

Why I Don't Teach Global Music History

TAMARA LEVITZ

Position Statement¹

I am a 61-year-old, privileged, white Jewish woman who has been teaching as a musicologist for 30 years, finding a home in the past five years as a full professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA. I am from Tiohtià:ke/Montréal on the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka/Mohawk nation, today in Québec, Canada. My family on my mother's side were descended from Irish, English, and Scottish Catholic, Protestant, and Methodist settlers and planters on the island of Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) as the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq. The British established the Dominion of Newfoundland in 1907 but the island gave up self-governance and put itself under a Commission of Government from 1934 to 1949, when it joined Canada as a province. My mother was raised Catholic in the fishing output of Red Head Cove, Newfoundland during these years. Her father was a fisherman from a long line of skilled fishermen in the Baccalieu strait who experienced the decline of the fishing industry during his lifetime. My father's family were orthodox Jews who came to St. John's Newfoundland to escape the pogroms in Krivici and Smorgon (Smarhon) in the pale settlement (today Belarus) in the early 1920s; my grandfather was a peddler who later set up a clothing store in St. John's. My Jewish family has been the subject of

1. I provide this statement because the editors of this issue, Hedy Law, Daniel Castro Pantoja, and Hannah HK Chang requested it. I am grateful to them for this suggestion, through which I learned a tremendous amount, also about how the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors might situate themselves in the world. At the same time, I am acutely aware of the limits, problems, and challenges of such introductions. I have found much food for thought in this regard in Jessica Bissett Perea's "Introducing [Our] Peoples, Places, and Projects: Indigological Ways of Doing Global Music History Homework," in "Forum: Centering Discomfort in Global Music History," *The Journal of Musicology* 40, no. 3 (Summer 2023): 255-267.

ethnographic research.² My mother converted to Orthodox Judaism when she met my father and we were raised Jewish, with no knowledge of Catholicism and little of our Catholic, Irish, English, and Scottish heritage. My parents moved to Montréal, Québec in the late 1950s: I was educated in French immersion schools with humanities classes in French and sciences in English. Growing up, I was accustomed to hearing that I was "not really Jewish" because my mother had converted; today the Montréal Jewish community's rigidity around enforcing rules of Jewish descent through the matrilineal line appears to have softened. As a native English speaker I was acutely aware of being neither Québécois nor belonging in the province of Québec during these years of hyper French nationalism although I was born there. On the other hand, my Québec roots lead me to relate only vaguely to the idea of being a Canadian although I identify as such when outside Canada. At school, we were educated to admire emphatically everything French. I did not grow up with classical music and have no allegiance to it or any other musical genre.

My father was a doctor and my mother a nurse. My siblings and I were raised at first by a black nanny from the Bahamas, Daphne Yarward, who came to Canada as part of the West Indian Domestic Scheme; I struggle as an adult to reconcile the feeling of love I have for her with feelings of shame at my implication in the unjust and inequitable system that brought her into my life. My family was middle class aspiring to be upper middle class with an inherited memory of hardship. Perhaps I could say we had the material advantages and privilege of the middle class accompanied with the fear of losing them, especially when my father died in 1977.

I moved to West Berlin on a DAAD scholarship in 1984 at age 22 to study Musicology—a very rare choice for a Jewish Montréaler at that time in light of the unhealed wounds of the Holocaust, which was still in recent memory. There I experienced the worst anti-Semitism I had known up to that point in my life. Before I left, my mother told me for the first time that I was named after my great aunt Tamara Muzykant, who was murdered in the Holocaust, possibly in a mass grave in Rostov-on-Don, but I have never found her. I went to Germany with the hope of finding out why the Nazis had killed her and my grandmother's family. I discovered that in spite of the zeal with which I pursued such questions, I could not answer them, because the Nazis' motivations had been fundamentally irrational, grounded in destructive hate, and thus beyond my reasoning. At the same time, however, I could not identify with the way Jewish Montréalers at home tended to demonize Germans or boycott Germany. In Berlin I developed a conviction to seek the truth, dialogue, and commit to

2. See, for example, Alison Kahn, *Listen While I Tell You. A Story of the Jews of St-John's, Newfoundland* (St-Jean, TN: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987).

social and restorative justice, even if I was for so many years very naïve about how to go about doing so. One consequence of these ruminations is that I have remained profoundly tied to Berlin and the German language for forty years; I am married to somebody from East Germany (the DDR) and my family and grand-children are German.

This history explains why I do not have a strong sense of one homeland or a single form of belonging although I understand the immense advantages of my citizenship, settler family history, and generational wealth. It also explains why I am deeply committed to taking responsibility for my overwhelming white privilege, while also not always identifying with how white racial identity is formed in the United States.

In the following essay I question global music history as a historiographic method, without, however, wanting to critique the excellent scholarship produced by its widely diverse individual practitioners. Global music history as a *decentering perspective* has brought together many scholars, inspired dialogue, improved morale, allowed Musicology to become more inclusive, and led to many fascinating articles, conversations, panels, and conferences. This is no easy feat. In spite of this, I myself cannot teach global music history because I don't find it sound as a *heuristic, concept, method, or pedagogical approach*. In order to demonstrate what I find problematic about it I first ask what the term itself means. I start with Pheng Cheah's critique of world literature, which I think reveals much about what is at stake in thinking about the global. I then compare how musicologists and literary comparatists have historically theorized the world in their respective disciplines—highlighting which methods each discipline embraced, and which adjustments they had to make in how they defined their objects of study to allow them to circulate in the world. Finally, I hone in on ideological features of the current global music history debate that I find disconcerting. I conclude with ideas about what I see as alternative pedagogical approaches to that of “global music history” and how I have and might implement them in my recent classes.

In writing this essay, I am aware of offering precisely the kind of anxious criticism that Daniel K.L. Chua argues we no longer need.³ I hope, nevertheless, that the counterpoint between my voice from the past and Chua's voice from the future is helpful to others seeking ways to break down traditional national or “area studies” frameworks in teaching music.

3. See Danial KL Chua, “A Keynote without a Key,” *Acta Musicologica* 94, no. 1 (2022): 110. Chua gives a fascinating list of his work in this area under the asterisk comment on the first page of this article (p. 109). See also his “Global Musicology,” *New Sound International Journal of Music* 50, no. 2 (2017): 12–16.

Conceiving the World

Musicology lacks a robust debate on the meaning of terms such as “global” and “world.” This is rather remarkable and unfortunate, given the rich, long-standing critical engagements with these terms in other fields.⁴ Comparatists in literature have been theorizing literature's place in the world ever since Johann Wolfgang von Goethe first used the term “world literature” (*Weltliteratur*) in conversations with his unpaid secretary Johann Peter Eckermann in the years before his death in 1832. When Goethe told Eckermann in 1827 that he had read the Cantonese narrative poem *Huajian ji* (*The Flowery Scroll*) from the Ming dynasty, translated in 1824 by Peter Perring Thoms as *Chinese Courtship*, Eckermann remarked that it must “look very strange,” to which Goethe responded, “Not as much as one would think. People think, act and feel almost exactly like we do and one quickly feels like one of them.”⁵ Such apocryphal stories laid the foundation for almost two centuries of debate about literary world markets, the geopolitics of world literary relations, cultural empathy, literary comparison, the politics and practices of translation, and universal ideals of humanity manifested through literature.

Recently, Pheng Cheah offered an illuminating analysis of Goethean world literature and how it differs from what he calls “global literature.” In his view, the normative [Goethean] conception of world literature subscribes to a spiritual idea of universal humanity and treats literature as a privileged form for expressing the human spirit. It posits world literature as the “concrete, objective” field for actualizing humanity because it elaborates on the human ideal through exchange that crosses national boundaries, and it defines world literature as a form of cosmopolitanism because it undermines parochialism at the subjective level of consciousness. Finally, it is founded on the idea that the project of world literature and its end of revealing humanity can be achieved only through historical process. Cheah concludes that, “the normative conception of world literature thus posits a relationship between world, literature, and humanity in which global literary exchange discloses a higher spiritual world wherein humanity's timeless ideals are expressed in sensuous form.” That conception “defines worldliness as spiritual human intercourse and regards

4. Makoto Takao does a phenomenal job of situating global music history within current debates on global history, and demonstrating their relative lack of theorization in “Global Music History,” Oxford Bibliographies Online, Music, last modified August 23, 2022, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199757824/obo-9780199757824-0317.xml>.

5. Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, eds. Christoph Michel and Hans Grütters (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2011), January 31, 1827. See Leslie O'Bell, “Chinese Novels, Scholarly Errors and Goethe's Concept of World Literature,” *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 87, no. 2 (2018): 64–80.

commercial exchange as the paradigm of human relations." Cheah will use this analysis as the point of departure for an approach to Comparative Literature based on a temporal rather than spatial concept of the world, and with the goal of transforming the world made by the globalization of capital.⁶

Cheah critiques recent theories of world literature (including those of David Damrosch, Franco Moretti, and Pascale Casanova) for detaching the concept from its original normative context and reducing it to the idea of "the global circulation and production of literary works."⁷ In what he calls a "banalization" of world literature, the concept of the world is left unexamined and world literature is treated as if it has come into being. He laments how theorists presuppose a late eighteenth-century/early nineteenth-century world "emptied of normative significance." As a consequence, they are left "tinkering" with the canon, and seeking maximum inclusiveness in a world reduced to "the largest possible spatial whole." The "world-making power that normative theories attribute to world literature as a means for actualizing humanity and humanizing the existing world is lost." "In short," he concludes, "recent theories of world literature have emptied Goethe's and Marx's thought of their normative dimension and reduced the world to the globe, an object made by globalization. Hence they are concerned not with world literature but with global literature."⁸

Cheah's critique holds, in my view, for global music history, whose practitioners tend to adopt what he speaks of as "an unexamined concept of the world as a container to be populated by, or filled with, literary [and musical] works."⁹ Lacking a concept of the world, they appeal to models that suggest one but without connecting the dots, like putting together puzzle pieces that belong to different puzzles. In the introduction to a foundational collection of essays on global music history produced as part of the Bolzano project, Martin Stokes runs through a list of somewhat unrelated theoretical frameworks that imply a notion of the world—postcolonialism, globalization, world music of the 1980s,

6. Pheng Cheah, "Global Literature, World Literature and Worlding Literature: Some Conceptual Differences," in *Handbook of Anglophone World Literatures*, eds. Stefan Helgesson, Birgit Neumann, Gabriele Rippl (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), 86–87. See also Pheng Cheah, *What Is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

7. David Damrosch has published a very wide array of books and articles on world literature, and is the director of the Institute for World Literature at Harvard. From his vast oeuvre, see, for example, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) and *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020). See also Francis Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (January 1, 2000): 54–68; and his *Distant Reading* (New York: Verso, 2013); and Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres* (Paris: Seuil, 1999), translated by M.B. DeBevoise as *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

8. Cheah, "Global Literature, World Literature and Worlding Literature: Some Conceptual Differences," 89.

9. Cheah, 85.

and sound studies.¹⁰ Rather than strive for conceptual coherence, editors of collections on global music history likewise tend to fall back on "case studies" that address national or ethnic music in an inchoate global space, producing fragmented atlases of compelling research. Frequently, what global music historians call "global" more resembles the antiquated idea of the international, or reduces to "connections."¹¹ Two truly outstanding thinkers—Olivia Bloechl and Daniel K.L. Chua—end their essays on global music history with appeals to institutional reorganization or affective solidarity: Bloechl expresses excitement about interdisciplinary literature, learning languages, collaborations, and "interconnection across borders."¹² Chua imagines a "platform" or "society" for studying music that encompasses the entire globe—an International Musicological Society (of which he was President) on steroids. In his utopian, somewhat ecstatic, yet also appealing vision—which echoes affectively the future-oriented dreams of the Jugendstil or succession movements around 1900—musicologists will be generous to each other, guided by love in uncritical relation globally.¹³

All of this is very optimistic. But it leaves global music history without a viable theoretical framework or concept of the world.¹⁴

Finding Methods and Objects of Study

Without a concept of the world, it is a challenge for global music historians to formulate methods and define their object of study, both of which depend on having such a concept. Centuries of disciplinary and methodological sectarianism have left music studies ill-equipped to rise to this task. Musicologists are also at a disadvantage for having no historical foundation for developing a comparative method—a requirement, I think, for engaging with music in the

10. Martin Stokes, "Notes and Queries on 'Global Music History,'" in *Studies on a Global History of Music: A Balzan Musicology Project*, ed. Reinhold Strohm (London: Routledge, 2018), 3–17.

11. Stephen Scheuzger offers an excellent critique of these approaches in "Global History as Polycentric History," *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 29 (2019), 122–52.

12. See Olivia Bloechl, "Editorial," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (2020): 176.

13. See Daniel K.L. Chua, "A Keynote without a Key," 111; 122–23.

14. In this regard, Makoto Takao wisely describes global music history as not being a clear signifier and having a "polysemous identity." See Makoto Takao, "Global Music History." A concept of the world, or material foundation for examining the global, is also missing in the recent forum on discomfort in global music history in the *Journal of Musicology*, which focuses on affective responses to moments of "interconnection across boundaries," or "entanglement," in Olivia Bloechl's terms. See, for example, Olivia Bloechl, "Introduction: The Discomforts of Entanglement in Global Music History," in "Forum: Centering Discomfort in Global Music History," 251–55.

world. Finally, whereas comparativists in literature long ago reached consensus on their object of study—literature—musicologists still don't agree on theirs. By briefly comparing how comparativists in literature and musicologists developed their methodologies and came to define their objects of study historically, I hope to give insight into why musicologists cannot jump so easily onto the world stage.

Comparative Literature as a Westernized discipline is grounded in comparative methodologies and in what has become in the present day a remarkably solid object of study: literature. This stability can be maintained only because of the hermetic elitism of Comparative Literature's worldwide readership, which the discipline achieved historically in a long intricate process and in part by making a clean break with comparative philology and folklore studies. Although contributors to the first journal of Comparative Literature—the polyglot *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*—engaged in the comparative study of and translation of folk poetry, by the time the first German journal in the discipline appeared in 1897, its editor, Max Koch, had started to see such studies as a premise for something bigger, Herder's work having led him to the idea of shared humanity as the basis for world literature.¹⁵ Accordingly, Koch separated out the science of folklore in his mapping of the discipline.¹⁶ In his programmatic introduction to the journal *La Littérature comparée* a couple of decades later, Fernand Baldensperger critiqued both the scholarly tradition of seeking the origin of genres or literary themes in the folk—a method he called “literary Darwinism”—and the practice of comparing national literatures. Although these branches had formed a “brotherly alliance” at the Congrès d'histoire comparée des littératures held at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1900, Baldensperger had come to doubt them, the turn towards individual expression having convinced him that a Bergsonian exploration of the dynamism of literary ideas as they develop, become, and move around the globe would set a better foundation for the “new humanism” of the modern age.¹⁷

The fate of folklore and nineteenth-century philology within the discipline of Comparative Literature was sealed in the United States with the rise of New Criticism in the 1950s. In a canonic article on “The Crisis of Comparative Literature” that shook the discipline, René Wellek convincingly rejected the French school and Baldensperger, whose proposed method he reduced to a search for “minor authors and bygone fashions of literary taste.” Wellek

15. Összehasonlító Irodalomtörténelmi Lapok/Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum, eds. Sámuel Brassai and Hugo von Meltzl (Kolozsvár/Klausenburg/Cluj, 1877–88), accessed September 25, 2023, <http://dspace.bcucluj.ro/handle/123456789/11579>.

16. Max Koch, “Zur Einführung,” *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* 1 (1897): 11–12.

17. Fernand Baldensperger, “Littérature comparée: Le mot et la chose,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 1 (1921): 5–29.

mentioned Baldensperger's critique of “tracing the history of literary themes” but curiously omitted the source to which they are traced: the folk. That erasure allowed him to make a fresh start, setting up his own holistic approach to theory, criticism, and the judgement of value of literature as an aesthetic object against Baldensperger's and other predecessors' allegedly nationalistic, positivist search for sources and influences.¹⁸ In a standard text co-written with Austin Warren, Wellek had earlier tried to define literature as a specific kind of aesthetic object requiring unique types of knowledge.¹⁹ In this way he had successively separated literature, and Comparative Literature from the folk (and the plurality of temporalities that Cheah sees as crucial to fighting the globalization of capital). The ensuing dispute between French and US comparativists over “imagologie” and the historic study of transnational influences in literature further diverted the discipline from folk study, in my view.²⁰ Contemporary comparativists avoid all this messy history by skipping over it, convincing themselves their discipline originated with Goethe's *Weltliteratur* but then leapt somewhat miraculously from Goethe to Auerbach's exile in Turkey, Edward Said, and the invention of a postwar discipline that tolerates folklore studies as an unobtrusive cousin and distant memory, and reinvents philology as a concept within worldly criticism.²¹ By containing their domain and object of study, they have been able to avoid thinking about their settler colonial history, and to keep their distance from decolonization efforts, some of them believing that their discipline achieved plurality and inclusion long before anyone else did.²²

18. René Wellek, “The Crisis of Comparative Literature,” in *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Comparative Literature*, ed. Werner P. Friederich (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina University Press, 1959), 148–59; reprinted in *The Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature: From the Global Enlightenment to the Present*, eds. David Damrosch, Natalie Melas, and Mbongiseni Buthelezi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 161–72). See p. 165 for his discussion of Baldensperger.

19. René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* [1942], 3rd edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956). René Wellek wrote the first two chapters, on the nature of literature (pp. 15–28). Although it is not popular to read Wellek today, it is remarkably refreshing to do so.

20. See Sarah Lawall, “René Wellek and Modern Literary Criticism,” *Comparative Literature* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1988), 3–24; and Antoni Martí Monterde, “Jean-Marie Carré et les origines historiques et politiques de l'imagologie comparatiste,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 379, no. 3 (2021): 297–312.

21. This happened famously with Edward Said's worldliness as developed from Erich Auerbach's “Philology and *Weltliteratur*,” translated by Maire and Edward Said, *The Centennial Review* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1969): 1–17.

22. That said, I was very taken by the many papers on decolonization at the 2022 annual conference of the American Comparative Literature Association. See, for example, Shu-mei Shih, “Decolonizing US Comparative Literature: The 2022 ACLA Presidential Address,” *Comparative Literature* 75, no. 3 (1 September 2023): 237–265; and, in the same volume, Alice Te Punga Somerville, “‘Enter Ghost of Goethe’: Comparison and Indigenous Literary Studies in the Pacific,” 266–282.

Musicology's attempts at erasing folklore from its past and subsuming its shared humanity into a worldly project of comparative music criticism have not been remotely as successful. This is in part because of the ontological differences between literature and music: as a non-representational art that cannot be so neatly divided into oral and written traditions, the latter can be neither translated nor compared in terms of content as, let's say, novels can be, and thus lends itself poorly to the task of revealing humanity in all its difference in the world. Whereas some experience music as notated or recorded, sound or work, others do not, the range of possible experiences preventing musicologists on the whole from developing one object of study for their discipline. In contrast to literary comparativists, musicologists also cannot depend on an enduring creation myth as generative as that of Eckermann's fortuitous capturing of Goethe's genial insight on *Weltliteratur*.

The greatest obstacle to Westernized musicologists being able to theorize music in the world and define their objects of study, however, is the burden they carry of the legacy of their own discipline. When Guido Adler first mapped the new discipline of the "science of music" (*Musikwissenschaft*) in 1885, as is well known, he distinguished between its historical and systematic branches, with Western music as the subject matter of history, and non-Western music relegated to the bottom of the list of subcategories of Systematic Musicology as "Comparative Musicology" or Ethnography. Adler's dichotomic model has proven a curse to all those who inherited it. He not only robbed non-Western music of historical method, but also Western music of a comparative method—a bifurcation of musical thought that has ripped apart the Westernized music disciplines.²³

When Adler's friend Erich von Hornbostel, a trained chemist, more explicitly defined the field of Comparative Musicology in 1905, he focused on collecting and comparing as many recordings of the world's peoples that he could find with the goal of determining "the origins and development of music and the essence of the musically beautiful."²⁴ The problematic search for origins that literary comparativists saw as part of their discipline and then quietly let disappear, became the *raison d'être* of this new discipline. Further, whereas the literary comparativists' Goethean norm of world literature posited a *shared* humanity, musicologists assigned that humanity to people in only one part of the globe, the West, depriving the rest of it. As is well known, they deemed non-Europeans "primitive," or as at an earlier stage of human development

23. Guido Adler, "Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1885), 5–20.

24. Erich M. von Hornbostel, "Die Probleme der vergleichenden Musikwissenschaft: Vortrags, gehalten an der Ortsgruppe Wien der IMG. am 24. März 1905," *Zeitschrift der internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 7, no. 3 (1905): 85. Hornbostel is referring to Hanslick's *Musikalisch-Schönen* (musically beautiful) here.

than they were—Darwin's work having cast long dark shadows on their perspectives and having fueled the evolutionary theories that became their bread and butter. Working in a discipline born at the height of empire, comparative musicologists replaced comparative literature's Goethean idealism of another age with a positivist project of imperial data collecting: they made charts, collected instruments, established recording archives, and worked assiduously to expand the knowledge base of music in the Westernized academy.

The methods comparative musicologists developed in the early twentieth century seem to cause the most anguish for global music historians trying to regroup and redefine their discipline today. Hornbostel and his colleagues relied on Comparative Linguistics in developing "scientific methods" of empirically comparing music on the basis of what they saw as objective data such as recordings and music instruments. They used precise instruments for measuring pitch and intervals (following the standard set by Alexander J. Ellis), and drew on the tools of music theory to compare consonances, dissonances, rhythmic language, harmony (largely absent in non-European music, in their view), and motives, completing exhaustive reports that few people then or now have cared to read. Although it may be tempting to see music theory and acoustics as an "equivalent" of sorts to philology in literature, they were not: it is noteworthy in this regard that the comparative musicologists chose comparative linguistics and not comparative literature as their model. The act of gathering data and establishing archives appears sometimes more important to comparative musicologists than the research outcomes—a hollowness of purpose characteristic of academic disciplines grounded in empire. Comparative musicologists also performed psychological experiments, conducted ethnographic research, took anthropometric measurements of musicians' skulls, and launched sociological investigations—the focus on quantitative data limiting the critical potential of these investigations. Such experiments continue today, yet continue to make people nervous because of the universal qualities or values they presume and/or the difference they potentially mask or erase.

The science of Comparative Musicology came to North America when Hornbostel's assistant in the Phonogramm-Archiv—Hungarian-Jewish former pianist Györgi Herczog or George Herzog—moved to New York City to study with anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia University in 1925. As one of the only practitioners of Comparative Musicology to obtain an academic job in the United States before the second world war, Herzog's story is emblematic of what the field became there. Herzog brought with him the bibliographic and data-collecting methods he had learned while working as a cataloguer in Hornbostel's archive, which he eventually replicated in the United States by creating the Archives for Traditional Music at Indiana University. Herzog had not studied with Hornbostel, but rather perhaps audited some courses, lived with him, and

worked for him as an unpaid assistant; the model Hornbostel gave him of free labor in the service of colonial bureaucracy shaped his life.²⁵ In Berlin, Herzog had also audited Diedrich Westermann's courses at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (today Humboldt University).²⁶ Westermann was a specialist on African languages who had exploited prisoners-of-war for his phonetic research during World War I, was heavily implicated in German colonialism in Africa, and led the deeply compromised *Deutsches Auslandswissenschaftliches Institut* during the Nazi period. Herzog took courses with Westermann in Ewe, Hausa, transcribing unwritten languages with phonetic exercises, and the people and languages of Africa. He inherited from his teacher a linguistic orientation towards music and sound—a direction he strengthened in the United States under the guidance of Edward Sapir. He also inherited condescending attitudes towards the colonized.²⁷ This experience formed the basis for Herzog's later close collaboration and friendship with Melville J. Herskovits, with whom he also felt a connection because of their common Jewish heritage, and who was instrumental in founding African Studies as a discipline in the United States.

Comparative Musicology became a settler colonial science when Boas enlisted Herzog to contribute to his comprehensive project of gathering vast amounts of detailed information on North American Native Peoples with the goal of determining geographical distribution of their characteristic musical styles. Herzog had been accepted into the Ph.D. program at Columbia on the basis of a bluff—his claim that he had completed studies in Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin when he had not.²⁸ In spite of this, his musical training and ear greatly impressed Boas, who came to rely on him as a go-to person for all questions about music—a privilege Boas never granted to other students who worked for him, including Zora Neale Hurston and Helen Heffron Roberts. Boas also relied on Herzog to transcribe recorded music and develop new recording technology to facilitate fieldwork—relegating him in this way to the intellectual position

25. Herzog studied Piano with Kurt Börner and Music Theory, Music History, and Orchestration at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin from April 1921 to July 31, 1922. I am grateful to archivist Antje Kalcher at the Universität der Künste Berlin for helping me to determine this information.

26. Herzog registered as an auditor in 1922/23 to take courses in "Ethnology" (*Ethnologie*) and Musicology (*Musikwissenschaft*), and in 1924/25 to take courses in Musicology and then Philosophy. See HU UA, Rektor und Senat, Listen der männlichen Gasthörer, 1922–23, entry no. 851, Humboldt Universität, and HU UA, Rektor und Senat, Listen der männlichen Gasthörer, 1924–25, entries no. 1263 and 1273. I am very grateful to Heather Foster, the archivist at the Universitätsarchiv der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin for providing this information for me.

27. For Westermann's courses during Herzog's time as an auditor, see the *Vorlesungsverzeichnisse* of the Friedrich-Wilhelm Universität from these years.

28. I explore this history in more detail in an upcoming series of articles on *Settler Colonial Humanists and the Racial Foundations of Comparison*, in which I also compare Herzog's experience to that of Zora Neale Hurston, whose transcript, in contrast, was scrupulously examined for any missing requirements when she applied to study English at Barnard College in 1925.

of a musical stenographer. As a consequence, Herzog unknowingly became the perfect, polyglot, erudite, fastidious bureaucrat for the already established settler colonial music system in the US university. Two years before graduating in 1938, Herzog launched his first class on "Primitive Music" at Columbia University, basing it almost entirely on Hornbostel's methodological foundations.²⁹ He offered variations of this class at Columbia until 1947 and then at Indiana University into the 1960s, mentoring Bruno Nettl, David McAllester, and other founding fathers of the later discipline of Ethnomusicology.

In the United States, Comparative Musicology and Comparative Literature developed differently as settler colonial sciences. Some comparativists in music collaborated in establishing the archives that robbed Native Peoples of their power and voice; comparativists in literature supported that settler colonial system from a distance by maintaining a sharp division between their worldliness and indigeneity. When Louise Rosenblatt—Margaret Mead's roommate and a student in Franz Boas's classes—was deciding whether to study Anthropology or Comparative Literature in 1925, for example, her Jewish parents intervened to say they did not want her travelling around the world as an anthropologist. Perhaps they were aware of the dangers women faced in the field in the United States—an expression of the reproduced violence of settlement.³⁰ In any case, they preferred Louise stick to Paris, where she was allegedly out of harm's way, and where she could study Comparative Literature with Baldensperger, which she did. During his visiting professor appointments at Columbia University (1917–1919), Harvard (1935–1940), and the University of California-Los Angeles (1940–1945), Baldensperger had managed to maintain the inviolable Eurocentric frame of Comparative Literature intact even when transplanting it into new contexts.³¹ It had become a "safe" white comparative discipline, as Comparative Musicology and Anthropology were not, in the US context.

The settler colonial history of Comparative Musicology in the United States had consequences for how music scholars later defined their methods and objects of study. The "folk" became for them a thorny subject. Herzog tellingly titled the course he taught for decades "Primitive" rather than "Folk" music, for example, distinguishing between Hornbostel's colonial methods and Folklore Studies as practiced in the United States, with which he was also

29. Herzog's notes for some of these classes are kept in his uncatalogued archive in the Archives for Traditional Music at Indiana University. I am deeply grateful to Alison McClanahan for allowing me access to these materials.

30. Megan Steffen, "A Mystery in the Archives: The Historiography of Denial, Henrietta Schmerler's Rape and Murder and Anthropology's Project of Prevention," *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 4 (December 2021): 1–13.

31. See Louise Rosenblatt, interviewed by Ed Edwin, 1982, available as transcript and recording, catalogued as "Reminiscences of Louise Michelle Rosenblatt, 1982," Columbia University Libraries, <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/4072942>.

deeply involved. But Herzog also had a strong understanding of folk music within modernism, having studied with Zoltán Kodály at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. He was instrumental in bringing Béla Bartók to the United States in the 1940s as well, and assimilated Bartók's methods by working closely with him on the publication of *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs*.³² Finally, Herzog grappled with the rise in his time of “popular music”—a category that blurred multiple boundaries and has remained highly problematic.³³ The discomfort music scholars feel in defining the folk and popular continues to the present day. Whereas comparativists in literature have seemingly solved the problem of the folk and thus today can gallantly refer back to formalist traditions of literary analysis based on them (Vladimir Propp, etc.) when they wish, music scholars are still mired in epistemic confusion about the musical work as it relates to written and oral traditions, and only slowly recovering from the trauma of past analytical violations in the name of formalism, which are so profound the slightest memory of them is still triggering. Johann Kroier succinctly and somewhat disturbingly describes this disciplinary path as, “that bumpy road from a science with ambitions for exactness through a collecting discipline under the influence of transitory anthropological macro-theories up to a branch of the humanities that has to represent the clear consciousness of the cultural sciences.”³⁴

Locked in this icy history from which it has spectacularly failed to break until recently, Musicology has become a broken discipline as Chua daringly proclaims.³⁵ I agree with his assessment.

Global Music History's Ideological Dilemmas

It is a lot to ask of global music history to fix this mess, and to develop the methods and objects to create worlds, given this disastrous history. And yet the practitioners of this subdiscipline seem to suggest it can. Calls for papers and mission statements burst with excited claims about decolonization, progress, renewal, and growth. There is a lot of hype as the global becomes the academy's latest brand. The Working Group of the Future Histories of Music Theory of the International Musicological Society opens its statement of purpose, for example,

32. Béla Bartók and Albert B. Lord, *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs: Texts and Transcriptions of Seventy-Five Folk Songs from the Milman Parry Collection and a Morphology of Serbo-Croatian Folk Melodies*, with a forward by George Herzog (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).

33. Herzog's struggle with this terminology is strikingly evident in his “Research in Primitive and Folk Music in the United States,” *American Council of Learned Societies Bulletin* 24 (April 1936): 1–97.

34. Johann Kroier, “Music, Global History, and Postcoloniality,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 43, no. 1 (June 2012): 159.

35. Chua, “Global Musicology: A Keynote without a Key,” 117–19.

with the phrase, “‘Global’ is hot.”³⁶ Without doubt, they are right; the “global turn” has become the latest new fad across the humanities. But such trends come and go, and none of them have ever been able to provide Musicology with the elixir of youth it seeks to reverse its aging as a compromised Western discipline.

Many global music historians get around their lack of a concept of the world by claiming they embrace the global as a way of “decolonizing” the West—a goal that reifies Adler's original dichotomic model. Structural white ignorance may be operating in our collective denial of how the globalization of capital is extended through the spatial project of global music history, and how little this has to do with decolonization.³⁷ This may perhaps be the reason musicologists turn to Comparative Musicology as their foil, without engaging with its history, scholarship, or methods. They condemn it on moral and intellectual grounds, without discussing it in any detail. Stokes describes Comparative Musicology as “complicit in the racial crimes of the 20th Century” in one breath, for example, while reducing it to a few texts in German that nobody reads anyway in the next.³⁸ Bloechl similarly speaks of Comparative Musicology as a “failed modern experiment,” the tenets of which were later “weaponized in European and settler projects of colonial and racial domination.”³⁹ Are they implying Hornbostel and Herzog are guilty of such crimes, even as their lives as well were shattered by Nazi persecution? Or Zora Neale Hurston? It seems the story needs to be told with much more nuance. And why do global music historians mention Comparative Musicology at all? Perhaps they need Comparative Musicology as their moral shadow—the Hyde to their Jekyll—the easy target that justifies their new politics without grounding them, or that allows them to be in the world again without rethinking the world.

Global music history may in fact actively divert from settler colonialism. At a recent meeting of the Alliance for Multi-campus Inclusive Graduate Admissions (AMIGA) project at UC Davis, I learned that departments frequently recruit international students to meet demands for diversity, misunderstanding how this practice causes them to neglect the specific need for proactive admission policies to ensure inclusion of historically underrepresented, first generation, and underserved college students from *within* the United States.⁴⁰ Could global music history similarly be functioning to distract from local issues in music

36. See “Going Global, in Theory,” *IMS Musicological Brainfood* 3, no. 1 (2019): 3–5.

37. I use the term “white ignorance” in Charles Mills's sense. See, for example, “White Ignorance,” in *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (Oxford, 2017): 49–71.

38. Stokes, “Notes and Queries on ‘Global Music History,’” 3–4.

39. Bloechl, “Editorial,” 174.

40. “The Amiga Project,” AMIGA, accessed September 25, 2023, <https://www.projectamiga.org/>.

studies far more difficult to resolve? Does it in any way replicate progressive educators' problematic goal of establishing "cosmopolitan internationalism" as a path to securing a liberal democracy in the United States in the 1930s, which masked and denied racial inequality and injustice? Or could it be distracting from the globalization of capital by claiming resistance to it as it extends its domain? Given how settler colonial systems often perpetuate themselves through white ignorance and acquisition of lands and goods, I worry about music scholars leaping joyfully into the world while leaving local history unexamined at home (although doing one doesn't exclude doing the other and very many global music historians do both).⁴¹ One need only consider how music theorists are currently distracting themselves by fixating on the racism of one Austrian theorist whom only a tiny elite knows, while the long, harrowing history of music theory's complicity in missionary settlers' conquest of the west—with Bible and music theory textbook in hand—hides in plain sight.

If global music history is not conceiving the world, developing historiographic methods, or decolonizing the West, then what is it doing? It seems primarily to be creating a space for an imagined scholarly community that seeks to move beyond the national. In this community everyone is included and no one is left out. It is made up primarily of scholars who are Westernized, and who have a place in the Westernized academy. They are mobile and can cross borders. One could call them a cosmopolitan elite (keeping in mind both the positive and negative interpretations of that term). In contrast to Stefano Harney's and Fred Moten's undercommons, or the lumbung of ruangrupa, who curated the documenta 15, global music history as a collective is not critical of or resisting Westernized institutions.⁴² Although its practitioners want to transcend national boundaries, they usually end up reinforcing them. This is because the global forces them to talk about music in relation to geopolitical identity, or to become cultural ambassadors or diplomats of their own countries—roles that may prove limiting to some in the long run. At times, they speak of packing this whole small world into the Westernized university's standard music history curriculum, adding to it in a way that mimics their institutions' diversity politics in its focus on representation.

41. Jessica Perea Bissett beautifully addresses this point in "Introducing [Our] Peoples, Places, and Projects: Indigological Ways of Doing Global Music History Homework."

42. See, for example, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), <https://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf>. See also *Lumbung Erzählen*, ed. Harriet C. Brown (Berlin: Hatje Cantz/documenta, 2022); *The Collective Eye im Gespräch mit ruangrupa: Überlegungen zur kollektiven Praxis* (Berlin: Distanz, 2022); *Documenta 15* (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum gGmbH, 2022), art exhibition, accessed September 25, 2023, <https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung/>; "Lumbung," Friends of the Lumbung Worldwide, accessed September 25, 2023, <https://lumbung.space/>.

This global space is less unified than hoped, as evinced by the fact that scholars in the different music subdisciplines conceive of it so differently and apply to it such different methods. The only thing they all seem to share is their cartographic images of the world and disgust with Comparative Musicology. Music theorists, for example, sometimes seem to imagine the global as a space in which to create a mythical library of Alexandria containing every music theory text ever written. Tellingly, they focus primarily on the history of music theory over phenomenological analytical method.⁴³ This allows them to compare texts and concepts, without necessarily worrying about the world. In a very compelling article on tuning, Alex Rehding takes as his model for comparative music theory G.E.R. Lloyd's "comparison of cultures," comparative organology, *Begriffsgeschichte*, and the structural comparison of myths as exemplified in Lisa Raphals's *Knowing Words*, for example. These methods are useful to the task at hand, but perhaps not for worlding music or music theory because they are focused largely on conceptual history, classifying, and language. Musicologists, unable to escape questions of aesthetics so easily, tend to focus more on networks, encounter, exchange, and reception.⁴⁴ Ethnomusicologists, in contrast, feel they have already been all along "a global, interdisciplinary network of individuals and institutions engaged in the study of music across all cultural contexts and historical periods."⁴⁵ The ICTM study group on global history speaks of increasing "global interaction of regional cultures," and of creating "a global network of cross-cultural relationships largely neglected by conventional musical historiography."⁴⁶

As this brief analysis shows, the global serves for music scholars primarily as a container in Cheah's sense—a space they can fill up with a wide array of methods, objects, and relations, and in which they can reflect on how to free themselves from the concept and reality of Western music, which seems to be their greatest goal. The discussions these music scholars are having could not be further removed from those in Comparative Literature, which, since Spivak and with Cheah and others, is moving away from spatial and towards temporal concepts of the world. In this regard, I would conclude as I began with the idea that global music history is not a heuristic, concept, pedagogy, or method, but

43. See Alexander Rehding, "Fine-Tuning a Global History of Music Theory: Divergences, Zhu Zaiyu, and Music-Theoretical Instruments," *Music Theory Spectrum* 44, no. 2 (June 17, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/mts/mtac004>.

44. See David Irving, "IMS Study Group 'Global Music History': Mission Statement," International Musicological Society, accessed September 25, 2023, <https://www.musicology.org/networks/sg/global-history-of-music>.

45. See "The Society for Ethnomusicology," SEM, accessed September 25, 2023, <https://www.ethnomusicology.org>.

46. "ICTM Study Group on Global Music History: Mission Statement," International Council for Traditional Music, accessed September 25, 2023, <http://ictmusic.org/group/global-history-music>.

rather a *decentering perspective*. In spite of all my criticisms, I think it has been immensely generative for scholarship. I don't think it will fix, redeem, decolonize, or cure Musicology, because it does not address its institutional conditions. Maybe it was unrealistic to expect such a quiet revolution from within.

Teaching Comparison as Relation

At the moment I respond to the worries I have voiced above by seeking pedagogical tools outside of global music history. I consider teaching a work in progress, however, and thus anything I say here captures only the moment of my current understanding and not a fixed program. I also think teaching takes place experientially between teachers and students and develops over time in a course and thus cannot be summarized with prescriptive pronouncements. In my view, it is important to teach students method, and I find comparative methods in literature immensely productive. I like the path Cheah suggested in the article I cited at the opening of this essay, for example. The solution to world literature's banalization, he argues, is not to return to the Eurocentric and spiritualist Goethean norms, but rather to "reattach literature to the unequal world of contemporary capitalist globalization and rethink its capacity for world-making from the ground up." He understands this world-making in terms of Martin Heidegger's notion of "worlding," and expands out from it to speak of modeling an alternative temporality and world to that created by global capitalism. By building bridges to other people, through "intercourse," he argues, people learn how to exist in other *modes of human life*, telling stories to each other, translating languages, engaging in cosmopolitan literary intercourse—is prior to the emergence of the rational subject and thus "the ontological condition of the possibility of world literature."⁴⁷

Rather than turn to Heidegger, I embrace Shu-Mei Shih's idea of relational comparison, which resembles Cheah's call for relation and connectivity. In a series of articles published in the last decade, Shih urges comparativists to think more about the ground of their comparisons, and about the integrated world systems, rather than national contexts, in which they take place. Comparison as relation, she writes, means "setting into motion historical relationalities between entities brought together for comparison, and bringing into relation terms that have traditionally been pushed apart from each other due to certain interests, such as the European exceptionalism that undergirds Eurocentrism." Shih considers comparative relation an ethical practice where "the workings of

47. Cheah, "Global Literature, World Literature and Worlding Literature: Some Conceptual Differences," 96–97. I see here echoes of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of the planetary, and found it worthwhile in this context to reread *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia, 2005).

power are not concealed but necessarily revealed." Committed to close readings, she imagines scaling back and forth between "the world" and "the text," revealing relations in the form and content of the literature itself.⁴⁸ I often like students to read Shih's work in the first week of class, and/or other essays from the collection in which it is published.

I also like to choose a very clear geopolitical frame for a course—one always smaller than the world. In a recent assigned general education class for 120 students on "Literature from the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century," I began by giving the course title the subtitle "Imperial, National, and Global Encounters," augmenting the temporal frame with a sense of geopolitical relation. Even though that may sound like I am doing something like global music history, my methods, goals, projected outcomes, concepts of the world, and notion of worlding distinguish what I do from that subdiscipline. I ground the course in the material reality of the plantation economy that fueled the rise of capitalism and the European powers. Thus I begin with the Haitian rather than French revolution. We read a selection of writings on race in the Enlightenment, Hume, and Kant, before analyzing Olaudah Equiano's narrative and Diderot's anti-colonial writings. I then pursue the theme of changing French and German relations with the Caribbean throughout the course, moving from reading Baron de Vastey, Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Verlobung in Santa Domingo* through Zora Neale Hurston's ethnographic work on Jamaica and Haiti and Aimé Césaire's *Cahiers de retour au pays natal*. I introduce nineteenth century Orientalism to pursue a second thread on the relationships between Germany, France and Persia/Iran. Here we read Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, Sadegh Hedayat's short stories, the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad, and Golnoosh Nour's short stories. I frame modernism as queer modernism with Oscar Wilde and Nella Larsen, in this way centering LGBTQIA+ creative expression in literary history. At the end of the course I sometimes invite contemporary writers to class and assign students the task of comparing texts between the present and the past and across geopolitical space. Because I focus on literary techniques we can do very close readings; this is where the work of worlding takes place. Last fall we compared Kafka's *In der Strafkolonie* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse*, for example, with the goal of understanding how each represents ethnography in a colonial context, and also of exploring how literature can resist capitalism and create a world, as Cheah argues.

48. See Shu-mei Shih, "Comparison as Relation," in *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, ed. Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 79–97. See also Shu-mei Shih, "Comparative Racialization: An Introduction," *PMLA* 123, no. 5, Special Topic: Comparative Racialization (October 2008): 1347–62; and "World Studies and Relational Comparison," *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 430–438.

If I were to teach the same course in music, I would adapt it dramatically to allow for music's ontological difference while seeking to maintain Shih's method of relational comparison. I would not choose the global as the course's unifying concept, because it is too vague. Which course concept I chose would depend entirely on the outcomes I seek. If the course catalogue required me to teach European music history I would still start with the Haitian revolution, but probably not attempt to show how European composers reacted to their knowledge of it, or music from there (as I did in the literature course with Kleist, for example), because I would not want to force music into the straightjacket of becoming a solely representative art gutted of its aesthetic content. I would also have to decide whether we would study sound, acoustics, circulation, musical scores, aesthetics, etc., or any other angle on music, or a combination of these. In other words, I would choose what kind of musical object or action to present. I would also take into consideration that music did not circulate as translated texts could in the time period in question, and thus was not received and cannot be compared in the same way as literature.

In the past few months, I have been thinking about a course based on Olúfemi O. Táíwò's constructive view of reparations, which he describes as "a historically informed view of distributive justice, serving a larger and broader worldmaking project."⁴⁹ Táíwò explains his concept of the world in very clear terms. He analyses what he calls the "Global Racial Empire," a "social system of distribution built by the converging processes of trans-Atlantic slavery and colonialism" that unequally distributed advantages and disadvantages, wealth, rights, and burdens over time.⁵⁰ "Global racial empire, and its history of slavery and colonial domination," he writes, "will be fully conquered only when their effects on the accumulations of advantages and disadvantages are also conquered."⁵¹ I appreciate in particular Táíwò's care in urging attention to the geography and history of the world system, rather than being content to take mere "snapshots" of certain parts of it, as I believe global music historians do today. In fighting for global reparations and social justice, he argues for the need to create "specific global superstructures—institutions, associations, chains of production, and norms—to ground a distributive justice analysis for specific historical reasons."⁵² And he powerfully asserts that climate justice and reparations are the same project and arise from the same political history, and thus remaking the world requires commitment to both.

I would like to teach a course that considers the dual projects of climate justice and constructive reparations through music, literature, and sound with the aim of achieving global social justice. I want to center this course on the Caribbean. I would again start with the Haitian revolution, and I would frame this class within the history of the global racial empire, rather than in terms of global music history. It would take considerable conceptual work to understand the role music played and plays in distribution, and this would be the task I would set for myself in preparing this course. I would focus on how this history plays out in specific communities in Los Angeles, with the goal of active engagement towards global social justice.

Up to this time, however, I have not yet assigned any published work on global music history in the classes I do currently teach. In the Proseminar in Comparative Literature I have been teaching recently, we discuss historical debates on world literature over ten weeks. I do not assign any texts on global music history because I find they are not related. From my perspective, debates on the global in music have so far appeared very "in house"—concerned more with the history of the Westernized music disciplines than with worlding music. In my music classes I do hope in the future to assign the articles by Stokes, Chua, and Bloechl that I have critiqued in this essay, because I believe in modeling difference of opinion honestly as a crucial pedagogical strategy, and I would want the students to decide what they think for themselves. In case it was not obvious, these articles inspired me, even as I argued against them. It is for this reason that I look forward to further engagement with global music history. While hoping for more robust concepts, methods, and theorization for the subdiscipline, I wait with bated breath to see what its practitioners will do next.

49. Olúfemi O. Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 74.

50. Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations*, 10.

51. Táíwò, 87.

52. Táíwò, 84.