances of another culture, but also how cultural-specific knowledge gained from living in the linguistic environment itself is part of the translation process.

This is a question that comes up continually for discussion in most non-Western country with sizable foreign populations, such as Japan; how much time must a foreigner spend in the country before s/he can be considered to have reached a level of mastery of the language and culture? Can one really learn the essentials in only two or three years, for

instance, or does it require much more time? How much of this cultural knowledge can even be learned in the often ivory-tower environment of an elite university, much less the rarified literary milieu of New York, London or Paris? Ultimately, the question becomes: what does each of us consider too strange or difficult, and on what cultural and social grounds do we draw such subjective distinctions as academics, intellectuals, or cultural mediators?

In contrast, what is so compelling about how Joffily came to translate this work is not due to any educational credentials, but from the surprising coincidence of actual lived experience in Tirana during the same period in which the work was written and under the same repressive political system. Having experienced firsthand the same repressive political environment as the author himself, Joffily may well be in many ways able to comprehend the significance of the work as a nuanced political commentary, with its often clear parallels between the powerlessness of Kadare's characters to change the mechanisms of social control and the conditions of even more regimented control under the regime of Enver Hoxha in the mid- to late 1970s.

That is not to say that the original translator Vrioni hasn't also provided a number of models for subsequent translators such as Joffily, even in this presumably direct translation. As in Vrioni's translation of the text, Joffily makes use of paratextual translator's notes to explain culturally specific terms in the Albanian original. Many of the aforementioned key culturally specific concepts, such as Kanun, the basic law of the region, and other terms related to the traditions surrounding blood feuds, such as "gjak" or "bessa," are usually given in Albanian and accompanied by a translator's note that explains the term. Over the course of the novel, this recurrent Albanian vocabulary becomes familiar to the reader, not only lending a measure of local color but perhaps even also the sense that the text allows for a measure of entry into the source text, its language and culture.

The question arises just how much intervention of this sort is needed for the reader to feel that measure of direct contact

with the source text. While Vrioni recurs to this device only seven times over the course of his translation, Joffily avails himself of it a full twenty-three times over the course of the novel, not only to explain all of the same Albanian terms that Vrioni does but also to explain many other terms that Vrioni does not accord a separate translator's note in the French version.

What, then, is the increased significance of this visible intervention of the translator's voice in both the French and Brazilian versions? How much intervention is too much? That all depends on how comfortable one feels with intervention. I personally find this approach refreshingly honest, as it allows me not only to experience Albanian culture, but also be reminded of the novelty of such a work transiting such a vast expanse of cultural and linguistic space and arriving so safely and successfully. Not only do definitions often make direct comparison to possible Brazilian cultural equivalents, but also the rare choice of typical Brazilian vocabulary stands out as a marker that the translator has been there; the most emblematic example might be the use of the word "caçula" or youngest son, a word that derives from Brazil's cultural contact with African languages.

3. Film Adaptation and the Re-Envisioning of National Narratives

These questions on how much Brazilian cultural content can respond to the challenges of cultural critique will be particularly relevant as we go on to look at the 2001 film adaptation of the novel by the Brazilian director Walter Salles, given the English title *Behind the Sun*, which resets the film's setting and themes of the cycle of revenge, particularly that of the northern Albanian blood feud, into the culturally distinct milieu of the dry and desolate region of northeastern Brazil called the *sertão*, one with its own historical discourses of underdevelopment, poverty, and uneven access to what could be called modernity. To what extent is the Brazilian Northeast a suitable 'translation' for northern Albania? How does such a parallel, however, imperfect, assist in bridging a mutual lack of familiarity between these two disparate cultures, ones that nonetheless have a number of common cultural questions to discuss with one another?

Here it is not so much a matter of what cultural specific terms have been adapted, but rather what textual elements have been maintained in moments of more direct translation from the original. When such a series of originals, translations and adaptations are thus juxtaposed and compared, it may be that the limits of what is identified as source or target language and culture become all the more fluid, thus creating a model for theorizing translation that may well serve for further discussion of other emerging global cultural flows that cut across the grain of dominant languages and cultures.

Finally, while translation may not always be a violent revenge narrative like the one represented in *Prill e thyër/April despedaçado*, to what extent does this cycle of justice taken into one's own hands, however imperfect it may be, provide for a different, perhaps even post-hegemonic, metaphoric of translation and adaptation? And perhaps more importantly: as a greater measure of multidirectionality is introduced into the translation landscape, what will happen to the relevance of terms such as North and South, East and West, in the description of relationships between global cultures?

Ever since Benjamin's metaphor of the broken vessel was first used to illustrate the ways translators must piece back together a literary work in another language, the trope of brokenness and reconstitution has been central to the ways many literary theorists have thought about the translator's craft; this metaphor, however useful it may be on the abstract level, may also be showing its own cracks or inadequacies, and may well benefit from a look at a wider range of global cultures, esp. non-Western ones with long traditions of ceramic art—Goryo or Choson dynasty celadon from Korea, Iznik tiles and vases from Turkey, or the countless examples from pre-Colombian cultures and their contemporary counterparts from indigenous cultures across the Americas. Each of them may well offer examples of how works of art, if not the cultures that they emerge from, might suffer breakage, either from internal instability or external disruption, and yet can still be put back together at a later time in unique and compelling ways.

One example that comes to mind from the Japanese cultural context is that of *kintsukuroi*, the art of repairing ceramic objects with gold enamel, such that many consider the resulting repaired object even more beautiful in its reconstituted brokenness than when it was intact. With *kintsukuroi*, it is not even necessary that the pieces fit together perfectly, as the enamel fills the spaces and creates what is essentially a second and perhaps even more beautiful work of art in the ways that it does not attempt to repair invisibly or imperceptibly, much in the same way that a translator may also make his/her art visible in reconstructing the original in another language.

What may be truly broken about *Prill e thyër* and its subsequent versions, then, is precisely that seemingly interminable cycle of revenge, violence and death at the heart of its thematic structure. It may well be that a translation that wishes to remain faithful to the original cannot tamper with this structure, but must transmit its meanings and implications in much the same way, even if that implies little or no change to the target cultures to which this message is transferred.

This is what I find most compelling about Walter Salles' 2001 film interpretation that spurred the publication of the Brazilian translation in the first place. Instead of replicating the same dynamics of interminable retribution, he adds a radically new dimension to it, perhaps in line with the Brazilian tradition of "transcreation" (Br. Port. "transcriação"), in the sense of creative reinvention and adaptation that Concrete poet and literary theorist Haroldo de Campos first imagined and practiced it; in this essay, he not only discusses a wide range of difficult translation he took on from a wide range of cultures, and in which he even took up learning Russian to translate the works of Mayakovsky and other avant-garde poets (Campos, 2007). One might even argue that Salles takes Kadare's narrative to a place of possible redemption and resolution that draws on this Brazilian transcreational approach, creating a work that is by all accounts unimaginable in the original.

While he maintains many of the visual and textual elements of the original work (e.g., the bloodstained shirts of the victims left to dry

outside on the clothesline, the black armbands of the young men marked for eventual revenge), he adds a number of new dimensions, ones that end up raising questions that even the original itself, to be fair, simply does not appear to consider with the same care or detail. While the original contrast between literate and illiterate societies is already present in the original novel, Salles' reinterpretation of this encounter between the world of the written world and its putative backlands may be even more original and novel, even if those familiar with the Brazilian literary tradition might also be able to discern in the text the traces of the Modernist genre called *regionalismo*, which treated the hopeless nature of the cycle of poverty and violence in much the same way.

For example, in the film version, the story is narrated not by an omniscient third person voice as in the original, but by a new character, a young boy who is the younger brother of the young man tapped to carry the next act of revenge and who acts as an often silent witness to the cycle of violence as it plays out around him. The boy is known at first only by the word 'Menino', lit. 'boy', but over the course of the film is given the name Pacu, after a river fish. The young boy's innocence, shaped by a lack of access to education or even basic literacy, draws into even clearer definition the unjust nature of this societal insistence upon revenge above all other social values: one is reminded of the young boy in the 1936 regionalist novel by Graciliano Ramos, *Vidas secas* (Eng. trans. *Barren Lives*): also a nameless child, whose limited access to language of any kind, be it written text or even a fully developed vocabulary, limits his ability to develop a deeper understanding of even the essentials of his everyday lived reality, to say nothing of that world of cultures, language and ideas that lies beyond it.

Perhaps for this very reason, Salles' decision to replace the author from Tirana and his wife with two traveling circus performers, who walk on stilts above the crowd while spitting fire from their mouths, is all the more provocative. Add to this that the first act of kindness in the film is that of the female romantic interest that replaces Diana, that of handing Menino his first picture book, one that would open up for him that entirely new world

of imagination and possibility that literature can represent, even after the book is confiscated from him by his father out of spite or fear of an arrival of literacy on the scene of an apparently unshakeable patriarchal order. These seemingly minor shifts in the original plot nonetheless subject the original to a subtle set of fundamental critiques, above all about the role of kindness and its potential for transformative power to interrupt cycles of violence, to shift dynamics of power, and to overturn prevailing and seemingly unchangeable social and cultural conditions.

I wanted to make reference to at least one scene from the film, one that highlighted how far the narrative diverges from that of the original, but that wouldn't act as a spoiler of how far the cycle of revenge is overturned in the film, along with the unexpected implications that such a radical shift in social reality holds out. Without giving away the ending, suffice it to say that the final scenes of the film complete the complete overturning of the original plot. Through creative adaptation, Salles' once broken but now reconstructed April becomes a story about how to challenge traditional narrative models in art and literature and remake them to address lingering contemporary problems.

That said, it is perhaps all the more ironic that both the Portuguese translation and the film are released in 2001, the same year that yet another set of events and accompanying narratives were devised to justify and sustain the present political and cultural status quo all too often characterized by violence, unrest and cultural and political divisions. In the wake of these cyclical and still continuing destructive events, academics, intellectuals, and other cultural agents, regardless of their country of origin, all too often face an increasing sense of isolation and hopelessness, as well as a quite real experience of disconnectedness from those from other corners of the planet who may be on the other end of the line. Is there still a world to be translated, and can translation and other forms of literary activity still make some form of meaningful and reparative global communication possible?

4. Concluding Remarks: Is Translation Still the Message? And If So, What is it?

With this in mind, perhaps what is most useful to us as translation and transcultural scholars is not only new, direct translations of key texts such as Kadare's *Broken April* that are sensitive to and allow for cultural specificities both in the original and in the eventual translation, but also critical reinventions of our own sense of futurity that have the power both to question and even reconfigure the terms of our shared humanity beyond the particularities of our languages and cultures or the political, economic and social systems we are subject to, and the recurrent cycles of preemptive violence and seemingly inevitable retribution that conflict between these competing systems generate.

This is perhaps a lesson that we can take into other areas of our own translational interactions; while major languages can often take us far in the way of communication, they cannot ensure that every nuance is understood and communicated. As in Joffily's direct translation, these rare instances that run across the mainstream current of global connectivity can often uncover new possibilities for meaning and lead to more durable relationships between source and target cultures. None of the countries I have transited while reading for and writing this piece are exempt from this dynamic: whether an Albania poised for eventual EU membership and a potentially new set of translational encounters in Europe and beyond; the indisputable cultural and political colossus that Brazil has become both in South America and the wider world; the tiny emerging media powerhouse of Qatar and its close neighbors on the Persian Gulf; or other established economic and cultural forces in the Far East or North America.

Far beyond the highlands of northern Albania, many other global cultures once

isolated from large-scale global interaction may also begin to receive the attention they deserve, without the common and all-too-facile dismissals of their potential importance—especially those packaged in more simplistic forms of exoticization, however flattering the Western cultural critic may imagine this ultimately dismissive act of cultural valorization to be. In fact, if the current state of affairs provides any indication, it may well be that much of the early 21st century will be spent in developing these kinds of direct connections with languages and cultures previously, and all-too-often erroneously, considered minor, “strange” or “too difficult”.

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