

October 2010
Volume 125 Number 4

PMLA

Special Topic
Literary Criticism for the
Twenty-First Century

Publications of the Modern Language Association of America

PMLA

October 2010 Volume 125 Number 4

Pages 897-1152

From the Garden of Knowledge

Scholarship on literatures and languages—what used to be called philology and still is in many quarters outside the United States—has long lost its momentum in public intellectual discourse. Its marginalization occurs at a point in history when we need the humanities to help solve one of the most urgent problems of the twenty-first century: how radically different cultures might live together with mutual respect for each other's differences. How, then, can we secure the existence of these disciplines and assure their survival? We need to reorient the humanities in this changed environment and to ask anew the question that Goethe posed in a different historical context: tell me, what is life to you?

When one examines the development of the humanities, especially during the second half of the past century, one notices that the term *life* has almost entirely disappeared from methodological and ideological debates. While this does not automatically entail a loss of these debates' relevance for life, it does mean that the humanities have lost a space for reflection. Other academic fields have increasingly occupied this space and its potential for creating meaning and for connecting meaning with action. Through the term *life sciences*, a constellation of biotechnological disciplines has appropriated the term *life* in an effective, deceptively self-evident way, increasingly robbing the humanities of any authority to produce knowledge about life. This narrowing of *bios*, a broadly conceived understanding of life that includes specifically cultural dimensions, to a bio- and natural-scientific concept is dangerous for the life of a society and for its cultural and intellectual development. Can humanists change this course?

For the humanities to survive in our present and future societies, it is vital that they conceive of themselves as *sciences for liv-*

Literature as Knowledge for Living, Literary Studies as Science for Living

ing [*Lebenswissenschaften*]. Literary scholars can take the lead by capitalizing on their discipline's critical function to develop an open concept of life and of knowledge *about* and *for* living, systematically interrogating the "uses and disadvantages" literary scholarship has for life.^a Such knowledge must "serve life"—that is, it must be grounded in dialogue and theory rather than in ideology (Nietzsche 59). This trajectory might prevent literary scholarship, along with the rest of the humanities, from comfortably settling down in a Nietzschean garden of knowledge increasingly walled off from the concept and the practice of life. The reorientation toward the idea of life that I advocate here cannot be a superficial, short-lived tactic. Rather, it ought to be a systematic and concerted effort to think through the obligations that the *sciences humaines*, the human sciences, have to our societies and to begin to realize their immense potential for improving how people live with one another. Any academic discipline that does not make its knowledge available to the society in which it exists shirks its responsibility toward that society and, in the end, has largely itself to blame for being pushed aside.^b

Should the humanities confront the natural sciences? No. Rather than attacking the semantic reductionism of the biosciences' concept of life, humanists need to initiate a serious dialogue with the biosciences. This dialogue has to include literary and cultural knowledge, thus making possible a more complete understanding of life and of the humanities as part of the *sciences for living*. Doing so would break down the imaginary border between Charles Percy Snow's "two cultures," whose hypothetical existence many still take for granted on the discursive level and, even more so, on the level of academic politics and policies.^c We need to

create a contrastive *and* complementary web of knowledge and comprehensive "scientific" systems that include humanists as equal partners. In the long run, literary criticism and theory will likely survive only if they formulate strategies and approaches that would include them fully in a nonreductive conception of the sciences for living.

Life, the Life Sciences, and the Sciences for Living

In the early twenty-first century, systems of ordering knowledge production continue, as a rule, to prescribe clear distinctions between the natural sciences and the humanities and between the humanities and the social sciences.¹ The strange career of the so-called life sciences is a case in point. Discussions of the human genome, stem cell research, the possibility for cloning animal or human life, and the engineering of genes or seeds have increasingly left the public with the impression that a few, highly specialized academic fields actually covered the entire spectrum of knowledge about human life. At least before September 11, a search for the "key" to human life dominated feature pages, television shows, and political debates. The mystery of life finally appeared to be decipherable: it was a code, a calculable and, in the end, predictable chain.² The popularization of fascinating theories for comprehending life and of impressive natural-scientific research results changed how people conceived of everyday life and of a safe future. Both the mass media and sponsors of research invested the biosciences with extraordinary significance: the life sciences became the sciences of life.

But the genetic code of life is not the only thing we can *read*. Equally readable is the discursive code that places the biosciences at the center of a society's attention. Against these sciences' hegemonic claims to universality, Hans-Georg Gadamer offers a cautionary note about the relation between the natural sciences and the humanities:

One enjoys asking the humanities in which precise sense they want to be sciences, in the light of the fact that there are no criteria for comprehending texts or words. For the natural sciences and various forms of technology, it is certainly true that a lack of ambiguity in their means of communication is guaranteed. But it is incontrovertible that even the apparatus of a civilization that is founded on science and technology does not nearly cover all aspects of living together. (202)

The phrase *life sciences* is as ambiguous as it is radiant and all-encompassing. It vastly reduces the term *life* from the breadth of meaning it enjoyed in Western antiquity. Because of its possessive and repressive tendencies, and through the metaphors it borrows from literature and the humanities, the concept of life sciences attempts to bar other branches of knowledge from accessing life.

Philosophy has already reacted to the challenge of genetic technology. In the context of eugenics, for instance, philosophy has questioned what life would be like without, as Habermas puts it, "the emotions roused by moral sentiments like obligation and guilt, reproach and forgiveness, without the liberating effect of moral respect, without the happiness felt through solidarity and without the depressing effect of moral failure, without the 'friendliness' of a civilized way of dealing with conflict and opposition" (73). Yet in a 2000 speech, Habermas also observes that philosophy is no longer confident enough to risk "answers to questions regarding the personal, or even the collective, conduct of life" (1). Criticizing the field of ethics for having been reduced to what Adorno had called "a melancholy science" (15), Habermas tellingly resorts to a literary text to point to the potential for disconcerting questions—and no less disconcerting answers—that literature has always held in store for its readers. Max Frisch's novel *Stiller* (1954) shows that literature never misses an opportunity to tell us about life and to show us the paradoxes and aporias of

knowledge for living. Habermas uses *Stiller* to make this point: "Frisch has *Stiller*, the public prosecutor, ask, 'What does a human being do with the time he has to live? I was hardly fully aware of the question; it was simply an irritation'" (1). Literary scholars, unlike philosophers, barely react to such questions; they do not even register them anymore. In the end, is it not literary scholarship that has turned from a joyful, or at least pleasurable, pursuit into a melancholy one?

The swift dissemination of the term *life sciences* has provoked many reactions and complaints but, it seems to me, has not resulted in any new strategies in the fields that focus on literature. Literary scholars have hardly begun to consider the impact of the biosciences' recourse to the life metaphor and all the confusion and perplexity that follow in the wake of this impact. Above all, literary scholars should know better than to risk relinquishing the term *life* and allowing it to function in such a limited way.

The public's ready embrace of the term *life sciences* indicates that people have an enormous interest in the systematic study of life, and this interest should open our eyes to the opportunities for the humanities if they were to conceive of themselves as part of the sciences for living. After all, life is not the loot of a single cluster of disciplines; it does not obey the logic of a simple code. Indeed, work in the natural sciences has gained much clarity from its varied encounters—with, for instance, "moral economies" and "cognitive passions" (Daston and Park 157). While it might be comforting to think that the life sciences participate in life more than their proponents would either know or care, this does not excuse humanists from the responsibility to protect life from the bioscientific claim to represent it completely and exclusively.³ Especially in times of heated debates about preimplantation diagnostics and stem cell research, literary scholarship stands a better chance than philosophy to propose mod-

els for life without arousing the suspicion of proffering, or even prescribing, normative concepts. This is particularly important because models for the "right (way of) life," both in literature and in philosophy, have an ever-shorter half-life in multi-, inter-, and transcultural contexts where life-forms and situations rapidly pluralize.

If we perceive the life sciences merely as a network of largely applied sciences while at the same time considering them as an experimental ensemble of biochemical, biophysical, biotechnological, and medical fields of research, we inevitably run the risk of losing the broad cultural diversity inherent in *bios*. A culturally sound concept of life, one that is also oriented toward literature, can counteract such a potential danger by reclaiming the differentiation between *zoë*, "the simple fact of living common to all living beings," and *bios*, which denotes "the form or way of living proper to an individual or group" (Agamben 1). Giorgio Agamben places this distinction at the center of his *Homor Sacer* from the start. The Italian philosopher is in the tradition of great intellectuals whose thinking revolved, to a considerable degree, around the epistemological relevance of forms as well as concepts of life.

In an essay for the programmatic journal *Die Wandlung* ["The Transformation"], Leo Spitzer defined literary scholarship as "the science [*Wissenschaft*] that seeks to comprehend the human being to the extent to which he expresses himself in words (speech) and linguistic creations" (179). For this "science," following Auerbach's line of thought about a philology of *Weltliteratur*, to dare again "what earlier periods dared to do—to designate man's place in the universe" ("Philology" 17), it has to conceive of itself as a science for living and, as such, a part of the life sciences in the broadest sense. That such an idea is hardly foreign, at least to scholarship in Romance languages, is evident from the notable yet unnoticed frequency with which the lexeme *life* appears at the end of Auerbach's foundational

work, *Mimesis*. Here, Auerbach grapples with a new orientation and a new conception of philology against the background of the catastrophes of World War II and the Shoah and in the midst of an acutely felt linguistic and cultural homogenization. It is no coincidence that the final chapter of *Mimesis*, in the German original, ends with the verb *erleben* ["to experience" or "to live through"]:

The strata of societies and their different *ways of life* have become inextricably mingled. There are no longer even exotic peoples. A century ago (in Mérimée for example), Corsicans or Spaniards were still exotic; today, the term would be quite unsuitable for Pearl Buck's Chinese peasants. Beneath the conflicts, and also through them, an economic and cultural leveling process is taking place. It is still a long way to a *common life of mankind* on earth, but the goal begins to be visible. And it is most concretely visible now in the unprejudiced, precise, interior and exterior representation of the random *moment in the lives* of different people. So the complicated process of dissolution, which led to fragmentation of the exterior action, to reflection of consciousness, and to stratification of time, seems to be tending toward a very simple solution. Perhaps it will be too simple to please those who, despite all its dangers and catastrophes, admire and love our epoch for the sake of its *abundance of life* and the incomparable historical vantage point which it affords. But they are few in number, and probably they will not *live to see* much more than the first forewarnings of the approaching unification and simplification.

(552-53 [Ette's emphases])

Today, we have a broader view than Auerbach did in the immediate post-World War II period of the cultural homogenization that he sketched and of the simultaneous cultural (re)differentiation that was then under way. Yet his insistence on a concept of life stands for an awareness of the need for literary scholars to *care about and for life* in the fullest sense.

Knowledge for Living

I want to use the concept of knowledge for living to suggest new perspectives on the relevance of literature and literary scholarship to human societies and their histories. Terminologically, *knowledge for living* opens our view onto the complex relation between the semantic poles of the compound phrase. This relation is multilayered or multidimensional. To combine *living* with *knowledge* implies knowledge *about* or *of* life. It also implies knowledge for the purpose or benefit of living. Further, these different aspects of knowledge exist *in* life and are inseparable for a living (and knowing) subject. Knowledge is a fundamental characteristic of life processes and the practice of living. From this vantage, knowledge for living appears as a specific way of living one's life, which includes reflecting on how one lives. Knowledge for living can be gained through concrete experiences in immediate life contexts *and* through the production and reception of symbolic goods. In this way, knowledge for living can also be understood as an *imagined* form of living and as a process of imagining life (and lives), in which self-referentiality and self-reflexivity are critically important. In other words, knowledge for living is bound up in life experiences but never tied to a single logic. Rather, the term implies the ability to think and act simultaneously according to different sets of logic.

Against this background, one may understand literature as an ever-changing and interactive storehouse of knowledge for living. In contrast to philosophy, which seeks to construct internally coherent systems of meaning, literature focuses on artistically enriching coherence with *incoherence*, a process that quantum theory knows as superposition. As a mutable and dynamic storehouse of knowledge for living, literature devises and aesthetically shapes blueprints for how to live. For this purpose, it draws on, and draws in, many partial knowledges, including academic

discourses. Literature specializes in not being specialized, with respect to disciplines and to lived realities and cultural differences. Because literature neither negates nor cements the division between the humanities and the biosciences and has access to a multitude of codes from radically different traditions of thinking and writing, the most diverse fragments of knowledge circulate through it. Literature is therefore singularly able to store a wide range of knowledge for living and to keep it at its readers' disposal. It also shapes forms of life artistically, in Juri Lotman's sense of a secondary modeling system, enabling readers to experience them aesthetically. In the biosciences and biotechnologies, life and knowledge cannot be thought of together in specific forms, practices, and models the way they can in the realm of literature, where life is *not* forced into disciplinary systems. For literary criticism and critical theory, knowledge for living is intrinsic to the very process of knowing; it is part of the object of study and of the subject's (the scholar's) individual life contexts.

Intra- and Extratextual Dimensions of Knowledge for Living

Knowledge for living has behind it a long tradition in western European literary histories, in which, starting with Aristotle's concept of catharsis, the question of literature's performance of knowledge for living has been as central as the question of how to acquire such knowledge. In an essay on the act of reading from a phenomenological point of view, originally published in English in 1972, Wolfgang Iser identifies three major aspects of the relation between text and reader: "the process of anticipation and retrospection, the consequent unfolding of the text as a living event, and the resultant impression of lifelikeness" ("Reading Process" 142). Compelling the reader to "seek continually for consistency" causes the reader "to be entangled in the text 'gestalt' that he himself has produced"; this

creates the impression of "experiencing" as a form of imaginative living through (142-43). Insofar as the act of reading includes "an element of our being of which we are not directly conscious," literature offers us "the chance to formulate the unformulated" (145). Following Iser, we may say that fictionality creates a space of experimentation in which readers, in serious playfulness, can test out different life situations, with which they can engage to collect experiences that they could not have in "real life."

Iser's observation that "fictional texts [are] always ahead of our practice of life, of the way in which we live our lives" touches on a problem that the field of reception aesthetics has introduced but never fully engaged ("Apellstruktur" 250):^d the interconnectedness of literature and life practice, which is implicit in the idea of knowledge for living. The extent to which literature integrates fragments of knowledge for living and sets them in motion enables it to produce knowledge for living as knowledge of having imaginatively lived through an event or situation. In this way, literature translates into narrative models the discursive structures of what one might call, with a wink in Barthes's direction, fragments of a living discourse. Unlike philosophy, literature can translate life knowledge into experiential knowledge that is unfettered from the discipline-bound rules of academic discourse, allowing it to come into view more clearly. Along with being able to integrate multiple sets of logic *simultaneously*, this ability is one of literature's greatest trump cards.

My brief recourse to the promise that Iser's reader-response theories have not yet fulfilled helps explain how the concept of knowledge for living applies to and functions in literary texts in at least two ways: intratextually (e.g., in the narrative modeling of characters) and extratextually (e.g., in how people experience art in a given society).

On the intratextual level, the challenge is to understand the dynamic modeling of

literary characters as complex choreographies of individuals who possess different kinds of life knowledge. For example, in Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, the cradle of the modern European novel, there are two characters with vastly divergent knowledges for living. The novel juxtaposes their knowledges in ever-new twists and turns of the plot and experimentally tests, reflects, and modifies them in its fictional laboratory. Sancho Panza, on the one hand, inhabits the world of Spanish sayings, relying on knowledge that has been accumulated in the proverbs of Iberian popular culture, which Werner Krauss presented in such novel and entertaining ways (308-33). *Don Quixote*, on the other hand, possesses a knowledge for living that represents the splendor and the peril, the creativity and the collapse, of a fictional world that unexpectedly, and fatally, encroaches on the practice of "real" life. The novel sets in motion these antithetical fragments of knowledge for living and charts the consequences of their movements and clashes.

For certain characters, the literary experiment can turn out to be painful, as it does for Flaubert's Emma Bovary in the intratextual constellations that connect her with the country doctor Bovary, the pharmacist Homais, the merchant Lheureux, and the estate owner Rodolphe. Emma's life project is wrecked through her contact with the differently located sociocultural discourses of mediocrity embodied in these characters and with their *idées reçues*, which so fascinated Flaubert.

The world of the novel may thus be understood as a microcosm of different types of knowledge for living, to the extent at least that the heteroglossia on which Bakhtin insisted so emphatically can mark the existence of an open dialogue in the "feedback-linked multiparameter systems" of which knowledge for living consists (Cramer 168). If literature is an interactive medium for storing knowledge for living, Bakhtin's cosmos of polyvocality, in its turn, constitutes forms, norms,

and ways of life that are as different as they are differently acquired. The self-referentiality and self-reflexivity of all processes of knowledge for living are embedded in the multi-, inter-, and transcultural contexts of literature as a whole, especially in the translanguing literary forms that I call literatures without a fixed abode. Literature offers forms of local knowledge for living (what Clifford Geertz has termed "local knowledge" from the perspective of anthropology) as well as forms of a worldwide circulation of knowledge, which, on the intratextual level, represent delocalized or translocalized life practices.

On the extratextual level, attention to specific cultural and sociohistorical ways of acquiring literary knowledge for living takes center stage. Where "closeness to life" and the testing of a "life practice" through fiction is concerned, the question arises of how to translate the literary experiment into one's own ways of living, perhaps even into certain groups' practices of everyday life. Whatever the cultural specifics of such a translation, it never literally carries over from one situation to another. Literature's problematic power to shape ideas of a "good life" and to corrupt presumably innocent, yet receptive, readers registered in the nineteenth-century French immoralism trials against novels and poetry (Heitmann), the court proceedings against *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the ostracism of "deviant" authors in Cuba, and the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, among many examples. In the foreground of this long tradition always stood reflections of how intratextual knowledge for living might be transformed into extratextual life practice or else of how this transformation, this acquisition of knowledge, might be prevented or at least slowed. Whether it wants to or not, literature taps into readers' knowledge for living and threatens to upend existing norms.

The reciprocal imbrications of intra- and extratextual levels are particularly important for a literary work's paratextual apparatus:

prefaces and afterwords, titles and subtitles, illustrations and interviews with authors. The literatures of the world bridge immense distances in time and place to facilitate transtemporal and translocal acquisitions of life knowledge. Far from a rare occurrence, this diversity of culturally inflected patterns of interpretations and practices of knowledge acquisition fascinates contemporary authors and their worldwide audiences. As Amin Maalouf pointed out in a 2001 interview, "The fact that human beings from the most different cultures read the same stories, react to them, smile about the same texts or get excited by them, presents an opportunity to create passageways between vastly different cultures. This is art's function . . ." (101). Following Maalouf, who was born in Lebanon, lives in Paris, and whose novels, written in French, are available in many languages, we might say that reading literature in different cultural surrounds can create new connections between cultures, which can influence the behavior, even the life practices, of groups of readers anywhere in the world. At the same time, it is safe to assume that national and monolingual narratives continue to dominate the scene. The one-hundred-year-old reception history of the writings of the Cuban poet, essayist, and revolutionary José Martí illustrates the degree to which discursive forms or political ideas remain accessible to later generations of readers (Ette, *Apostel*). This accessibility holds equally true for norms and forms of life and even extends to readers adopting certain patterns of action and ways of life.

Knowledge for Living Together

Taken together, the intra- and extratextual dimensions of the knowledge for living that literature stores constitute fundamental aspects of what I would like to call *knowledge for living together* [*Zusammenlebenswissen*]. Literary scholarship ought to devote special attention to the ways in which novels, drama,

and poetry render explicit literary characters' knowledge for living. Of vital significance in this context are artistic representations of living spaces: a city, a house, and a room are fractal patterns that may function like a *modèle réduit* (Claude Lévi-Strauss) or a *mise en abyme* (André Gide) to offer paradigms of knowledge for living and confer knowledge for how to live together in a given society. Examining representations of such spaces affords us the opportunity to tease out forms of living together as they manifest themselves in literary texts and to situate these forms culturally, historically, or societally. We can deduce from such studies highly dynamic forms of knowledge—highly dynamic because they are, by necessity, highly adaptable—that are most accurately described as knowledge for living together.

At its core, knowledge for living together is knowledge of the conditions, possibilities, and limits of living together as the literatures of the world have shaped it aesthetically and have tested it experimentally from radically different cultural perspectives. The concept has not only social, political, and economic dimensions but also cultural and ethical ones. Although the literatures of the world have always been concerned with knowledge for living together, literary scholars have yet to mine this resource in any extensive and systematic fashion. Nor have they contributed any of this knowledge to recent public debates on the subject of life. But literary criticism and critical theory should be at the forefront of such discussions as we face the most important, and at the same time riskiest, challenge of the twenty-first century: the search for paradigms of co-existence that would suggest ways in which humans might live together in peace and with mutual respect for one another's differences.

Literary scholarship, as part of the sciences for living, is always acutely aware of itself, because it wants to produce knowledge for living together. This self-reflexivity is perhaps the legacy of Roland Barthes's posthumously

published lecture *Comment vivre ensemble*. In this lecture, part of a seminar held at the Collège de France in 1976–77, Barthes focuses his intellectual attention and theoretical curiosity on the question of how people might live together in difference. He notes under the keyword *closure* that leaving the protective mother's womb might itself stand for life and its definition: "to leave is to be exposed: life itself" (96). Unsurprisingly, Barthes, as semiologist and sign theorist, concerns himself with the question of distance to the other and to material objects, in the novelistic sphere and in actual life. Barthes also addresses the significance of touching the other slightly (what he called *frôlage* [112]), which shows performatively that the other's body is not taboo, no matter the reason for touching it. He focuses as well on the significance of an immediate environment for living together, a *proxémie*, a concept the author of *The Pleasure of the Text* had taken from Edward Twitchell. *Proxémie* refers to a culturally shaped space that surrounds the subject at arm's length, so to speak, and whose perhaps most important objects—as "créateurs de proxémie"—are the lamp and the bed (155–56). Barthes also took important cues from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) and developed Bachelard's spatial analysis as he addressed the question of living together.

Probing the different forms and rhythms of cloistral and anchoretic coexistences, for instance, would bring to light a broad spectrum of historically accumulated knowledge of *vivre ensemble*, of which only parts have been passed on to later generations. Analyses of texts by Thomas Mann, Émile Zola, Daniel Defoe, or André Gide, in addition to the numerous autobiographemes of scholars themselves, can broaden this spectrum even further. Much like Iser, in the writings of his that I have quoted above, Barthes starts from the premise that literature is always ahead of everything else: "toujours en avance sur tout" (167). In other words, literature has available

for its readers areas of knowledge and questions that academic scholarship, notably psychology, would have to labor long and hard to bring to life.

In many ways, Barthes's question in *Comment vivre ensemble* is intertwined with his *Lover's Discourse*, but it stretches the former text toward a new horizon. His inquiry into the topic of living together illustrates initial possibilities for how literary analysis might connect literature and life without collapsing one into the other. The realization of literature's meaning and entelechy must not lead to a continued exiling of life from literary scholarship. The bracketing of one of the central questions that literature poses has inhibited literary theory's development, particularly since the second half of the twentieth century. We continue to feel this trend's negative repercussions today, when societies should instead recognize literature as an indispensable source of knowledge for living and for living together. While this function should not replace other functions of literature, literary theory should finally accept it and take it seriously as a genuine research subject.⁴

In thousands of years, the literatures of the world have accumulated a body of knowledge that has tremendous relevance for the knowledge for living together. Literary scholarship would do well to devote much more, and more systematic, attention to analyzing exactly how literature stores such knowledge. Exploring this storage function in detail is a foundation for reorienting literary theory and for precise and dynamic accounts of specific forms and ways of life. The different genres and subgenres of the literatures of the world can provide us with knowledge of how to live (in the novel), of how people have lived (in biography), and of how to try to transform one's own performed life into knowledge for living (in autobiography). The varieties of autobiographical writings for and about life and survival [*ÜberLebenSchreiben*], in particular, produce a knowledge whose analysis is indis-

pensable for a comprehensive understanding of life. This knowledge will help inform the further development of our societies, challenging their historically grown self-conceptions and guiding meaningful agendas for the future.

The issue of how to live together better includes the question of how to approach knowledges for living that have completely different cultural origins and inflections. Any knowledge for living together will consequently have to reflect on the limits and the validity of its own ideas in the lived contexts of multicultural side-by-side-ness, intercultural togetherness, and transcultural mixed-upness. Paradigms for producing knowledge for living together will also have to combine respect for others with an awareness of gender, social, and other cultural differences. Doing so is crucial for the peaceful coexistence of a humanity that, since the mid-twentieth century, has possessed nuclear and other means of its own destruction.

Literary Scholarship as a Science for Living Together

To determine anew the place of humans in the universe, literary scholarship needs to reflect anew on its place in a changed system of knowledge production. A concept of *knowledge for living*, understood as one of literary studies' tasks, would be able to deliver an important impetus for creating an academic landscape better and more productively attuned to the cultural diversity of human life. The conception of biosciences as "life sciences," in its turn, would greatly benefit from reclaiming the idea of life in a cultural and literary-theoretically grounded way that would return to the very idea of life science its indispensable cultural dimension. I see it as inevitable that literary scholarship will develop in the direction of a science for living together [*Zusammenlebenswissenschaft*] and that the humanities will become incorporated

into a broader conception of the sciences for living. Nevertheless, we should not fool ourselves: art and literature will not provide us with some higher form of knowledge about life. But literature is capable of simulating many forms of life practice, making them accessible performatively and offering readers ways to "re-live" them and to understand the limits of their own cultural knowledge(s).

The time is right to understand literary scholarship as a science for living together and to embark on research collaborations that include literary studies as much as they do bioscientific research. Such collaborations might contribute to elaborating what Auerbach, in the passage above, from the final chapter of *Mimesis*, called the "abundance of life." Literary scholars need to rise to the challenge of using their analytic frameworks to emphasize the "abundance of life" that literature holds in store for its readers, to augment it, and to carry the results of their critical analyses out into our various societies.

Complementary approaches and methods from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, joined in a broad-based understanding of the life sciences as part of the sciences for living, can open up new perspectives for the systematic exploration of art and literature as experiential knowledge, as survival knowledge, and as knowledge for living together. A decisive and enlivening application of literary scholarship's unique potential offers a timely response to increasingly pressing questions about the uses that the study of literature has for life. To invoke Nietzsche one last time, if the humanities succeed in "organiz[ing] the chaos within" themselves, they may recognize their "real needs" (123).

NOTES

1. But actual developments in academic scholarly practice over the last twenty years (see Frühwald et al.)

have been quite different: the crossing of disciplinary lines has increasingly blurred these divisional distinctions. One need not be clairvoyant to predict that this tendency will gain momentum as transdisciplinary concepts of knowledge production mature and, in the process, develop in ways parallel and complementary to other forms of academic specialization. The goal of a transdisciplinary structure is not the interdisciplinary exchange among conversation partners firmly anchored in a discipline but a continual crisscrossing of diverse disciplines. It goes without saying that the development and the results of this "nomadic" practice, which is transdisciplinary in the true sense, must be tested and solidified through ongoing disciplinary and interdisciplinary contacts. In this way, it becomes possible to render dynamic radically different areas of knowledge and to bind them together more strongly and flexibly. For additional details on transdisciplinarity, see Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben* 20.

2. For the genetic code's tantalizing history of metaphorizing and readability, see Blumenberg 372–409.

3. It remains to be seen to what extent genetics and stem cell research will develop new models of knowledge that can put into perspective, or even undermine, the supposed externality of knowledge to life processes that have no consciousness of themselves.

4. Literature has often overlooked this prospective dimension, one that can be of great use to critical theory. Literary scholarship can convert the fragments of knowledge for living, which it brings to the surface through its analytic methods, into its own forms of knowledge for living, thus keeping them, too, in store for the future.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

This translation is an edited composite of excerpts from two overlapping texts by Ottmar Ette: his programmatic article "Literaturwissenschaft als Lebenswissenschaft: Eine Programmschrift im Jahr der Geisteswissenschaften" (2007), from the journal *Lendemains*, and "Literatur als Lebenswissen, Literaturwissenschaft als Lebenswissenschaft?" the introduction to his book *ÜberLebenswissen: Die Aufgabe der Philologie* (2004). I use the more resonant title, of the introduction, without the question mark. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of the quotations Ette uses are mine. I thank F. David T. Arens for his indefatigable editorial counsel, Daniel Spoth and Anja Becker for their assistance with references and related matters, and Ottmar Ette for reviewing my drafts.

a. The beginning of this excerpt omits Ette's comments on Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874).

b. For further details, see Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben* 269.

c. In "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution," the first of Snow's 1959 Rede lectures at Cambridge Univer-

sity, Snow pronounced "that the intellectual life of the whole of western society [was] increasingly split into two polar groups" (2): "literary intellectuals" and "scientists." While Snow did criticize "the degree of incomprehension on both sides," he was quick to blame the lack of communication between "the two cultures" on the "anti-scientific" and generally backward-looking attitudes of the presumed guardians of "traditional culture" (11): "literary intellectuals." While some, most notably F. R. Leavis, promptly returned Snow's volley, many others sided with Snow to proclaim a widespread crisis of confidence in the humanities (Plumb).

d. Iser's article "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction" articulates aspects of this idea, as does his book *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*.

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