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# The Material World of Comparison

Pheng Cheah

**T**HE INTENSIFICATION OF GLOBALIZATION in the past two decades has led to debates about reenvisioning and reinventing the discipline of comparative literature in a manner that is ethically sensitive to the cultural differences and geopolitical complexities of the contemporary age. The task of reinvigorating comparative literary studies has been so successful that Haun Saussy begins his 2004 report on the state of the discipline by declaring its intellectual triumph, adducing as evidence the widespread diffusion of comparative methods and approaches to all corners and sectors of U.S. universities.<sup>1</sup> But despite this success, comparative literature remains a specific application of a method, perspective, or approach, which it shares with other forms of comparative study such as comparative politics, comparative sociology, or comparative history, as opposed to a clearly delimited field with established aims and objects of study. Hence, even if comparison is crucial to the formation of a critical consciousness and the improvement of knowledge production by giving an area of knowledge greater range and depth, it remains essentially a technique to be wielded by intellectual consciousness in its various projects and endeavors. The question that has almost never been asked is this: if comparison is a fundamental activity of human consciousness, then what is it that makes us compare? Is it something that is internal to consciousness or the human spirit or something that comes from the external or objective world?

The essay has two aims: it traces the genealogy of the idea that comparison is an activity that forms consciousness in some canonical texts of modern philosophy and the elaboration of this idea into a stimulus for the awakening of anticolonial consciousness in radical postcolonial nationalist literature. It then argues that in contemporary globalization, comparison is no longer a critical activity but a material infrastructure that undermines the formation of a shared world even as it makes us more connected in unprecedented ways. What are the implications of this material world of comparison for the struggles for freedom of peoples in the postcolonial South in the current global conjuncture?

## I. Comparison and the *Bildung* of Humanity

The connection between comparison and the formation of the mature consciousness of a social being lies in the fact that comparison is an activity that consciousness undertakes when it encounters something foreign or other to itself. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's thought is exemplary because he suggests that comparison is a fundamental psychological mechanism in the human species's passage from a state of nature to social existence and further distinguishes between a salutary form of comparison that is the necessary precondition of our knowledge of ourselves as members of humankind and a defective, pernicious form of comparison that is the origin of social ills and inequality. Rousseau elaborates on the first kind of comparison in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*.

Reflection is born of the comparison of ideas, and it is their plurality that leads us to compare them. Whoever sees only a single object has no occasion to make comparisons. Whoever sees only a small number and always the same ones from childhood on still does not compare them, because the habit of seeing them deprives him of the attention required to examine them: but as a new object strikes us, we want to know it, we look for relations between it and the objects we do know; this is how we learn to observe what we see before us, and how what is foreign to us leads us to examine what touches us.<sup>2</sup>

When something foreign or unknown enters our perceptual field, we begin to observe it closely, form conceptions of it, and compare these to what is familiar to us. Hence, the experience of alterity, the presence to consciousness of a *plurality* of objects, stimulates knowledge of what immediately surrounds us. What is emphasized here is the force of the foreign as it breaches the world we are accustomed to and moves the mind to compare.

Rousseau associates this force not with violence but with sociability and humanity. The knowledge formed from comparison enables us to imagine the experiences of others and to identify with them, thereby leading to the development of social affections such as pity, and eventually to knowledge of ourselves as members of a common humankind.

The social affections develop in us only with our knowledge [*lumières*]. Pity, although natural to man's heart, would remain eternally inactive without imagination to set it in motion [*en jeu*]. How do we let ourselves be moved to pity? By transporting ourselves outside ourselves; by identifying with the suffering being. We suffer only to the extent that we judge it to suffer; *we suffer not in ourselves but in it*. Think how much acquired knowledge this transport presupposes! How could I imagine evils of which I have no idea? How could I suffer when I see another suffer if I do not even know that he suffers, if I do not know what he and I have

in common [*de commun entre lui et moi*]? Someone who has never reflected cannot be clement, or just, or pitying, nor can he be wicked and vindictive. He who imagines nothing feels only himself [*sent que lui-même*]; in the midst of mankind [*genre humain*] he is alone.<sup>3</sup>

There are therefore three different moments in the generation of *human* sense, the sense that one shares something in common with others and is part of a common world of humanity. First, by forming knowledge about the other, comparison converts the force of the initial shock of alterity into virtual images. These images operate as a motor force that transports us beyond ourselves. Second, in the moment of identification, the self is propelled into the skin of the other. We regard the other as another version of ourselves, an alter ego, and we feel his suffering as if it were ours. Third, as a result of this identification, the self becomes conscious of what is common between itself and the other.

It is imperative here to distinguish between the common and the similar or the like. The similar is what is familiar to us because it is immediately around us and habitually present to our sight. It constantly touches us in its physical proximity, and we relate to it through feeling. In contradistinction, the common involves a power of abstraction that only comes about after the foreign has disrupted the familiarity of the similar. It is both the end result and object of knowledge. Moreover, the consciousness of what is common enables us to know our true selves *qua* human beings instead of merely feeling our immediate selves, either as isolated beings or as members of a family.

Apply these ideas to the first men, you will see the reason for their barbarism. Never having seen anything other than what was around them, they did not know even it; they did not know themselves. They had the idea of a Father, a son, a brother, but not of man. Their hut held all those who were like themselves [*semblables*]; a stranger, an animal, a monster were all the same to them [*étaient pour eux la même chose*]: outside of themselves and their family, the whole universe was naught to them [*ne leur était rien*].<sup>4</sup>

Because it enables the conceptualization of the idea of man as that which is common to the self and others, the imagination's abstractive power generates the knowledge that one belongs to a common humanity. Without this power, we simply cannot distinguish others in any meaningful sense that will lead to the establishment of relations based on what we share in common. Whatever lies outside our immediate family circle is simply a homogeneous mass that does not exist for us. Hence, without the imagination, we will only have an impoverished sense of ourselves that is limited to the ties of blood and kinship. We will not be able to "see" (that we are part of) humankind.

But comparison is also a double-edged process. In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau suggests that the comparative gaze sets off the development of *amour propre* (vanity) in the human person and that it is also the first step towards inequality and vice in nascent social life. As is well known, *amour propre*, as distinguished from the natural sentiment of *amour de soi-même* (love of oneself) that is directed at self-preservation, is a social passion. *Amour de soi-même*, when regulated by reason and tempered by pity for the suffering of others, “produces humanity and virtue.”<sup>5</sup> As we have seen, the identification with the suffering of others that is crucial to the activation of pity requires comparative activity. In contradistinction, the genesis of *amour propre* involves a different kind of comparative gaze. Here, one does not step into the other’s skin and identify with him, but instead gazes at oneself through the other’s eyes. The self sees itself as an object of possible disapprobation or admiration, disrespect or esteem, in the other’s eyes and thus *desires* to be highly regarded or valued.

Amour propre is only a relative sentiment, factitious, and born in society, which inclines every individual to set greater store by himself than by anyone else, inspires men with all the evils they do one another, and is the genuine source of honor.

[I]n the genuine state of nature, Amour propre does not exist; For, since every individual human being views himself as the only Spectator to observe him, as the only being in the universe to take any interest in him, as the only judge of his own merit, it is not possible that a sentiment which originates in comparisons he is not capable of making, could spring up in his soul. (FI Note XV [1–2], 218; 219)

Here, the introduction of otherness in the self does not lead to the productive disruption of the familiar by difference that brings about the construction of a common human world. Alterity is now a threat since the other occupies the position of a judge that can devalue the self and undermine its security. Hence, observing the other does not lead to the appreciation of its differences, the identification with its suffering, and the knowledge of myself as human through the grasping of a common humanness. Instead, the self imagines how it is observed by this interloper and seeks to aggrandize itself in front of the other to defend against the other’s judgment. There is no breaching of the circle of familiarity and sameness, no establishment of the larger circle of the common. Instead, the circle of sameness is reinforced through an oppositional, competitive relation to the other. *Amour propre* is a relative sentiment: it is a sense of self that can never be fully centered in the self but is always derived in relation to the other and therefore involves the permanent unease of competition.

Accordingly, selfhood and reflection have entirely negative connotations. Reflection does not lead to identification with the other. It is instead a movement of turning back on oneself in a way that rigidifies the self's boundaries, thereby blocking the identification with the other that defines pity.

Now this identification must, clearly, have been infinitely closer in the state of Nature than in the state of reasoning. It is reason that engenders amour propre, and reflection that reinforces it; *reason that turns man back upon himself, reason that separates him from everything that troubles and afflicts him*. It is Philosophy that isolates him; by means of Philosophy, he secretly says, at the sight of a suffering man, perish if you wish, I am safe. (FI I.37, 153; 155–56)

Instead of transporting the self beyond the limited circle of the same so that it can arrive at a sense of its own humanity, reflection here generates an impoverished, atomistic self that is imprisoned within this circle. The more educated one is, the less one identifies with the sufferings of others because one acts according to selfish calculations of prudence.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the pernicious modality of comparison leads to forms of hierarchy at the level of social life. In a presocial stage, human interaction with natural forces leads to the determination of relations to the outside world in quantitative terms such as greatness, strength, speed, et cetera. The human ability to master nature through prudential calculation gives the person a sense of the human species's superiority. The development of the same comparative activity in social relations with other human beings leads to individual pride, social hierarchy, and the vices that accompany property and civility.

Everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself [*Chacun commença à regarder les autres et à vouloir être regardé soi-même*], and public esteem acquired a price. The one who sang or danced best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most skillful, or the most eloquent came to be the most highly regarded, and this was the first step at once toward inequality and vice: from these first preferences arose vanity and contempt on the one hand, shame and envy on the other. (FI II.16, 166; 169–70)

[C]onsuming ambition, the ardent desire to raise one's relative fortune less out of genuine need than in order to place oneself above others, instills in all men a black inclination to harm one another, a secret jealousy that is all the more dangerous as it often assumes the mask of benevolence in order to strike its blow in greater safety: in a word, competition and rivalry on the one hand, conflict of interests on the other, and always the hidden desire to profit at another's expense, all these evils are the first effect of property, and the inseparable train of nascent inequality. (FI II.27, 171; 175)

This is precisely the unfolding, at every stage of social life, of the pernicious modality of comparison found at the heart of *amour propre*, where the self views itself competitively through the other's eyes.

Let us sum up Rousseau's views about comparison. First, the distinction between the salutary and defective forms of comparison and reflection is essentially a distinction between a relation to alterity where the other is integrated into the self through identification and the difference is overcome through the establishment of what is common, and a relation to alterity where difference is seen as a threat that has to be contained by reinforcing the self's boundaries through withdrawal, self-aggrandization, and competition. Second, in the "good" kind of comparison, there is an initial recognition of qualitative differences between self and other that are resolved by identification, which establishes a complete symmetry, substitutability, and equality of self and other. Ideational work raises up difference into what is common and shared, to a larger communal self. In contradistinction, comparison-as-competition is essentially a quantitative relation between different magnitudes, a matter of more or less. The relation between self and other is here structurally asymmetrical and unequal since the self always desires to be greater than the other in power or force. Third, comparison is primarily a matter of the subject's desire. It may open up a common world or obstruct such an opening, but comparison remains a dynamic of the subject rather than an objective worldly structure.

German idealist philosophy resolves the contradiction between the two modalities of comparison by means of a teleology of history in which conflict and antagonism are regarded as the motor of human progress towards a telos that has universal validity for all individuals and peoples within the human species. Kant called the good type of comparison "pluralism," which he defined as the opposite of egoism, the attitude in which consideration is given only to one's viewpoint in matters of logical judgment, taste, and morality. Comparison is primarily a rigorous testing of the self's presumptions by means of the perspectives of others and it leads to the formation of a collective subject, humanity, in which the self strikes down its own egoism by acknowledging that it exists with others within a larger whole, that is, a plural world. Pluralism, Kant writes, is "the way of thinking in which one is not concerned with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world [*Weltbürger*]."<sup>7</sup> The optimal cultivation of this intellectual perspective in individuals can only be attained in a world federation that secures the highest state of peace.

But, paradoxically, human beings are motivated to establish a cosmopolitan federation by the competitive kind of comparison. Because of our egoistic nature, human beings are pulled by two conflicting tendencies.

On the one hand, we desire to be isolated individuals because we want the world to operate according to our selfish wishes. But, on the other hand, we also desire to be in society because egoism finds its highest expression in the desire for power, wealth, and honor. These are social phenomena because one can only aggrandize oneself and have status in the eyes of others. "Through the craving for honor, the craving for domination, or avarice, he is driven to seek status among his compeers, whom he cannot bear, yet cannot leave alone [*getrieben durch Ehrsucht, Herrsucht oder Habsucht, sich einen Rang unter seinen Mitgenossen zu verschaffen, die er nicht wohl leiden, von denen er aber auch nicht lassen kann*]."8 Kant calls this constitutive feature of human life "unsocial sociability" (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*).9

Social existence thus involves a physics of mutual attraction and repulsion. Since each person will try to resist the inclination of others to bend him to their will and is also aware that this resistance is mutual, he must develop his natural predispositions so as to enable him to resist the will of others, as well as skills, taste, and social graces to attract others and reduce their resistance to being bent according to his will. Competitive comparison is crucial to human progress. "Nature should thus be thanked for fostering social incompatibility, enviously competitive vanity, and insatiable desires for possession or even domination [*Herrschen*]! Without these desires, all man's excellent natural predispositions [*Naturanlagen*] would never be roused to develop."<sup>10</sup> A similar competitive dynamic is repeated at the level of interstate relations. States seek to aggrandize themselves in each other's eyes in terms of cultural achievements because this is a way to influence other states. "The mutual relationships between states are already so sophisticated [*so künstlichen*] that none of them can wane (or slacken) in its internal culture [*in der inneren Kultur nachlassen kann*] without losing power and influence in relation to the others."<sup>11</sup> Such competition can lead to war, which itself can be an incentive "for developing to their highest degree all the talents that serve for culture [*die zur Kultur dienen*]."12 Rivalrous comparison, however, gives way when states reach a point where they realize that a cosmopolitan federation provides the optimal conditions of security for the development of culture and the moral cultivation of their citizens.

Hegel's philosophy of history takes the generative character of the comparative gaze's competitive aspects to its extreme. Because Hegel rejects the possibility of a cosmopolitan federation as an empty utopian dream, he views the totality of world history as a process of successive struggles between national spirits (*Volksgeister*) to assume the mantle of the world spirit (*Weltgeist*). As universal spirit, world spirit can only exist in the particular shape of a national spirit.<sup>13</sup> Hence, in any given epoch it is vested in only one state, whose actions will have universal normative



force. A given state's eligibility to assume the mantle of world spirit in a given epoch depends on its national spirit's historical achievements as manifested in the quality of its political institutions and spiritual-cultural products and the eternal contribution they make to world history. This confers to a given nation its right to be recognized as the dominant nation in a given stage of world history. World history is thus the ultimate forum of judgment of the actions of particular nations and individuals. But the universality of its judgments exceeds the sphere of mere morality or justice. It metes out undying fame. Its judgment and recognition are neither tolerant nor benevolent. To the contrary, they legitimize the violence and domination suffered by nations that do not embody the world spirit as being favorable to universal progress.

It is through this dialectic that the *universal spirit*, *the spirit of the world*, produces itself in its freedom from all limits, and it is this spirit which exercises its right—which is the highest right of all—over finite spirits in *world history* as the *world's court of judgment* [*Weltgericht*].<sup>14</sup>

In contrast with this absolute right which it [the dominant nation] possesses as bearer of the present stage of the world spirit's development, the spirits of other nations are without rights [*rechtlos*], and they, like those whose epoch has passed, no longer count in world history.<sup>15</sup>

Two points are important for present purposes. First, because of the importance Hegel gives to spiritual-cultural forms as a measure of the contributions of a national spirit to world-historical progress, world history's court of judgment—the forum that *is* world history—is a theater of comparison for cultural forms. World history is the objective condition of possibility of art, religion, and philosophy, the three shapes of absolute spirit. We can only recognize these forms as expressions of absolute spirit *after* we understand the place of their respective national spirits within the chain of world history. Because art, religion, and philosophy are recognized as such only after the judgment of the world, the study of these forms is necessarily comparative and must range across different cultures and periods. Second, Hegel's comparative gaze places the spiritual products of each people within a (Eurocentric) developmental hierarchy or teleology of the progress of universal spirit, where the cultural forms produced by previously dominant nations are judged as defective in comparison with those of the now-dominant Europe in terms of the development of universal reason's consciousness of the concept of freedom and how it is expressed in individuals.

In all world-historical nations, we do indeed encounter poetry, plastic art, science, and even philosophy. But these differ not only in their tone, style, and general

tendency, but even more so in their basic import; and this import involves the most important difference of all, that of rationality. . . . For even if one ranks the Indian epics as highly as Homer's on account of numerous formal qualities of this kind—greatness of invention and imagination, vividness of imagery and sentiments, beauty of diction, etc.—they nevertheless remain infinitely different in their import and hence their very substance.<sup>16</sup>

The comparative gaze of world history produces the Eurocentric characterizations of non-Western art that abound in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, for instance, the judgment that the failure of the Egyptian, Indian, and Persian peoples to grasp the true nature of the absolute leads to the production of bizarre and grotesque objects whose phenomenal forms are forced to express a higher meaning inappropriate to their shape, whereas classical beauty is only achieved in the Greek world.<sup>17</sup> We can call this world history from the present of (nineteenth-century) European hegemony. It looks at the past in a way that affirms Europe as the teleological model by which to judge all other nations as wanting and thus elevates Europe into a developmental standard toward which all other nations ought to aspire.

## II. Postcolonial Literature and the Revolutionary Politicization of Comparison

These philosophical ideas about the constitutive nature of comparison foreshadow key motifs in our contemporary discourse concerning the ethics and politics of comparison. For example, how is the advent of the other and the comparison it stimulates beneficial to the development of consciousness and, indeed, even constitutive? How does identification across difference lead to the formation of a common human world? Conversely, how does comparison as a type of competitive relation to the other undermine the establishment of humanity? We are reminded that comparison always involves relations of power. We also see two different solutions to the conflict between a hospitable and a competitive relation to alterity: the gradual achievement of a pluralistic universalism in which we test our assumptions by including other perspectives after a historical process of antagonisms (Kant), and the generalization of conflict into a hierarchical economy of domination that operates in the entire span of history where difference is subordinated to a developmental standard (Hegel). Finally, we also see the importance of the imagination in establishing a relation to otherness in the form of either the role of identification in building a common humanity or the optic that places all peoples and their cultural products within the forum of world history.

These ideas have left a lasting imprint on the way we think today. Indeed, even the Eurocentric comparative gaze of Hegelian world history has been influential as a catalyst for the decolonizing nationalist imagination. Here, the imposed developmental hierarchy is exposed as Eurocentric and even racist, and the energy of that critique then fuels the educated native's desire that his people not be left out of world history. The struggle to assume the role of an autonomous agent in world history is precisely the political project of anticolonial revolution: the destruction of the colonial world where natives cannot be at home and cannot develop as autonomous subjects, and the creation of a new common world where they can.<sup>18</sup> I discuss two examples of this revolutionary politicization of comparison from the literature of decolonizing and postcolonial space.

José Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) is a novel written by an *haute bourgeois* Filipino colonial subject in Spanish (published in Berlin) that is widely regarded as an important literary inspiration of the revolt against Spanish colonialism in the Philippines. The book's protagonist, Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra, the scion of a wealthy mestizo family, has, like the book's author, returned to Manila after several years of study and travel in Europe. As he reacquaints himself with the colony's urban landscape, he feels the haunting shadow of Europe in everything he sees. The most notable features in this landscape, such as the tobacco factory and the botanical gardens, are copies of European phenomena and are made largely for the consumption and enjoyment of the Spanish colonizers and wealthy mestizos. Ibarra feels what Frantz Fanon calls the belatedness of the colonial world. He cannot help but compare the colony with Europe.

At the end of the bridge the horses broke into a trot, heading toward the Paseo de la Sabana. On the left, from the Tobacco Factory of Arroceros he could hear the roar of cigarette makers pounding the leaves. Ibarra could not help but smile at the memory of the overwhelming odor that had permeated the Puente de Barcos at five each afternoon and made him queasy when he was a boy. The lively conversations and joking automatically carried his thoughts back to, among other things, the Lavapiés section of Madrid with its cigarette-vendor riots, so fateful for the unfortunate cops.

The botanical garden drove away these delightful memories and the devilry of comparison [*el demonio de las comparaciones*] placed him back in front of the botanical gardens of Europe, in those countries in which one needs a great deal of will and even more gold to bring forth a leaf and make a flower open its calyx, even in these colonies, rich and well tended and open to the public. Ibarra looked away, to the right, and there saw Old Manila, surrounded still by its walls and moats, like an anemic young girl wrapped in a dress left over from her grandmother's salad days.<sup>19</sup>

In this narrative construction of the psychological development of the imperative to revolt against colonialism, what strikes the reader first is the automatic nature of comparison, which the narrator refers to as a demon.<sup>20</sup> When Ibarra recalls his childhood, the chattering cigarette makers transport him back to the prototypical scene in Madrid. The moving carriage then brings up another Manila landmark, the botanical gardens, which is a colonial project. Ibarra is transported yet again to the “original” versions in Europe, about which the narrator reminds us that much effort and money is needed to make flowers bloom compared to the lush tropics. But his next glance brings to view the degradation of Manila, which despite the conduciveness of its warm climate to health is figured as a pale waif in hand-me-down clothing, a human life whose vitality is stifled by colonial rule.

At this point of the novel, the political meaning is still subconscious, but the demon of comparisons has laid the ground for Ibarra’s gradual realization that the basic human freedoms of the Enlightenment available *over there* in the Europe he idealized as a student are not available *here* in the Philippines because of the anachronistically repressive colonial regime. This endless comparison of *here* and *there* and the conclusion that *here, in the colonial present*, there is only a dead end without any future of a common humanity finally leads Ibarra to the resolution to revolt: “Now I see the horrible cancer gnawing at this society, rotting its flesh, almost begging for violent extirpation . . . . For three centuries we have held our hand to them, asked them for love, eager to call them brothers, and how do they answer us? With insults and mocking, denying us even the status of human beings. There is no God, no hope, no humanity, nothing more than the rights of power!”<sup>21</sup>

My second example comes from Pramoedya Ananta Toer’s *Buru Quartet*. Its third volume, *Footsteps (Jejak Langkah)*, 1985, was published almost a hundred years after Rizal’s *Noli*, but it is set in the Dutch East Indies of the early 1900s, the years of the rise of anticolonial sentiment and protonationalist political organizations. The decade or so separating this from the time of the *Noli* has seen rapid technological change. These innovations have transformed the demon of comparisons into an objective world of comparison where the emergence of a more readily accessible world of print, especially in the vernaculars of colonized peoples, has made them increasingly conscious of progress in the outside world and the role of colonialism in perpetuating their stagnation. One no longer needs to be educated abroad like Ibarra to be possessed by comparison since the entire world of comparison—events occurring not only in Europe but also the rising tide of anticolonial movements in other parts of Asia, such as the successful Philippine revolution against Spain (1896–98), the Republican movement in China that led to the downfall

of the Ching dynasty on February 12, 1912, and the Japanese defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war (1904–05)—can come to the educated native through newspapers and other forms of printed knowledge.

The phrase “world of comparison” (*alam perbandingan*) appears in an episode where the protagonist, Minke, a Javanese aristocratic youth who has been educated in the exclusive Dutch colonial school system, becomes possessed by an anxious restlessness as a result of his awareness that his people have been subjected to a foreign people because of their backwardness. He contrasts this restlessness to the stagnant tranquillity and childlike ignorance of “traditional” communal life in the villages and points out that they remain stagnant because they are not part of the world of comparison.

I began to observe more closely the life of the village. I clearly could not ask its inhabitants to discuss the issue of modern organisation. They did not possess any knowledge of their own country. Most probably, they rarely left their own village. They have never read a book. Illiterate.

. . . A large number of [the small village children playing] will die due to a parasitical disease. . . . And if they survive, if they manage to overcome the parasitical diseases, is their condition any better than the time of their childhood? They will continue to live within their narrow destiny. Without ever having any comparison. Happy are those who know nothing. Knowledge, comparison, makes people aware of their own situation, and the situation of others, there is dissatisfied restlessness in the world of comparison [*gelisah dalam alam perbandingan*].

. . . The people around me have never known what I know . . . . They do not know anything except how to make a living and reproduce themselves. Oh, creatures like herded cattle! They do not even know how lowly their lives are. Nor do they know of the monstrous forces [*kekuatan raksasa*] in the wider world, which grow and expand, gradually swallowing everything in their way, without being satiated. Even if they knew, they would not pay any heed.

Within these surroundings, I felt like an All-Knowing god, who also knew their fate. They would become the prey of both criminals and imperialists. Something had to be done [*Sesuatu memang harus dikerjakan*].<sup>22</sup>

This is the catalyst for Minke’s organizational activity as a radical nationalist. In the previous volume, *Child of All Nations (Anak Semua Bangsa, 1981)*, the world of comparison had led him to identify with the frustrations of the Chinese youth movement:

[The backwardness of my people was] [s]hameful. But not only that. I became incensed because of my powerless awareness [*kesadaran yang tidak berdaya*]. . . . And Maarten Nijman wrote: “The Chinese Young Generation of intellectuals are envious of Japan’s progress. . . . Envious! Also furious and incensed because they are aware but powerless.” *Just like me*.<sup>23</sup>

More and more, we see that comparison is something that comes upon and constitutes the reflective self rather than something that it wills or decides to do. It is less a function of human psychology in Minke than it was in Ibarra. Comparison is no longer a matter of memory but of the inescapable force of what is read. It stems from the disquieting awareness of material forces at work in the wider world, especially forces that circulate knowledge and information, which disrupt our nonreflective intimate relationship with our immediate social surroundings. As was the case with Hegel's teleology of world history, comparison is an economy for the formation of the consciousness of peoples. But here it is the consciousness of a revolutionary subject who seeks to overturn Hegel's Eurocentric hierarchy.

As in Hegelian world history, in these novels about the rise of revolutionary anticolonial consciousness, comparison is a field of conflicting forces that is appropriated by the reflective consciousness of the subject that it forms. In the final instance, comparison, even though it is no longer a merely subjective technique but has become an objective structure, always returns back to the subject. Whatever disruption, anxiety, or competition it brings, it is an economy that ultimately serves the development of the human spirit and the establishment of the common good. This is why we have always understood comparison within the horizon of ethics. It is always a matter of the relation of a self to the other and how the self responds to, acts toward, or seeks to know the other.<sup>24</sup>

### III. Infrastructural Comparison and Biopower

We would be mistaken if we regarded the two modalities of comparison I have discussed above as being in a simple relation of opposition or contradiction that can be resolved by the regulation of competitive strife by ethical ideals of common humanity. The ethical relation to the other, indeed, ethics in general, is always a matter of power because it involves the capacity or ability to act or to do: to be generous, gracious, respectful, tolerant, or accepting of differences. This ability is coextensive with the strength of the self, computed in terms of its intellectual and material resources in specific contexts. This is evident in Hegel's developmental narrative and its reversal in anticolonial and postcolonial literature in a colonized people's revolutionary desire to develop itself. Indeed, the emergence of comparison as a material or objective structure—a world—in Pramoedya's *Buru Quartet* suggests that the ethical modality of comparison is premised on a more fundamental modality of comparison.

The emergence of comparative studies in Europe followed the discovery of the New World and the increased contact with non-European peoples that led to nineteenth-century colonialism. This gave rise to the need for the production of knowledge about these "others" within unequal power relations, especially those "others" with great civilizations and cultures that could be museumized. The critique of the complicity between colonialism/neocolonialism and anthropology's construction of the other is representative.<sup>25</sup> The ethical imperative to relate to the cultural other in a nonreductive, humane manner that informs current reflections on the comparative enterprise and also all of postcolonial theory is part of this epistemic formation. It seeks to reverse the epistemic violence inflicted on the cultural other that has resulted from the complicity between knowledge production and colonial/neocolonial domination. Edward Said, the founder of postcolonial theory and an eminent comparatist, offers this exemplary comment: "History is made by men and women just as it can also be unmade and unwritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated, so that 'our' East, 'our' Orient becomes ours to possess and direct."<sup>26</sup>

However, if we understand comparison only as a subjective technique that can be corrected or reformed through the raising of consciousness by means of an ethical dialectic of self and other, we obscure more fundamental processes of comparison that create the material conditions of the capacity for ethical comparison. These processes are concerned with the quantification and calculation of the conditions of human life in order to increase life as a resource. They are material processes in several senses. First, they are technologies directed at the material conditions of life that directly impact the population instead of individual consciousness. Second, they are deployed by states in order to enhance the material well-being of a society or nation by maximizing its resources. Third, they create a milieu in which the material existence and corporeal needs and capabilities as well as intellectual abilities of individual subjects as members of the population are crafted. Consequently, comparison becomes an ongoing material activity, an objective motor or operational infrastructure that shapes every aspect of human life. It conditions, influences, and shapes any intellectual consciousness that is engaged in ethical comparison and, thus, also exceeds and circumscribes such endeavors.

Adam Smith elaborates on this modulation of comparison from a technique of consciousness in the production of knowledge into a process that shapes a society by means of policies that improve its wealth. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) is a veritable machine of comparison that engages in comparison and makes it the motor of healthy societies. It begins by using comparison as a mode of philosophical analysis in the study of economic phenomena,

for example, the comparison of wealthy and poor nations in terms of different plans in increasing productivity and the different theories of political economy these plans generate. But since these theories exert influence on policy makers and can have an enormous impact on the economies of nations, comparative knowledge is also indispensable to policy makers. Comparison should, therefore, be the operational basis of any healthy political economy and be built into the science of political economy and its institutionalized policies and technologies.

Though those different plans were, perhaps, first introduced by the private interests and prejudices of particular orders of men, without any regard to, or foresight of, their consequences upon the general welfare of society; *yet they have given occasion to very different theories of political economy . . . .* Those theories *have had considerable influence*, not only upon the opinions of men of learning, but upon the public conduct of princes and sovereign states. I have endeavoured . . . to explain, as fully and distinctly as I can, those different theories, and *the principal effects which they have produced* in different ages and nations.<sup>27</sup>

Comparison is, moreover, central to human existence at another level: the practices of individuals in daily life. According to Smith's philosophical anthropology, exchange and trade are innate human propensities.

In civilised society he [man] stands at all times in need of the co-operation and assistance of great multitudes, while his whole life is scarce sufficient to gain the friendship of a few persons. In almost every other race of animals each individual, when it is grown up to maturity, is entirely independent, and in its natural state has occasion for the assistance of no other living creature. But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. . . . We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.<sup>28</sup>

Cooperation in the interests of self-love involves comparison. It requires a temporary coincidence of advantages arising out of plurality. Such coincidence is brought out by comparative activity that shows the other that his advantage coincides with my needs. This is an *a priori* form of exchange, an ontological reciprocity, if you will. Because we always need help from others, we must identify a synchronicity across all our differences of needs and advantages. This synchronicity then leads to actual exchanges, which gradually develop into the division of labor. Smith calls such comparison a "trucking disposition." "As it is by treaty, by barter, or by purchase, that we obtain from another the greater part of those



mutual good offices which we stand in need of, so it is this same trucking disposition which originally gives occasion to the division of labour."<sup>29</sup>

The modality of comparison Smith outlines is distinguishable from the ethical dialectic of self and other in two respects. First, although it involves the identification of similarities, the common does not refer to attributes of an ideal humanity. Smith explicitly rejects any appeal to a common humanity to facilitate cooperative exchange in favor of shared needs and interests. Since needs and interests change with the development of society, this commonality itself is inherently plastic and a product-effect of material changes. Second, the development of a society is furthered by technologies of comparison at the level of government that have become institutionalized. This means that the technologies that productively shape human life are detached from and exceed individual intellectual consciousness.

Indeed, this infrastructural form of comparison is the necessary backdrop for the emergence of what Michel Foucault calls biopower, a positive or productive modality of power that takes as its targets and objects of investment the life of the population. States, Foucault argues, begin to treat their populations as a resource because the post-Westphalian system of competitive relations between multiple absolute state units gives rise to a new principle of political power that is concerned with the maximization of the state's forces—its natural resources, commercial possibilities, balance of trade, and quality of its population. It is only within a framework of comparison between states that "we enter a politics whose principle object will be the employment and calculation of forces."<sup>30</sup> Henceforth, states attempt to organize production and commerce with the interrelated aims of enriching themselves through financial accumulation, strengthening themselves through increasing population, and maintaining themselves in a state of "permanent competition with foreign powers."<sup>31</sup> They also establish technologies of internal management (policing) so that they can develop their forces while preserving internal order (STP 313). Initially, in the seventeenth century, the population is regarded as a productive force and power (*qua* discipline) is directed at individual bodies (STP 69). However, from the eighteenth century onwards, with the rise of biopower proper, the population is regarded as a set of biological processes that are dependent on a series of variables that need to be managed "at the level and on the basis of what is natural in these processes" (STP 70).

For present purposes, two features of this new modality of power arising from infrastructural comparison are important. First, power is primarily affirmative and productive rather than prohibitive and repressive. It invests in the population in order to enhance and maximize the positive aspects of the population as a force. Second, it does not oper-

ate by directly impacting on the consciousness or even the psyche of its targets, that is, the collective will of the population or the individual wills of its members. It acts instead on a range of factors and elements that are remote from the population and its immediate behavior but have a fundamental impact on shaping the population because they constitute the physical-material milieu or environment for the biological existence of the population. Biopower is therefore a form of structural causality that works with natural processes to shape the milieu within which the biological well-being of the population and, therefore, their material needs and interests, can be formed and altered. It does not repress and manipulate what is spontaneous in individuals, namely, desire, but encourages their free play in order to achieve the general interest of the population.<sup>32</sup> Simply put, biopower does not affect individuals as a set of juridical subjects capable of voluntary actions that are restricted by sovereign legal command. Its object is “a multiplicity of individuals who are and fundamentally and essentially only exist biologically bound to the materiality within which they live” and it works by positively shaping this material milieu (STP 21).

Today, this biopolitical infrastructure of comparison operates at every level of human life and organizes human existence as such. The health of national economies is continually measured through quantitative comparison, and states carefully monitor and act on the constantly fluctuating diagnoses. The mass media keenly reports this information, and it affects the life and interests of households and individuals, primarily in the form of national stock exchange indices and currency exchange rates, mechanisms that most immediately indicate a country's healthy economic activity and purchasing power. For example, a recent newspaper article berates American consumers for living beyond their means in tough economic times.

Year after year, the United States bought more from the rest of the world than it sold as foreign nations cranked out shipload after shipload of goods destined for American consumers. . . . It was only thanks to the kindness of strangers that such a drain of dollars was able to continue. Every year, overseas investors poured hundreds of billions of dollars into U.S. stocks, bonds, real estate and other assets, largely offsetting our taste for imported goods. . . . Foreigners have become wary of underwriting the U.S. standard of living. The flow of outside investment is slowing.<sup>33</sup>

The economic rise of China is repeatedly characterized in terms of the usurpation of the United States' rightful place as the world's father figure.<sup>34</sup> Anxious, inflammatory, pseudo-Hegelian pronouncements about the beginning of a perverse world-historical stage also abound in the opinion pages of leading Western newspapers. A regular opinion

columnist in the *International Herald Tribune* screams: "The baton passes to Asia."

Every now and again, an ice cap the size of Rhode Island breaks off. The breaking sound right now is that of the end of the era of the white man. . . . The West's moment, I thought, is passing. Money and might are increasingly elsewhere. . . . Come to Asia and fear drains away. It's replaced by confidence and a burning desire to succeed. Asian business leaders are rock stars. The culture of education and achievement is fierce. China is bent on beating the U.S.A. What you feel in Asia, said Claude Smadja, a prominent global strategist, is "a burst of energy, of new dreams, and the end of the era of Western domination and the white man."<sup>35</sup>

But any resemblances to Hegel are fundamentally misleading. The divisive kind of comparison denounced by Rousseau that surfaces here is not generalized into an economy for the development of the human spirit or the establishment of a common good or pluralistic universal across qualitative differences. The comparison is not about quality but quantity. It is about the increase of resources by better management and the securing of more advantageous terms of exchange. It points to a certain "common," but this is not humanity as an ideal project to be actualized across qualitative differences, an end to which one strives to move upward, but the lowest common denominator of consumption and production for all human beings that a nation-state needs to increase within its borders in order to be "better" than others. It is concerned with a subject of biological needs. Such newspaper articles are not intended to foster the kind of critical revolutionary consciousness that will overthrow a system of unbearable domination we saw in Rizal's and Pramoedya's novels. They are concerned with maintaining current consumer standards of populations in the West. They express the anxiety that the West will be outdone by Asia in consumption with the hope of instilling this anxiety in their readers. Comparison is not a process of a critical consciousness but something that occurs so effortlessly and obviously as part of the biopolitical infrastructure of comparison that we no longer think about it.

What happens to critical or revolutionary consciousness in this material world of comparison? I end by briefly discussing Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), a novel that dramatizes the tragic implications of comparison as a material infrastructure for a nation in the contemporary postcolonial South. Clare Savage, the novel's female protagonist, is a Jamaican from a privileged Creole clan. At sixteen, she is uprooted when her family migrates to America. After experiencing racist discrimination in America and the "mother country," England, where she attends university, she returns to Jamaica and joins a guerrilla movement

to fight against the degradation of her country and her people by the global capitalist transformation of Jamaica into a destination for luxury tourism and an exotic location for films. Clare is the contemporary Caribbean counterpart of Ibarra and Minke. The demon of comparisons has ignited her patriotism. After decolonization, the revolution's target is the postcolonial state, the collaborator with global capital. Clare is instructed by the guerrilla leader to revolutionize her consciousness: "Perhaps you will go further . . . sometimes it is the only way. We are not thugs, you know . . . You speak of the knowledge of resistance . . . the loss of this knowledge. I ask you to think of Bishop. Rodney. Fanon. Lumumba. Malcolm. First. Luthuli. Garvey. Mxembe. Marley. Moloise. Think of those who are gone—and ask yourself how, why?"<sup>36</sup>

In the novel's final chapter, the guerrillas attack the site of a film about Jamaica history. This incident is framed by a thematization of the extent of Jamaica's degradation by global capital. A fictive excerpt from the *New York Times* sells Jamaica as a beautiful film location, noting among other things that "it also has a racially mixed population of many hues and ethnic distinctions, which . . . includes a number of people willing to serve as extras."<sup>37</sup> The narrative then cuts to a scene where two film industry people scouting for locations crudely discuss the prostitution of Jamaica. "You can't beat the prices. And, besides, they need the money . . . real bad. They'll shape up . . . they have to. They're trapped. All tied up by the IMF."<sup>38</sup> "Jamaicans will do anything for a buck. . . . Everyone from the hookers to the prime minister, babe. These people are used to selling themselves. I don't think they know from revolution."<sup>39</sup>

People can only sell themselves and a state can only sell its people if human life is viewed through the quantitative measure of growth. The promise of growth is also a trap, the IMF trap where inflows of foreign capital through tourism are viewed as the optimal basis for Jamaican national development. The novel's ending is appropriately ambiguous. The film shooting is a trap set for the guerrillas who are killed by fire from Jamaican army helicopters. On the one hand, Clare is repatriated. In her death, she has become part of her native soil. On the other hand, the popular nation, personified by the guerrillas, is betrayed by the Jamaican state, which appears to have arranged the ambush. But more importantly, it is unclear whether their deaths are also recorded as part of a filmic retelling of the suppression of resistance in Jamaican history to give the film even greater realism. In the earlier conversation, one of the film producers boasts that he has rented soldiers from the Jamaican army complete with helicopters. The narrative therefore dramatizes the snuffing out of revolutionary consciousness by the material world of comparison.

The more sobering point, however, is this: even if a revolution is successful, successful government would require increasing resources and

enhancing means so as to best satisfy the needs and interests of the population. The quantification of human life would necessarily inform and shape the values and principles of actors pursuing the common good. We remain part of the material world of comparison insofar as calculations concerning resources, means, and capabilities cannot be absolute. They are always relative and competitive, always a matter of more or less in comparison to whom.

The implications for rethinking comparison are several. First, the fact that power is not primarily directed at consciousness but works through infrastructural comparison and political technologies that shape the milieu affecting populations in order to craft bodies and material interests severely qualifies the preoccupations of an ethics of comparison. Such an ethics attempts to rectify the exclusion of the other through repressive discursive representations that distort and reinforce qualitative differences. There are undoubtedly instances of Orientalist stereotyping in economic processes, for example, to justify the exploitation of cheap overseas labor or the mistreatment of migrant workers. There are also discriminatory practices targeting minority groups within populations that should be resisted. But the current emphasis on repatriating jobs and creating new ones in the North Atlantic in times of economic distress indicates that power's primary focus is to incorporate bodies and enhance the population by accommodating the needs and interests of its members. The competition between populations is a dynamic internal to the quantification of life. Even though it produces and reinforces effects of domination, the original impetus of the quantification of life is not the will to dominate others but the inclusion of others. The reduction of human beings to the same lowest common denominator of basic needs and interests that are calculable makes us all intrinsically interconnected because it facilitates the formation of tighter and, in principle, optimal relations of mutual advantage. Accordingly, free trade is seen as friendly competition and all developing countries want friendly inflows of foreign capital. Just as Marx inverted Hegel and argued that the various shapes of spirit were epiphenomena of a material infrastructure, just as he argued that world literature is generated from a material world of production, I am suggesting that the figures of comparison that preoccupy humanities scholars today and the current reinvigoration of comparative intellectual activity are the epiphenomena of infrastructural processes of comparison premised on the quantification of life. An ethics of comparison is too easily integrated into this infrastructure as a form of cultural capital that bespeaks the intellectual superiority of national academic institutions capable of cultivating such an ethics.

Second, it would be sentimental and nostalgic to counter this material world of comparison by lamenting the degradation of the human

spirit by calculation and quantification and calling for a reaffirmation of humanity and its rights, or better yet, to make claims on behalf of both a degraded humanity and its excluded others. The Frankfurt School's critique of instrumental reason also contained a critique of quantification.<sup>40</sup> But because it remained within a Marxist framework of alienation and preserved the priority of human critical consciousness, it foreclosed the fact that humanity itself and all its capacities, needs, and interests are produced by these calculative technologies. This means that all claims in the name of humanity are necessarily imbricated in and circumscribed by these technologies. For example, much is made of the importance of education in fostering socially responsible and humane development. But in the final analysis, education is about the enhancement of human capital so that a given country can be comparatively stronger than others in this most valuable of resources.

Third, one vocational task of literature in this world of comparison is to provide an aesthetic-cognitive mapping of how the mechanisms and technologies of infrastructural comparison work in specific locations and their negative, coercive effects. But literature is also part of the postindustrial comparison machine, which conjures up new forms of comparison where cultural production is indispensable. To take the most obvious example, in the endless search for new opportunities in global markets, there is intense competition among cities outside the top tier of global cities (New York, London, and Tokyo) to join the ranks of the second tier in order to be better equipped to attract transnational capital and gradually ascend the international division of labor. Culture is an important variable in ranking global cities. A city with a vibrant cosmopolitan culture and built environment that can serve as symbolic markers of global city status is more attractive to foreign talent. Aspiring global cities around the world have organized culture festivals, film festivals, art biennales, and literature festivals to demonstrate the presence of a critical mass of cultural capital. Committed literature can outline the limits of the world of comparison and point to a world to come. But like the ethics of comparison, it is also implicated in the processes of infrastructural comparison.

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NOTES

1 Haun Saussy, "Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares," in *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, ed. Haun Saussy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2006), 3.

2 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press,

- 1997), 268, translation modified where appropriate; *Essai sur l'origine des langues, Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond (Paris: Pléiade, 1995), 5:396.
- 3 Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 267–68, emphasis added; 5:395–96.
- 4 Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 268; 5:396.
- 5 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Foundations of Inequality among Men*, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), Note XV [1], 218 (hereafter cited as FI); *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, Œuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond (Paris: Pléiade, 1959) 3:219.
- 6 Rousseau notes that during a riot, the uneducated rabble prevents combatants from killing each other whereas the prudent man withdraws (I.37, 153–54).
- 7 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. and trans. Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), 18.
- 8 Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," in *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 44, translation modified; "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht," *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik I, Werkausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 11:31–50.
- 9 Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," 44; 37.
- 10 Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," 45, translation modified; 38.
- 11 Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," 50, translation modified; 46.
- 12 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 300; *Kritik der Urteilskraft, Werkausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 10:392.
- 13 See G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), 52–53.
- 14 G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), §340, 371.
- 15 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §347, 374.
- 16 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 143.
- 17 G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lecture on Fine Arts*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1:77.
- 18 For a fuller discussion of decolonization as a form of *Bildung* and the striking privileging of the Bildungsroman in the literature of revolutionary decolonizing nationalism in Asia and Africa, see Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2003), 235–47.
- 19 José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, trans. Harold Augenbraum (London: Penguin, 2006), 54.
- 20 Benedict Anderson has translated the phrase, *el demonio de las comparaciones*, as "the spectre of comparisons." This passage from Rizal's novel is crucial to Anderson's own formulation of a non-Eurocentric method of comparison in which Europe is viewed from the standpoint of Southeast Asia as through an inverted telescope. See Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 2. For a more sustained discussion, see Pheng Cheah, "Grounds of Comparison," in *Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Jonathan Culler (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1–20. My analysis of Rizal has benefited from conversations with Anderson.
- 21 Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, 400–401.
- 22 Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Jejak Langkah* (Kuala Lumpur: Wira Karya: 1986), 170–71, my translation. For a more detailed discussion of how the world of print generates a comparative gaze in Pramoedya's tetralogy, see Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 273–80.

- 23 Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Anak Semua Bangsa* (Kuala Lumpur: Wira Karya: 1982), 46, my translation.
- 24 The ethical relation to the other can be radicalized (à la Lévinas) to the point that even in the “good” kind of comparison, the establishment of a common world and of humanity as the measure of what is common to self and other involves the domestication of alterity insofar as otherness is brought back into the self by identification and is seen as comparable to the self because it is an other self, an other that is like the self. The self is elevated into a communal self at the expense of the other.
- 25 See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983), and Edward Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 205–25.
- 26 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, twenty-fifth anniv. ed. (New York: Vintage, 2003), xviii.
- 27 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), 3, emphasis added.
- 28 Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 18.
- 29 Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 19.
- 30 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977–78*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 295 (hereafter cited as STP).
- 31 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978–79*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.
- 32 See Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 73; and *Birth of Biopolitics*, 44–45.
- 33 Sam Zuckerman, “Lifeline in Sea of Debt,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 27, 2008, A1, A8.
- 34 Roger Cohen, “The Fleecing of America,” *New York Times*, September 22, 2008, and Jane Perlez, “China Competes with West in Aid to Its Neighbors,” *New York Times*, September 18, 2006.
- 35 Roger Cohen, “The Baton Passes to Asia,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 31, 2008, 6.
- 36 Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven* (London: Methuen, 1987), 196.
- 37 Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*, 200.
- 38 Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*, 201.
- 39 Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*, 202.
- 40 See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).