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JARAD ZIMBLER\*

## Literary Worlds and Literary Fields

When speaking of a literary world, we may not have in mind anything as large as the whole planet. Indeed, we may mean something as small as a particular community, in which all members participate in making literary works and their meanings. They may be novelists, poets, playwrights, or essayists, but they may also be editors, translators, or reviewers. In the same way, we might speak of the art world, the film world, or the worlds of journalism, law, or politics.<sup>1</sup> In fact, we could speak of any community whose members possess a set of related technical skills and pursue a set of related practices, and who are more visible to one another than to the broader public (knowing who belongs to the world is one marker of membership, though this is frequently given an institutional footing by guilds, clubs, professional associations, and regulatory bodies).

By describing such a community as a world we tend to impute to it values and rewards which differ from those of society at large. We might be less inclined to think of literary production as a domain unto itself if works were considered good or bad only on commercial grounds, such as volume of sales. But when questions of craft or beauty are deemed relevant to success, and when authors and other literary figures compete for literary prestige (chiefly the recognition of predecessors and peers), then the demands of the market and politics are somewhat vitiated, and a discrete literary world comes more clearly into view.

Pierre Bourdieu provides an especially compelling model of how such a world looks and functions.<sup>2</sup> In common with other sociologists, Bourdieu recognizes the labour of auxiliary institutions and agents (periodicals, publishers, prizes, and so on), and the importance of prestige, or symbolic capital. But his account of a 'relatively autonomous literary field' goes still further. In the world Bourdieu describes, writers craft their practices alongside and against one another. Struggling to find forms of expression that have not yet become passé or banal, and striving for distinction (to be different and to be recognized), they bring into being a field of relational position-takings,

in which each work situates itself, via its craft or practice, in relation to all other works. The structure of this field is then necessarily modified by each new arrival, and a dynamic of generational conflict arises.

The fact that position-taking and thus relationality are achieved through craft is an especially important feature of Bourdieu's model. It means that, for authors as well as their auxiliaries and readers, the configuration of the field at any given moment determines which practices – which techniques, forms, genres, and themes – will seem distinctive, effective, and significant, rather than formulaic, outmoded, and irrelevant. The field of position-takings thus becomes a horizon of possibilities and expectations, its structure inviting certain interventions, and discouraging others. This has important consequences for literary scholars: any effort to understand the strategies of agents in the field, or the effects and meanings of their works, must attend to questions of craft, and reconstruct the space of positions-takings.

Such a demand, however, forces us to confront questions implicit whenever we posit the existence of a discrete literary world: where are its boundaries? What are the limits to autonomy, and to cooperative and competitive activity? What are the limits to relationality? How far can a literary community extend? Bourdieu's own account focuses entirely on French literary production.<sup>3</sup> Yet various literary institutions clearly have a transnational character; influential genres and techniques cross national boundaries; and, even without translation, works belong to multiple traditions. For these and other reasons, scholars such as Anna Boschetti, Gisèle Sapiro, and Pascale Casanova have sought to develop Bourdieu's model from a transnational perspective.<sup>4</sup>

Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, which describes a global field constituted of distinct national fields, remains the most thoroughgoing effort of this kind. It argues that, whilst competing as individuals, authors compete also as representatives of national traditions. Their success on the global stage generates value for themselves as well as for the literary cultures to which they are deemed to belong. When Elfriede Jelinek wins the Franz Kafka Prize and then the Nobel Prize, for example, the prestige of Austrian literature seems to increase; and, as a particular national field accumulates literary capital, it becomes more autonomous and thus better able to enforce its own conceptions of literary value – to say what counts as good or bad. As a result, literary capital ends up being unevenly distributed across the globe, concentrated in a few metropolitan centres (Paris, London, New York), where production is longstanding and intensive. Elsewhere, in the dominated peripheries, political and economic pressures are greater, and literary capital remains scarce. Moreover, since the most innovative practices

of the most prestigious literary cultures will almost inevitably seem the most innovative practices of the world at large, the metropolitan fields also become sites of the literary present, of ‘literary modernity’, whereas the peripheries remain in the past, reduced to imitation and repetition.<sup>5</sup>

Casanova’s account has generated a fair amount of controversy and criticism,<sup>6</sup> and is by no means the only attempt to explore global aspects of circulation, consecration, and reception.<sup>7</sup> Yet, what frequently goes missing in sociologically oriented research of this kind – whether focused on prizes, publication, translation, or educational curricula – is precisely the central insight of Bourdieu’s model: that understanding a work in the moment of its emergence requires not only that we investigate networks of activity, and the mechanisms and hierarchies of prestige, but also that we analyse literary craft as relational practice. To this end, we cannot conflate value and meaning, as so often happens when literary community is thought in global terms.

For all its flaws, Casanova’s study remains significant precisely because it retains an interest in literary form and interpretation. Indeed, the Preface to its English-language edition insists that the book theorizes the literary world in order to enable better understandings of works: ‘This immense detour through transnational space has been undertaken for the sole purpose of proposing a new tool for reading and interpretation of literary texts that may be at once, and without any contradiction, internal (textual) and external (historical).’<sup>8</sup> The problem with this claim, however, is that it very closely resembles a remark of Bourdieu’s own, that the ‘notion of the field allows us to bypass the opposition between internal and external analysis without losing any of the benefits and exigencies of these two approaches.’<sup>9</sup> If Bourdieu is right, and a national field on its own suffices for understanding the contingencies of literary production, we might well ask: do we really need a ‘detour through transnational space’ to become better readers and interpreters? Is a given work’s space of relational position-takings – its horizon of expectation and possibility – necessarily global?

This chapter is centrally concerned with these very questions, which it seeks to answer by bringing Casanova into contact with two authors, Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977) and Stefan Heym (1913–2001). Casanova’s framework is thus subjected to immanent critique, not in order to target it, but as a way of exploring the limits and possibilities of a field-based approach to world literature (of which her study is only a single instance, albeit the most comprehensively articulated). If certain of her own version’s shortcomings are exposed, this is a by-product of the chapter’s method, rather than its principal aim, which is, instead, to indicate why we need to expand the ambit of Bourdieu’s insights, and how we might do so. There are certainly good reasons for addressing relations between, and movements across, particular literary

fields, but there are also more promising avenues than have hitherto been attempted.

My chosen authors speak directly to these matters, although they are admittedly odd companions. Nabokov, a figurehead of American post-modernism who was born Russian, and Heym, a dissident writer of the German Democratic Republic who lived for a while as an American, differed considerably on questions of politics and aesthetics, and whilst the former achieved global celebrity, the latter remains relatively obscure. However, they are united by a shared experience of multiple dislocations and migrations, which took them back and forth across Europe and the Atlantic during irruptions of international crises and armed conflicts. Nabokov left Russia after the 1917 revolution, and lived between Cambridge, Berlin, and Paris, before arriving in New York in 1940. By then, he was already widely celebrated as the author of nine Russian novels and several volumes of short stories. He had also recently completed his first English-language fiction. As for Heym, he too began his career in one domain before moving into another. His earliest poetic juvenilia had appeared in Germany and he continued to write for an émigré readership in Prague, and then in Chicago and New York. He may not have been as successful in his native tongue as Nabokov had been in Russian, but several German-language plays and short stories preceded his transition into English, which was fully accomplished in 1942 with the publication of the novel *Hostages*.

Nabokov and Heym therefore had in common not only the worldliness of exile, but also – and more importantly – the experience of leaving one literary field and attempting to gain entry to another.<sup>10</sup> Unlike most émigré authors, they chose to give up hard-won literary crafts in their first languages, as well as established networks and, to some extent, readerships. Clearly, their careers cannot be understood in terms of single national literary communities or traditions, or even single linguistic regions, and if a sense of ‘transnational space’ and its systemic relations is necessary for understanding the works of any twentieth-century authors, it must be necessary for understanding theirs.

At first glance, Nabokov seems the very paradigm of a dislocated cosmopolitan, whose career provides evidence of the dynamics of global success as Casanova describes them, and also supports one of her principal contentions: that Paris remained, into the latter half of the twentieth century, the centre of the literary world. It was in Paris that *Lolita* (1955) first appeared, brought out by Olympia Press, having been rejected by several American publishers; and the city could also claim some share in the success of Nabokov’s earlier Russian fictions, since most of these were serialized in the Paris-based periodical *Sovremennye zapiski* (*Contemporary Annals*).

Not that we should confuse citizenship or location with membership of a field. Literary and geopolitical borders need not be aligned, and, regardless of his address, Nabokov remained part of the Russian émigré literary community so long as he wrote in Russian, published with émigré journals and presses, and was read, celebrated, and denigrated chiefly in émigré circles. Nevertheless, the relative autonomy and prestige of French literary culture was vital to Nabokov's later entry onto the world stage. Olympia, an English-language publisher, was hardly a bastion of French literary experimentalism, but its existence depended on a more permissive Parisian environment, and the novel's scandalous success could buy its author global notoriety only because literary and commercial capital were then more readily available to French- and English-language writers than to Russian ones. It is precisely for this reason that Casanova uses *Lolita* to illustrate her argument that, by accumulating prestige and powers of consecration, metropolitan literary centres come to preside over principles of aesthetic valuation, enabling them to determine which literary practices should be deemed innovative, and which passé.

But if *Lolita* reveals something about the structure of the literary world, does the literary world reveal anything about *Lolita*? If we route our analysis through the circuits of global prestige, does it help to make sense of *Lolita*'s meaning and distinctiveness, of its peculiar pleasures and challenges? Casanova offers no close reading of Nabokov's most famous novel, but her general approach is to divide literary practices between two camps: national-political practices, which tend to be identified with realism; and cosmopolitan-aesthetic practices, which tend to be identified with modernism – or at least a certain canon of modernist authors (Joyce, Kafka, Beckett). Whereas realism is treated as the characteristic mode of the peripheries, as well as of the global market, modernism is bound to the relatively autonomous spaces of metropolitan literary cultures.

A quadruple exile and self-proclaimed scourge of tendentious art, Nabokov fits all too neatly into the category of cosmopolitan anti-realist who disregarded the market, morality, and national belonging in order to celebrate aesthetic freedom. But, this identification concluded, have we travelled any further towards understanding the work, *Lolita*? Does setting Nabokov alongside Joyce, Kafka, and Beckett illuminate much about his novel, or the reasons it struck its first readers as distinctive, original, and important? The earliest reviews suggest not, for while these were frequently enthusiastic, the grounds of their praise had little to do with *Lolita*'s reflexivity, unreliability, anti-realism, or any other feature typically associated with modernism. Instead, American reviewers in particular celebrated Nabokov for dissolving 'moral absolutes in a sea of absurdity and passion';

for his comic technique and the ‘force of his art’; and for the distinctiveness of his ‘rich, raucous, exuberant style’.<sup>11</sup>

Of course, reviews do not mechanically register aesthetic effects. Reviewers have their own priorities and predilections, and are themselves caught up in struggles for prestige. Nevertheless, their reputations depend on the facility with which they issue the *mot juste*, and their judgements must draw upon and display a set of skills acquired through education, as well as practice. Precisely because they too belong to the field of literary production, and because they must demonstrate this proximity and familiarity as the basis for their evaluations, their knowing allusions to prominent works, authors, and genres, and their impressionistic descriptions of styles and practices, usefully (and often unwittingly) attest to key coordinates of a particular configuration of a field, as well as to the debates and aesthetic categories by which it is subtended. As such, when attempting to reconstruct a space of position-takings, an overview of contemporaneous critical pronouncements becomes a helpful starting point.<sup>12</sup>

With this in mind, we might note that reviewers of *Lolita* not only lavished praise on the vividness of ‘a prose of spectacular vitality’,<sup>13</sup> a prose ‘flamboyant, free, liberated’;<sup>14</sup> but also very frequently suggested that *Lolita*’s charm and potency had much to do with its ‘remarkable ability to represent certain aspects of American life’.<sup>15</sup> This was the view of Lionel Trilling, amongst the best-known American critics of the time, and one shared by Paul Lauter, a future president of the American Studies Association, who wrote: ‘the moral point of *Lolita* lies rather in what the *recherché* European discovers behind the billboards of America: purity of landscape beside depravity in motels’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it was precisely a sense of the novel’s pleasure in traversing the ‘wilderness of American motels, suburbs and progressive institutions’ that led R. W. Flint to conclude: ‘What makes the book “flame,” [...] is first of all a love affair with the real America.’<sup>17</sup>

It seems, then, that *Lolita*’s earliest reviewers were struck more by its Americanness than by its modernism or cosmopolitanism. They were also beginning to think of Nabokov as an American author, a view he encouraged when explaining his novel’s setting: ‘I chose American motels instead of Swiss hotels or English inns only because I am trying to be an American writer and claim only the same rights that other American writers enjoy.’<sup>18</sup> For once, Nabokov was underselling (or over-ironizing) his achievement, since *Lolita* did far more than claim the rights to an American locale. Stepping back from the scene of its arrival, one is able to detect ways in which it anticipated and perhaps even initiated some of the prominent tropes of American fiction of the 1960s, not only in its treatment of sex and sexuality, but also in its fascination with the car and the road, the diner

and motel, the suburb and country-club. It is striking, for example, that Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* – often identified as the originator of a new kind of American road novel – was itself not published until 1957.<sup>19</sup>

If *Lolita's* themes therefore seem to connect Nabokov to the rising vanguard of American writers, one of his early readers believed not only that *Lolita* was 'an American novel'; but that it was 'probably the best fiction to come out of this country (so to speak) since Faulkner's burst in the thirties'.<sup>20</sup> The claim is remarkable, especially for elevating Nabokov above the most prominent novelists of the 1940s and 1950s, including John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway. In doing so, it also fills in the background against which the distinctive qualities of Nabokov's practice were thrown into relief. For if both Steinbeck and Hemingway were acknowledged masters of style, the relatively simple, idiomatic prose of the former, and the clipped, hypnotic, and elemental prose of latter became the yardsticks against which to measure the *flamboyant, free, vital, raucous, rich, and exuberant* prose of *Lolita*.

It is especially noteworthy that many early readers felt that *Lolita's* singular style was attuned to its locale. Lauter observed that '*Lolita's* humor, and its greatness, lies in Nabokov's ability to detonate American idiom against its own clichés'.<sup>21</sup> For Flint, the achievement of *Lolita's* language was less a matter of parody than of profound affective force, creating an America 'where language and event make a seamless web of wonders, terrors, revelations and portents'. Indeed, Flint regarded Nabokov's English as 'an instrument for the wildest and most mysteriously fitting shifts of tone, the most cheerfully extraverted, slang-relishing, literate tomfoolery'.<sup>22</sup> Here, Nabokov's writing is magically matched to what it describes (*mysteriously fitting, seamless*), capable both of evoking the romantic America of sublime heights, expanses, and experiences (*wildness, mystery, wonders, revelations, portents*) and of recalling a down-home, folksy American past inexorably enmeshed with Mark Twain's rural south (*cheerful extraversion, slang-relishing, tomfoolery*).

Seen from the perspective of its contemporaneous critics, *Lolita* thus seems to embed itself in its setting linguistically and stylistically, as much as thematically. Of course, one has to be careful, since Nabokov's finely wrought prose had been remarked by his Russian readers too. Nevertheless, it appears that, transferred into English and transposed to the United States, his playful delight in words, phrases, and idioms, in repetitions of sound and sense, and in descriptive exhibitionism, was attributed a national character. Choosing American motels, in other words, may have set in motion the emergence of a literary practice experienced and recognized by readers as properly American. To ground such a claim comprehensively would require extensive analysis. Short of that, one might indicate a path of pursuit, by comparing

a short passage from *Lolita* with a shorter one from *The Enchanter*, a novella originally composed in Russian in 1939 but published posthumously, in a translation by Dmitri Nabokov. This brings me onto the treacherous terrain of cross-linguistic comparison, where I will try for safety by focusing on features of narration.

Described by Nabokov as the ‘prototype’ of *Lolita*, *The Enchanter* likewise concerns a predatory middle-aged man fascinated by a pubescent girl.<sup>23</sup> In the following, this anonymous protagonist encounters for the first time the girl’s middle-aged, widowed mother:

He expected to find a sick, emaciated woman in an armchair, but instead was met by a tall, pale, broad-hipped lady, with a hairless wart near a nostril of her bulbous nose: one of the faces you describe without being able to say anything about the lips or the eyes because any mention of them – even this – would be an involuntary contradiction of their utter inconspicuousness.<sup>24</sup>

Here, in contrast, is the moment when Humbert Humbert first catches sight of *Lolita*’s mother, the middle-aged Mrs Haze:

Presently, the lady herself – sandals, maroon slacks, yellow silk blouse, squarish face, in that order – came down the steps, her index finger still tapping upon her cigarette.

I think I had better describe her right away, to get it over with. The poor lady was in her middle thirties, she had a shiny forehead, plucked eyebrows and quite simple but not unattractive features of a type that may be defined as a weak solution of Marlene Dietrich. Patting her bronze-brown bun, she led me into the parlor.<sup>25</sup>

Certain family resemblances are apparent: archness of tone, acuity of vision (which seizes on warts in the first passage and plucked eyebrows in the second), and self-consciousness regarding the act of description. But where *The Enchanter*’s narrator sketches the woman’s figure in outline before giving up entirely when confronted by features void of particularity (exhaustion is a feature of the subject and objection of narration), Humbert Humbert seems to relish identifying precisely that which is most generic about Charlotte Haze. His gaze, moreover, is cinematic, zooming in on her face after tracking her descent: an imitation film-narration matching the imitation film star, though in the kind of technicolour detail of which Dietrich herself was mostly deprived. Moreover, in spite of the narrator’s desire to ‘get it over with’, the description continues well beyond the quoted passage, losing itself in an exuberant yet banal enthusiasm for cataloguing banality; and it is precisely this kind of delighted disgust that comes to seem characteristic of the novel’s style,



a horrified celebration of a life brought into being and at once emptied of meaning by films, magazines, and advertisements.

This does not prove that Nabokov set about consciously matching his prose to his subject matter, but it does explain the readiness of American readers to believe he had done so. It also explains their surprising lack of interest in non-American literary traditions. *Lolita*'s early readers occasionally connected Nabokov with James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence (on the grounds of censorship) and with Joseph Conrad (on the grounds of a transition into English), but they were not especially concerned to characterize his literary practice in relation to contemporary French or British fiction. Nor did they pay much attention to Nabokov's Russian literary heritage. The only Russian writer to feature prominently in these earliest reviews was Gogol, whose work had been brought to the attention of the American public by Nabokov's own biography, published in 1944. All of which suggests that, far from encompassing the world, the horizon of possibilities that shaped the novel's meaning and impact was rather more limited. *Lolita* was situated, and made sense of, principally within the American field.

*Lolita*'s American homecoming was eventually consolidated in the unexpurgated edition published by Putnam in 1958. In 1942, the same firm had achieved notable success with Stefan Heym's *Hostages*, a novel set in German-occupied Prague that wove together tales of the Czech resistance with those of the Nazi practice of ransoming citizens for the compliance of their countrymen. When it appeared in October, film rights had already been purchased by Paramount, and, by the end of the year, *Hostages* had found its way onto bestseller lists.

This commercial success was not entirely surprising. Putnam had committed itself to the 'largest first printing of a first novel in the firm's history';<sup>26</sup> and thereafter pursued an intensive advertising campaign, producing an advanced notice which mentioned Heym alongside Hemingway and Steinbeck.<sup>27</sup> The approval of critics followed. Orville Prescott insisted *Hostages* would 'be ranked with the finest novels of 1942, if not of a much longer period';<sup>28</sup> and other reviewers compared Heym's novel favourably with Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down* (1942),<sup>29</sup> Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths* (1912 [1902]),<sup>30</sup> and Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* (1930 [1923]).<sup>31</sup> When the Book-of-the-Month Club conducted its annual nationwide poll, *Hostages* was placed tenth on the list of outstanding novels of the year.

However, though *Hostages* was certainly acclaimed, its greatest champions were seldom prominent critics or novelists. Even then, some suspected *Hostages* of 'melodrama', deploying one of the period's 'standard terms [...]

used to designate a novel as entertainment'.<sup>32</sup> Reticence about Heym's literary standards was doubtless compounded by his formal conservatism. *Hostages* made little use of recent technical innovations in focalization, free indirect discourse, stylistic pastiche, surrealism, or reflexivity. Instead, its narrator was the familiar figure of the late nineteenth century: external, impersonal, and omniscient, sweeping freely back and forth across Prague, piercing prison walls and secret meeting places. As such, were we to characterize Heym's literary practice only in terms of Casanova's broad distinction between modernism and realism, we would necessarily incline to the latter, especially given that *Hostages* is set in the real and recognizable world at large.

*Hostages* thus comes into focus as a middlebrow fiction. It was by no means pulp – it came out in hardback from a prestigious firm at the time when the US paperback market was emerging – but nor was it purely literary.<sup>33</sup> A serious but commercially oriented work, it seems to belong at what Bourdieu describes as the 'heteronomous' end of the 'sub-field of restricted production', a siting further encouraged by Casanova's identification of heteronomy, not only with commerce, but also with realism, politics, and parochialism. This assessment is complicated, however, by a broader view of the American field. To begin with, *Hostages* was not alone in achieving both commercial and critical success. Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*, Pearl Buck's *Dragon Seed*, and Anna Seghers's *The Seventh Cross* had done considerably better on both fronts. This might indicate that properly autonomous American fiction no longer existed in the 1940s, as American literary culture became increasingly mercenary; except that, crucially, these novels were also linked thematically, by a preoccupation with the war, or with events leading to the war. Rather than literary value being subordinated to market value, it seems that both were being subsumed by moral and political imperatives, in particular by the demands of the war effort. These demands were clear to Putnam's publicity director, who committed to ensuring 'the sale of every possible copy' of *Hostages*, 'not only because of the profit' but also because 'you might as well have the facts even if you must get them from a novel'.<sup>34</sup> As for Heym, far from guarding his artistic freedom, he threw himself into anti-fascist activities, and would soon enlist in the US army.

If the local fate of *Hostages* suggests that priorities were shifting within the American literary field, its international trajectory hints at far broader, even systemic, changes. Before the novel's US publication, rights had been sold for Czech, Swedish, Slovak, Portuguese, and Spanish translations; and soon after, *Hostages* was reviewed positively in the French press in Algeria, and in Britain. There too, war themes were increasingly prominent, and novels

concerned with the conflict could achieve both commercial and critical success. Clearly, even the most autonomous literary regions were becoming increasingly politicized.

*Hostages* thus alerts us to structural changes across the literary world. A sense of this altered ‘transnational space’ helps, in turn, to explain the speed and breadth of the work’s circulation. However, such a ‘detour’ hardly facilitates better understandings of the captivating, breathless intensity of Heym’s novel – its ‘thrilling suspense’,<sup>35</sup> ‘constant excitement’,<sup>36</sup> and ‘terrific swiftness’<sup>37</sup> – or the ambivalence of its reviewers. In short, Casanova’s heteronomous realism brings us little closer to *Hostages* than her cosmopolitan modernism brought us to *Lolita*, not least because lumpy categories of this kind – ubiquitous in world literary studies – lack the precision required to identify features that may be more granular, but are no less properly distinctive. In the case of Heym’s novel, these include its strategic deployment of the conventions of the crime novel.

*Hostages* opens with what seems to be a murder. Soon after, the Nazi policeman Reinhardt begins his investigation. On the pretext of identifying the culprit, he takes hostages, whilst scouring the city for members of the underground, mimicking in his search the hard-boiled detectives already associated with American pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s. A story of Czech resistance is thereby harnessed to a powerful generic motor of suspense, and, while reviewers resisted identifying *Hostages* with ‘Continental espionage’ and ‘crime fiction’ (for the same reasons they equivocated about ‘melodrama’), Heym had no such qualms. Describing his earliest plans for *Hostages*, he recalls reflecting, first, on the American demand for detective novels, and, second, on the need to frustrate the genre’s formulaic conclusion, which he did by inventing Reinhardt, a detective whose investigation fails.<sup>38</sup> In fact, it seems Heym was thinking along similar lines long before he had conceived of *Hostages*. In 1939, after completing ‘The Courier from Strasbourg’, a short story in which a resistance movement is infiltrated by a spy, he offered it to a literary agent as ‘a mixture of detective fiction and underground’, suggesting that it might be ‘sold on the glossy or pulp market’.<sup>39</sup>

Heym’s literary practice was thus shaped from early on by a desire to remake commercial fiction as democratic fiction, entwining two versions of the popular. For this, he cultivated sensitivity to local conditions, especially the tastes of American readers and publishers. But, in pursuing this project, Heym also aligned himself with a particular tradition of American novelists, who had used their works to expose social ills, and to evoke animosity towards the powerful as well as sympathy with the downtrodden. When asked to contribute an article to a series on memorable books, Heym chose

a signal work of this tradition, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906). Of it, he remarked: 'Mr Sinclair's style is not necessarily exquisite; [...] but I like a man who sees things as they are – writes them down – and points an accusing finger squarely'.<sup>40</sup> In Heym, then, we find a further example of an exiled author attuning his work to a local literary field. He shapes his practice so as to position himself both alongside a group of American writers identified with socially conscious novels, and also against the conventions of mass-market American crime fiction, even whilst drawing on the energies of those conventions.

We might anticipate Heym's literary localism more readily than Nabokov's, especially if we assume, like Casanova, an alignment between political art and parochialism. But, in important ways, Heym was a cosmopolitan writer too, which is signalled even by his engagement with American literature, since this predated his emigration. In the piece on Sinclair, Heym recalls reading *The Jungle* long before he arrived in Chicago: 'It was the first of the books I read on America by an American author. I read it, then, in its German translation.'<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the very first of Heym's works to appear on stage – in Vienna as well as Prague – was *Tom Sawyer und Huckleberry Finn*, an adaptation of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876). Addressing a youth audience, but with the purpose of sounding a warning to German-speaking communities in the shadow of Nazism, Heym reworked Twain's novel to produce a play explicitly about racist conspiracies and violence.

Moving across media, as well as linguistic-cultural bounds, *Tom Sawyer und Huckleberry Finn* is evidence that neither technical innovation nor a worldly orientation is the preserve of autonomous art. The play also points towards another important context for Heym's practice, by connecting him with a German tradition of epic theatre that was associated then, as it is today, with the works of Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator. Heym himself identified his one-act *Execution*, performed in Chicago in 1936, as an 'epic play'; and, once in the United States, corresponded several times with Piscator. The fact that Piscator himself produced an adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, which had premiered in Vienna in 1932 before crossing the Atlantic in 1935, hints at the possible existence of a more systemic relation between the American and Weimar literary fields, one having little to do with global flows of literary prestige.

From the outset, then, Heym's literary as well as his political interests were cosmopolitan in outlook. But the point really to be emphasized is that the capacity of *Hostages* to be gripping and suspenseful, as well as provocative and unsettling, was the result of an aesthetic disposition that was formed in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s and that came to fruition as

a position-taking within the American literary field in the early 1940s. As with Nabokov, however, this cosmopolitan inheritance would remain invisible to local readers, unless made explicit by the author or his reviewers. In this regard, it is interesting, first, that the advanced notice for *Hostages* mentioned *Tom Sawyer und Huckleberry Finn*; and, second, that the non-American work to which reviewers most frequently referred was not a German novel, but a Czech one: Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk*. If the former assured readers of Heym's long-standing familiarity with American authors, the latter framed the worldliness of the novel in terms of its themes, rather than its author's origins.

In closing, I offer a few observations about the kind of readings attempted in this chapter, as well as their consequences for an approach to the literary world that draws on Bourdieu's field-based model. I have tried not only to explain the circulation and successes of *Lolita* and *Hostages*, but also to understand how these novels were related to works of significant peers and predecessors. I have therefore considered aspects of publication and reception, and even, broadly speaking, of biography and history. I have remarked also on genre, style, and narration, attending especially to those features that seem both distinctive and pertinent to the effects of these novels on their readers. The chapter thus indicates some of the ways in which a field-based approach demands, but also facilitates, internal as well as external analysis.

As to claims for the necessity of a transnational perspective, it is certainly true that we gain richer understandings of their aesthetic dispositions if we consider Nabokov's Russian and Heym's German literary inheritances. It is also true that the relative prestige of different literary cultures, and the structure of their relations, are relevant to the ways in which *Lolita* and *Hostages* circulated and were consecrated. However, once we shift our focus from the value of a work to its meaning, there is little to suggest that we ought to keep in view the global totality of literary production. On the contrary, if we are trying to determine a work's 'context of intelligibility', it seems far more important to begin within a particular community of practice.<sup>42</sup> In the case of Heym and Nabokov, this was the American literary field, the existence of which both authors presumed in addressing or responding to the constraints and possibilities of American themes, tastes, and conventions.

This is not to say we should never lift our eyes to the wider world. In all kinds of ways, the American field was impinged upon by outside forces, literary as well as socio-political and economic. The outbreak of global conflict, for example, affected the movement and valuation of literary works, and perhaps also the relations between fields. What is

more – and this is something not yet touched upon – it may also have provided the kind of common ground necessary for the emergence of relationality, in confronting writers from very different communities with the same themes and even challenges. This returns us to a question with which I began: what are the limits to cooperative and competitive activity, and to relationality? How, for that matter, does relationality arise, and of what does it consist? These questions have hardly been posed by sociologically minded scholars of world literature, yet they are clearly vital to understanding how we might expand the ambit of Bourdieu's insights beyond the boundaries of the nation.

Intuitively, it seems that relationality can extend only so far. While the existence of transnational or even non-national spaces of position-taking is inevitable (there are no practical or theoretical reasons for limiting relational dynamics to national borders), imagining such a space on anything like a global scale is more challenging. It is especially difficult to understand why or how writers would shape their works in response to one another's aesthetic decisions if they were faced by very different constraints and choices, and if they lacked a common repertoire of meaningful forms, genres, techniques, and themes. Yet without this – without, that is, an effort on the part of writers to craft their practices and measure themselves alongside and against one another – it is quite meaningless to speak of a literary field in Bourdieu's terms. Unless, of course, we abstract literary practices so far as to banalize them, for example, by relying entirely on categories such as realism and modernism; or unless we conflate value and meaning, and thus understand the global field as little more than a global market, unified by the common currency of symbolic capital.

Confronting actual works and practices, and attempting to understand whether and in what ways particular instances of relational position-taking operate over narrower or broader terrain than any nation's, would be one way of adapting Bourdieu's vision of the literary world. In the case of individual authors, relations across fields might prove to be singular, idiosyncratic, and also superficial, amounting to little more than what is often called 'influence'; but, if we look carefully, patterns may emerge, pointing to deeper structural or systemic relations across and also between fields, which cannot be accounted for by models of global prestige. To begin with, this may only prompt further questions – what is and is not portable across fields? What, if any, of a literary material can be shared? – but these would at least lead us closer to, rather than away from, understanding how much of the world is relevant to articulating those horizons of expectation and possibility that impel, constrain, and shape any work's emergence into meaning.

Notes

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1. The now classic account of this understanding is found in H. S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). It continues to frame social-scientific research into cultural production. See, for example: H. van Maanen, *How to Study Art Worlds: On the Societal Function of Aesthetic Value* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).
  2. Elaborated across his career, this model is given clearest expression in P. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, S. Emanuel (trans.) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).
  3. A similar focus on the nation characterizes research by scholars influenced by Bourdieu, such as Michel Hockx, Peter D. McDonald, and Gisèle Sapiro, in their respective accounts of the Chinese, British, and French literary fields.
  4. See, for example: A. Boschetti, 'How Field Theory Can Contribute to Knowledge of World Literary Space', *Paragraph*, 35.1 (2012), 10–19; G. Sapiro, 'How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not?): A Sociological Approach to World Literature', *Journal of World Literature*, 1 (2016), 81–96; P. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, M. B. DeBevoise (trans.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
  5. Casanova, pp. 87–103.
  6. For an early, incisive and influential critique, see: C. Prendergast, 'The World Republic of Letters', in C. Prendergast (ed.), *Debating World Literature* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 1–25.
  7. Analysis of literary production, circulation, and consecration from a global or transnational perspective can be found in a number of recent studies, including those of James English, Sarah Brouillette, Stefan Helgesson, Ruth Bush, and Peter D. McDonald. See Further Reading for details.
  8. Casanova, p. xii.
  9. Bourdieu, p. 205.
  10. We are thus dealing here with actual authors moving 'from space to space', and not merely with the disembodied forms pursued in F. Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 90.
  11. G. Culligan, 'Lolita, Or As You Like It', *Washington Post*, 17 August 1958, p. E6.
  12. This approach to reviews is explained in more detail in J. Zimbler, *J. M. Coetzee and the Politics of Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 4–7. For an account of the status, dispositions, and institutional contexts of American reviewers in the mid-twentieth century, see J. S. Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).
  13. R. W. Flint, 'Nabokov's Love Affairs', *New Republic*, 17 June 1957, 18–19 (p. 19)
  14. C. Brenner, 'Nabokov: The Art of the Perverse', *New Republic*, 23 June 1958, 18–21 (p. 20).
  15. L. Trilling, 'The Last Lover: Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*', *Encounter*, 11 (1958), 9–19 (p. 19).

16. P. Lauter, “... elementary errors”, *New Republic*, 3 November 1958, 23–24 (p. 23).
17. Flint, p. 19.
18. V. Nabokov, ‘On a Book Entitled *Lolita*’, *Anchor Review*, 2 (1957), 105–112 (p. 110).
19. On the surge in popularity of the American road narrative in the 1960s, and the significance of *On the Road*, see: R. Primeau, *Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway* (Bowling Green: BGSU Popular Press, 1996), pp. 8–9.
20. Brenner, p. 21.
21. Lauter, p. 24.
22. Flint, p. 19.
23. Nabokov, ‘On a Book Entitled *Lolita*’, p. 105.
24. V. Nabokov, *The Enchanter* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 15.
25. V. Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 37.
26. ‘Notes on Books and Authors’, *New York Times*, 5 September 1942, p. 11.
27. ‘Hostages’, *Four Star Final*, September 1942.
28. O. Prescott, ‘Books of the Times’, *New York Times*, 16 October 1942, p. 17.
29. D. Daiches, ‘Grim Picture of Life Under “New Order”’, *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 18 October 1942, p. 6.26.
30. W. Soskin, ‘Books and Things’, *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 October 1942, p. 11.
31. F. Seyd, ‘Without Fear of Failure, Torture or Death’, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, 18 October 1942, p. 5.
32. B. G. Ekelund and M. Borjesson, ‘The Shape of the Literary Career: An Analysis of Publishing Trajectories’, *Poetics*, 30 (2012), 341–364 (p. 353). The term is used in this way, with varying degrees of circumspection, by Soskin, ‘Books and Things’; H. Strauss, ‘A Czech Patriot’, *New York Times Book Review*, 25 October 1942, p. 28; and H. S. Canby, ‘Hostages’, *Book of the Month News*, November 1942, p. 10.
33. This sense of ‘middlebrow’ is discussed by Rubin in *Middlebrow Culture*, pp. xi–xvi.
34. C. B. Boutell, ‘Analysis of Novel by Stefan Heym: The Source of the Power in *Hostages* Lies in Five Basic Factors’, *Four Star Final*, October 1942.
35. Prescott, p. 17.
36. Canby, ‘Hostages’, p. 10.
37. A. D. Bond, ‘Novel of Life in Conquered Czechoslovakia’, *Boston Herald*, 23 October 1942, p. 3.
38. S. Heym, ‘Wie ich anfang: “Stefan Heym”’, Stefan Heym Archive, A107.
39. S. Heym, Letter to Henriette Herz, 7 July 1939, Stefan Heym Archive, C1/H7.
40. S. Heym, ‘Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*’, Stefan Heym Archive, D2.
41. *Ibid.*
42. The notion of ‘context of intelligibility’ is explored in B. Etherington and J. Zimble, ‘Field, Material, Technique: On Renewing Postcolonial Literary Criticism’, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 49.3 (2014), 279–297.