Lina Meruane's Palestine Writing: *Becoming*-World in World Literature

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Abstract | Lina Meruane's work on Palestine began in 2012 and comprises what throughout the text will be addressed as the author's Palestine Writing, a mesh of pieces belonging to different genres that, understood through Deleuze and Guattari's framework, constitute Meruane's *literary machine*. Analysing the book's title, *Volverse Palestina*, this paper discusses the two different meanings wrapped in it—Returning to Palestine and becoming Palestine. Meruane's return is impossible because one cannot return from where one has never been, and her transformation is the result of a series of unexpected encounters and collaborations. This paper considers Meruane's Palestine Writing as a form of becoming-Palestine that takes place not only through an inherited identity but also through a kind of cultural contagion. Following this argument, Palestine Writing can be understood as a part of worldish literature; a becoming-world instance of literature that can relate to other literary works, opening the door to a new understanding of world literature, based on a consolidated definition of what the "universe" of world literature is.

Keywords | Lina Meruane, Literary Machine, *Becoming*-minor, World Literature, Palestine, *Volverse Palestina*, Deleuze, Guattari, Comparative Literature, Travel Writing, Worldish

Lina Meruane launched her career in 1997 with *Las Infantas*,[1] a collection of short stories. Soon after publication, she began what we can now consider her "trilogy of sickness": *Fruta Podrida* (2007), *Sangre en el Ojo* (2012), and *Sistema Nervioso* (2018).[2] The three books constitute a unique sequence of reflections on the volatility and multidimensionality of illness. Since 2012, however, Palestine has served as the gravitational center around which Meruane's literary work orbits. This "Palestine writing" has been produced in parallel with, to date, two trips to the West Bank and a failed trip to Gaza triggering a work in progress that embraces different genres, formats, and rewritings. The first issue of this process, "Una Semana en Palestina,"[3] was a sketch of a travelogue published in 2012 in the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio*,[4] in the section "Mujeres que viajan solas."[5] The second issue appeared in an anthology edited by the same newspaper, which included an extended version of the text, fifteen pages of which are now part of the present version: "Palestina en Pedazos."[6] The third piece was the first to constitute an actual book: *Volverse Palestina*[7] was published in 2013 by Conaculta as part of a collection under the name "Dislocados,"[8] and was already structured into the three parts that remain in the present version: "La agonía de las cosas," "El llamado palestino" and "Palestina en partes" (which would later become "Palestina en Pedazos").[9] The latest version of the book (to date) was published by Random House Mandadori in 2015. It includes a new section called "Volvernos Otros,"[10] written the year before when a planned trip to Palestine was cancelled due to the Gaza bombings. Since its publication in 2015, Meruane has also written a poem named *Palestina, por ejemplo*,[11] which formed

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[1]*Editor's Note (hereafter referred to as Ed.N.)*: *Las Infantas* can be translated to *The Princesses* from Spanish to English. Translation borrowed from Maruane, Lina. "Who Are You." *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, pp. 47–51.

[2]*Ed. N.*: The title *Fruta Podrida* can be translated to *Rotten Fruit*. *Sangre en el ojo* and *Sistema Nervioso* have been translated into English by Megan McDowell, as *Seeing Red* (2016) and *Nervous System* (2021), respectively. Translation borrowed from Maruane, Lina. "Who Are You." *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, pp. 47–51.

[3]*Ed.N.*: "Una Semana en Palestina" can be translated to "A Week in Palestine."

[4]*Ed.N.*: *El Mercurio* can be translated to *The Mercury*.

[5]*Ed.N.*: "Mujeres que viajan solas" can be translated to "Women who travel alone."

[6]*Ed.N.*: "Palestina en Pedazos" can be translated to "Palestine in Pieces."

[7]*Ed.N.*: *Volverse Palestina* can be translated to *Becoming Palestine*.

[8]*Ed.N.*: "Dislocados" can be translated to "Dislocated."

[9]*Ed.N.*: "La agonía de las cosas," "El llamado palestino" and "Palestina en partes" can be translated to "The Agony of Things," "The Palestinian Call," and "Palestine in Parts," respectively.

[10]*Ed.N.*: "Volvernos Otros" can be translated as either "Become Others" or "Return to Others."

[11]*Ed.N.*: *Palestina, por ejemplo* can be translated to *Palestine, for Example*.

part of the 2015 presentation of *Volverse Palestina* in Bogotá, and a short story for the *White Review*, titled "Faces in a Face," that narrates her last *return* to Palestine.[12]

The dimension of Meruane's Palestinian writing that is discussed in this paper involves assembling it with the approach to literature advocated by the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The aim is not to propose a Deleuze-Guattarian reading of Meruane's work but to open a discussion on the nature of the literary objects that can be included in the universe of world literature through the Deleuze and Guattarian notions of literary machine and becoming-minor.[13]

Meruane's Palestine Writing as a Literary Machine

Meruane's Palestine writing is made up of a heteroclite set of pieces belonging to different genres which—if we relate it to the author's biographical condition as a traveler born to a family that is the result of multiple displacements—has led Emmanuela Jossa to characterize her work as "nomadic" (279). To this nomadism one must add, Jossa argues, using Rosi Braidotti's definition of *nómade*, the *search for* and *creation of* subjectivities that desire and experience change and transformation (279). But another approach to the nature of Meruane's motile *writing*-Palestine is to understand the whole corpus as a "literary machine." The *machinism* of desiring machines, war machines, abstract machines, and musical, literary, or philosophical machines is introduced in Deleuze and Guattari's vocabulary to distinguish its machinery from that of a structure. In particular, the concept is applied in moments of meaningful breakage, when, in the words of Manola Antonioli, "[t]he subject can no longer be located, as was the case with Lacan, along a chain of relays from one signifier to another; on the contrary, it only appears as the provisional, unstable effect of a machinic operation of cutting, of extracting singularities and discontinuities" (158). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the literary machine, by its malfunctioning and its dysfunctionality, becomes independent of the sole control of the subject that has created it as an object, and opens itself to the *real*, producing transformations in the perceptions and affections of its receivers.

In the 1970 edition of his book on Proust, which had originally appeared six years earlier, Deleuze added a second part, "The Literary Machine." Here, Deleuze describes the functioning of three "orders of truth"[14] (*Proust and Signs* 148): that of singularities which, once isolated, produce reminiscences; that of pleasures and pains, which do not reach fulfillment in themselves and point in other, often unnoticed, directions; and that of the production of catastrophe (as in aging, illness, and death) (148–149). These three orders of the Proustian machine act as a force of dislocation to produce a world that, in

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[12]For further reading on the different issues and publications, see Dunia Gras's "En el nombre del padre: Volverse Palestina. Volvernos otros, de Lina Meruane, versiones de una obra en marcha."

[13]In this sense, it differs from strict Deleuzian readings of literary works such as, for example, Naeem Nedaee's interpretation of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Mijeong Kim's study of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, or Sarah Posman's analysis of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

[14]Deleuze argues in *Proust and Signs*: "Why a machine? Because the work of art, so understood, is essentially productive –productive of certain truths. No one has insisted more than Proust on the following point: that the truth is produced, that it is produced by orders of machines that function within us, that it is extracted from our impressions, hewn out of our life, delivered in a work" (146). And continues later on: "The Search [*In the Search of Lost Time*] is indeed the production of the sought-for truth. Again, there is no truth, but orders of truth, just as there are orders of production" (148).

Antonioli's words, "has neither meaningful contents nor ideal significations according to which one could establish an order or a hierarchy, assorted points of view on the world that affirm their irreducible difference, and above all a subject that is never unique and that no longer guarantees the unity of the world" (160). Deleuze's reading, once again with Guattari, of Kafka's work, revolves around the question (which could also be addressed to Proust) about the nature of the literary character in relation to the author. Are the three K's (i.e., the narrators or characters in "The Process," "The Metamorphosis," and "The Castle") present in Kafka's three novels one and the same character? Are the different K's actually Kafka, or is the narrator Marcel in *In Search of Lost Time* actually Marcel Proust?[15] Through Deleuze and Guattari's approach, the answer leaves no room for doubt: K, like Marcel and, we might add, Meruane, is not a subject "but a general function that proliferates over itself, and that doesn't cease to segment itself and to run across all of the segments" (*Kafka* 84). But perhaps the most remarkable thing about the categorization of the literary character as a general function is that what is meant by "general" is the individual's connection to all the terms of the series through which K passes. The multiple segmentation of K is a proliferation that does not require splitting, an assemblage between a solitary individual and diverse collectives.

Meruane's return to Palestine is also a literary machine that produces a proliferation of segments that assemble the general function of the solitary character with different collectives: Meruane in Chile among the signs of the saga of losses that make up the family landscape; Meruane in New York among the emissaries of the Palestinian appeal for travel and writing; Meruane in Heathrow among the supervisors of her "authentic" identity; Meruane in Palestine among fragments of the life that could have been her own; Meruane in a Manhattan library among words raised as flags for attack and defense; Meruane in front of her audience among verses that record the present; Meruane back at the airport trying to erase from the bathroom mirror the many faces hiding in her face. Each of these segments is advanced by the assumed conventions of a literary genre, yet Meruane's writing simultaneously jeopardizes these same literary conventions, producing ambiguous and wobbly readings.

If Deleuze found three orders of truth in Proust, this paper proposes three orders of *identity* in Meruane. In this sense, Meruane's first order of identity is that of the travelogue, which anticipates its development through one of the most characteristic sub-genres of contemporary Palestinian literature: the displaced autobiography. Assad Al-Saleh, in his comparative study of two of the most representative works of this sub-genre, Edward Said's *Out of Place* and Fawaz Turki's *The Disinherited*, stresses that one of the essential characteristics of a displaced autobiography is that it constitutes narratives of affiliation where, beyond the tradition of autobiography centered on the self, emphasis is placed on relational aspects and intersubjective presentation that deepen the sense of belonging. Instead, as discussed in the third section of this article, the literary journey and its connection between narrative and the experience of displacement serve Meruane,

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[15]"The letter K no longer designates a narrator or a character but an assemblage that becomes all the more machine-like, an agent that becomes all the more collective because an individual is locked into it in his or her solitude (it is only in connection to a subject that something individual would be separable from the collective and would lead its own life)" (*Kafka* 18).

as opposed to what is proper to the genre, to problematize the sense of belonging and the narratives of affiliation.

The second order of identity takes the form of a literary genre, and is the essay "Volvernos Otros," included in the Penguin Random House edition of *Volverse Palestina* (108–195). "Volvernos Otros" is a segmented piece that acts as a guide, given that it unfolds a complex weaving of voices in which Meruane refers to more than forty writers and cinematographers. According to Dunia Gras, the commentary on other texts in "Volvernos Otros" brings together a multiplicity of sometimes contradictory voices (Gras 185) which Meruane incorporates, assimilates, and embodies, making the essay an exercise in a sort of collective autobiography.[16] Nonetheless, the essay's structure is the point of arrival, not the point of departure, and rather than a logical and hierarchical organization of references, the reader encounters something akin to the experience of traveling or the serendipity inherent to doing research in a library. This reading path is punctuated by keywords which, instead of underpinning the argument, highlight the difficulty of its development. This is expressed graphically by an inordinate distance between letters, so that the highlighted words take up more space and appear dislocated, en route to vanishing, in the reading.[17] In her effort to go against the grain with the language of conflict, Meruane contrasts these spaced words with their opposite, the crossed-out phrases that appear in the first part of *Volverse Palestina* as a sign of self-censorship (44–46). The crossed-out words make the reading impossible, thus words inevitably say more than what can be said, while the spaced-out words, in their "super-readability" always say less than what should be said (See Appendix A). In other words: the unreadability of the crossed-out words force the reader to extend the meaning of the text, whilst the spaced-out words become mere commonplaces that are unable to express the complexity of the specific problematics they address. For instance, in the correspondence between Meruane and her novelist friend in Jaffa, many sections of the text are crossed out; maybe because they were never written at all but merely imagined, maybe because they wanted to be written but the circumstances made it impossible. Be it as it may, the result is still the same: when the novelist friend in Jaffa changes his mind about writing the text Meruane asked him to, the reader is left only with scraps and pieces of the real reasons why. Words such as "violence" and "my country" can be glimpsed beyond the black marks, but such marks are what become the actual form of the text's identity: anonymity instead of signature (*Volverse Palestina* 45).

Finally, the third order of identity of Meruane's *literary machine* manifests in *Palestina, por ejemplo,* through metaliterary poetry written as a public presentation in verse that acts both as a political and a poetic statement. The literalness and vehemence of the utterance in this text, as discussed below, is sometimes interrupted by the presence of clusters of nouns without verbs, prepositions, or punctuation marks to articulate them, which disrupt the body of the poem.[18] Andrea Kottow has compared these groupings, also present in the novel *Sistema Nervioso* by the same author, to a kind of corporeal

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[16]In this second part of *Volverse Palestina*, the autobiographical experience is amplified through the incorporation of a multitude of testimonial voices discovered through library research.

[17]Keywords such as "problema a e l i m i n a r" (literally; problem to solve, the word *solve* being written with a wider interspace) in page 119, or s i l e n c i o (silence) in page 125.

[18]The words act as scattered semantic fields: they have no apparent relation to each other nor guide the following texts, but, as Kottow notes, they work as Meruane's unconscious writing.

unconscious that makes it evident that the subject does not write the story but that there are events beyond the author's control that are largely responsible for how the story is written and how the subject is inscribed in it (14). A clear instance can be found in Kottow's highlighted paragraph of *Sistema Nervioso*, "There is no cake or candles or salt shots. There's no ocean to cross, just a *killer amnesia amniotic* fluid"[19] (38). In Kottow's words:

> Repeatedly, the flow of the story is interrupted by grammatically disjointed words, which burst in as if they came from somewhere else. A kind of bodily unconscious, a memory that comes from materiality and that forces us to pay attention to it, although it never allows us to fully decipher it. The words come from an involuntary order, where it becomes evident that we do not write our history, but rather, to a large extent, we are written by events beyond our reach. (13)

The joint action of the segments in which Meruane multiplies herself serve a general function, together with the three literary mechanistic orders that, from their dysfunctionality, alter the conventions of the genres they traverse. They bring Meruane's writing closer to Palestine. To use an expression that will be developed in the Conclusion of this article, they turn this Palestinian writing into *worldish literature*, a singular space within the discourse of world literature.

Meruane's Palestine Writing in the Universe of World Literature

In statistics, "universe" is the term that designates the set of units concerned with the research goal. Sometimes, given that the totality of units may be infinite or exceed the scope of the resources available, it becomes necessary to reduce this universe to a subset that has to be, on the one hand, significant and, on the other hand, affordable; in other words, to a fraction of the total universe—a *sample*. Therefore, the definition of the research universe does not determine *what* will actually be studied, but rather *where* the conclusions of the study will be directed. The distinction between universe and sample avoids confusion between the nature of the elements of the study and the methodological problem of designing a viable research procedure. Here, the expression "the universe of world literature" designates nothing beyond the reference class of the concept "world literature," the search for a proper answer to the question about the total set of objects, in this case literary works, which possess the properties attributed by the concept "world literature." Therefore, that *proper answer* must respond to the question about the common qualities of the literary works that are considered part of world literature. Consequently, the choice of a broader or narrower definition of "world literature" should not be conditioned by the possibilities of carrying out its study; the universe exists beyond the resources available for us to observe it.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe mentioned the word *Weltliteratur* in his writing twenty-one times between 1821 and 1827. Despite their brief, scattered, and sometimes

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[19]"No hay torta ni velas ni tragos de sal. No hay océano que cruzar, sólo un líquido *amniótico, amnésico, asesino*" (Italics in original). All translations, apart from Editor's Notes, are by the authors from Spanish to English.

contradictory nature, these mentions served to coin the term that started a whole field of study—world literature seems to have been conceived not merely as an aggregate of all literary works produced worldwide, nor as a canon of universal masterpieces. In his 1830 introduction to Thomas Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, Goethe locates the universe of world literature in the body of works that enable nations with a long history of conflicts between them to become aware "of having imbibed much that was foreign, and conscious of spiritual needs hitherto unknowable. Hence arose a sense of their relationship as neighbors, and, instead of shutting themselves up as heretofore, the desire gradually awoke within them to become associated in a more or less free commerce" (301). For Goethe, therefore, the universe of world literature is not equivalent to that of the literature of the world and should refer only to those works that contribute to overcoming the boundaries of national cultures by promoting a free flow of ideas and a better relationship between peoples.[20]

Goethe considers the mediating role between nationalism and cosmopolitanism as the fundamental quality of world literature. This attribution must be understood within the intellectual context of the Enlightenment, an optimistic time that saw in commercial exchanges between nations the basis of what Kant conceived as the possibility of perpetual peace. This mediating function was forcefully reiterated a century later by Fritz Strich in a different context. To overcome the risk of cultural enclosure stemming from the conception of nation states based on the principle of common descent, a new fear was added: that of a progressive cultural uniformization as a result of the standardization processes characteristic of modern rationalism. The double pressure that world literature had to face gave a dramatic urgency to the requirement of its mediating function "that is able to help us resolve the battle now raging between the idea of the nation and that of humanity" (48). It is this double pressure that leads Strich to define in a restrictive way the nature of the works that form the universe of world literature. This nature is not related to the literary value of the work but to its capacity to respond to that double pressure. World literature will be "a harmony of voices of the most different sounds" only "when it is fed by the blood of the nation, yet is infused with the spirit of general humanity" (42). Strich was aware that his characterization of the dual nature of the works that constitute the universe of world literature went against the predominant naturalistic ontology of Western modernity: instead of voices from different national "bloods" merging into a common universal harmony (different exterior bodies that can accommodate the same interior spirit), he himself admits that, under rationalism, humanity is instead represented as a single universal voice (48) capable of producing different local modulations (the same exterior accommodating different interiorities).[21] It is perhaps because of this ontological discrepancy that the object of world literature often appears strange, unstable, and difficult to grasp. Confronting the ontological approach, David Damrosch observes that:

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[20]For further accounts on the commercial and cosmopolitan dimension of world literature, see Alex Matas's "El règim global i l'homogeneïtzació cultural del cosmopolitisme," where he analyzes the global world and its geocultural domains.
[21]On the distinction between forms of interiority and exteriority as a criterion for drawing up ontological categories, see Philippe Descola's *Beyond Nature and Culture*.

As it moves into the sphere of world literature, far from inevitably suffering a loss of authenticity or essence, a work can gain in many ways. To follow this process, it is necessary to look closely at the transformations a work undergoes in particular circumstances, which is why this book highlights the issues of circulation and translation and focuses on detailed case studies throughout. To understand the working of world literature, we need more a phenomenology than an ontology of the work of art: a literary work manifests differently abroad than it does at home. (6)

There is, thus, according to Damrosch, no intrinsic quality of the literary work that makes it part of the universe of world literature because, eventually, such a universe would not exist. World literature would not, in fact, have any constituent elements of its own; it would only be the processes of circulation, translation, and reading that would be responsible for constructing the "sphere" of world literature. For Damrosch, then, literary works are not active mediators in the relationship between local cultures and humanity as a whole, but patient objects that receive an external agency that brings them into the category of world literature. This passivity is evident in the forcefulness with which Damrosch characterizes literary works as "works that would serve as windows into foreign worlds" (13). Yet, can all literary works, of whatever kind, be susceptible to being opened up for use as windows to the world? If so, the study of world literature should shift its focus from literary works per se to particular uses of works that construct the extra-literary sphere of world literature. In order to maintain the notion of "universe" with which to designate the group of literary objects towards which the conclusions of our study will be directed, we must, instead, recover the consideration of a mediating agency of the literary work. Furthermore, instead of seeing literature as a window waiting to be opened, we can now imagine it as a complex system of revolving doors that *facilitate* access to different places. This does not reduce the interest of the phenomenological inquiry of the processes of circulation, translation, and reading, but, at the same time, it recognizes the singular nature of those literary works that activate such processes.

What is the quality of a literary work that makes it capable of transcending its local context of origin? What makes it an object of cosmopolitan circulation and translation that facilitates the conception of humanity as a community united by the principles of equity and justice? One frequent response sees, in certain literature— considered part of the World Literary Canon—the capacity to create ideal worlds that allow us to reformulate our perceptions of our lived worlds. Pheng Cheah in *What is a World?* calls the various theories in which literature is able to make a world "appear" in our imagination "spiritualist" (313). Cheah suggests that literature is ontologically infrastructural with lived worlds because it depends on and expresses the temporal structure of the world. According to Cheah, certain literary works open up new worlds governed by a "heterotemporality" alternative to the conception of time in which we live; this gift of time "also destabilizes the temporal reckoning of teleological time and disrupts its self-returning closure" (313). Although Cheah bases his own re-reading of Heidegger on the contributions of Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida, the infrastructural nature that he attributes to literature in relation to the world, instead of being understood as the temporal disruption that *worlding* implies, can also be considered a form of mutation: what Deleuze and Guattari would call a product of deterritorialization. For Deleuze and Guattari, deterritorialization is a process by which a certain milieu has its current

organization and context altered (*A Thousand Plateaus* 143), which relates to what happens when a literary work becomes worldly (i.e., makes world, in Cheah's terminology). As explored below, if we understand Cheah's worlding oeuvres through Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization and becoming-minor, the complex process of cosmopolitanization literary works go through can be understood as a never-ending *becoming-world* that is not born out of the common place, but out of expressions of alterity, of non-belonging. In Lina Meruane, this alterity is to be found in the several moments in which she finds herself in no man's land: not an identifiable part of a group, but an exception that jeopardizes the stereotypes and standards of recognition of a determined group. In this regard, the difference between Cheah's spiritualist literatures and our proposal of becoming-world literatures is that whilst in Cheah worlds appear through literature, in the becoming-world account, a certain model of world (with its patterns, its common places, and its guidelines) is being contested by an exception that is able to expand its structural and conceptual horizons becoming, in the process, a new instance of world.

If we limit the universe of world literature to those works that do not create worlds but *become* worlds, perhaps it is time to revise the question previously posed in this section: instead of asking *which is the universe of world literature*, it would now be more accurate to ask *which is the world of the universe of world literature?* Mariano Siskind, in his essay "Towards a Cosmopolitanism of Loss: An Essay About the End of the World," exemplifies the modern process of world production with the saying, "they have a world to win" with which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels close *The Communist Manifesto*:

> In this context, "world" should be understood, not only as the geospheric cultural-political territory whose function was to negate the national determination of local forms of agency, but perhaps most importantly, "world" named the modern and modernist symbolic structure that supported humanist discourses of universal emancipation through global connections, translations, interactions, displacements and exchanges; "world" as the symbolic realm where demands of justice, emancipation and universal inclusion (whether political, cultural and/or aesthetic) were meant to be actualized. (Siskind 207)

But Siskind finds that this notion of world is no longer useful. The idea of world literature must be reconceptualized to fit the traumatic experience of the end of the world. Siskind does not refer to the end of the world in its biospheric but in its historical sense: "the symbolic closure of the horizon of universal justice and emancipation that had defined the modern/modernist relationship between cosmopolitan politics and culture" (211). How can we think of world literature when there is no longer a horizon of expectations where redemption and emancipation have a place? Faced with this approach, can there be any other response than to mourn the loss of the world and thus to understand art and literature as the place where we can engage in this labor of mourning? (215). Perhaps an alternative proposal to Siskind's melancholic mode would be to consider other variants of world—understood as the symbolic structure on which modernity built its subjectivities and aesthetic projects—other horizons of expectations that modernity itself has generated. Thus, when Siskind refers to the loss of the emancipatory horizon, he is referring to the idea of emancipation that, since Kant, has been predominant in the West,

which considers "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity" a priority. But, as Diogo Sardinha has shown, there is, at the very heart of the Modern project, another chain of thought that is in direct opposition to that posed by Kant. This chain brings together Beaudelaire, Bataille, Foucault, and Deleuze as the deserters of the Kantian program for the coming of age of humanity. Meruane's Palestine is located on this axis of opposition to the idea of universal emancipation, in the area where alternatives are discussed, rather than where the lost dream is mourned.

Sardinha distinguishes two forms of opposition to the Kantian sense of emancipation, both of which promote a "becoming-child" as opposed to the biographical metaphor of humanity's coming of age through emancipation, but this becoming something less rather than more can be quantitative or qualitative. Foucault best argued the quantitative alternative when, in "What is Enlightenment," he discussed the equivocality of Kant's use of the term *Menschheit*.[22] Does humanity refer to the human species as a totality or does it refer to that which constitutes the humanity of human beings? Foucault opts for the second option and therefore sees modernity as an ethical attitude, "a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task" (309). Instead of the emancipation of humanity as a whole, we are thus faced with the choice of a minority that decides to reinvent itself, with creative and experimental practices, to break with the limits and tutelage imposed by life "in the majority":

> This means that the historical ontology of ourselves must turn away from all projects that claim to be global or radical. In fact we know from experience that the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions. (Foucault 316)

For Foucault, emancipation thus implies a twofold process of becoming minor. On the one hand, it entails choosing an aesthetic of existence that distances itself from any possibility of universalization or compatibility with the majority. On the other hand, this attitude will lead to incomprehension, and those who adopt this mode of relating to contemporary reality will be relegated as immature and incapable of reaching the majority. In the poem *Palestina, por ejemplo*, Palestine is that minority Meruane turns to in order to write, and, in writing—to subscribe to Virginia Woolf's call in "A Sketch of the Past"—to do something "more necessary than anything else" (8). The alliance with Woolf is justified:

> Because she didn't have
> cold blood (or maybe warm)
> nervous stability
> trained musculature
> to hold banners
> against the war

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[22]*Ed.N.*: Translated from German as 'Humanity.'

> to take the streets, the weapons
> against the lasting peace that war,
> they said, would provide once ended.[23] (8–9)

Just as Woolf once was herself a minority—a woman-writer in a *world of male soldiers*—the writing proposed by Meruane becomes a minoritarian act of emancipation of minorities, of the disarticulated. Writing, according to the author, should be understood as a:

> fight for the articulation of
> ideas, [in which] women
> were never really alone
> with them there were the disarticulated of the world
> with them more than ever
> the Cristian Palestinians, the Muslim Palestine
> the covered and uncovered Muslim women
> that lack their own image
> in the political discourse, that lack
> the legal power to move
> their legitimate claims, to transcend their *ideas, words, wills*.[24] (*Palestina, por ejemplo* 16; italics in original)

Palestine can become a suitable setting for writing because Meruane's writing requires minority, and, quoting the poem again, Palestinians "[a]lways lack the majority"[25] (17).

Becoming minor in its qualitative sense, on the other hand, is to be found in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. It is through the authors' argument, as Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc and Daniel Richter point out, that the minority ceases to be an "object" of reflection or of historical, political, or social knowledge, and is instead understood as a dynamic process entangled in social practices, a creative action that transforms the collective regimes of enunciation (120). According to Deleuze and Guattari, becoming minor is not becoming a simple part of the minority that antagonizes the majority, but becoming an exceptional part of the majority instead. Becoming-minor is not a collective grouping, it is an act, a minoritization which, by problematizing endogenous conflicts, weakens a majoritarian system from within. As reflected in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "[t]here is no 'becoming-majoritarian'; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian" (106). Thus, in this particular case, minority languages are *minoritarian* in terms of

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[23]"Porque ella no tenía / sangre fría (o tal vez caliente) / estabilidad nerviosa / musculatura entrenada / para sostener pancartas / contra la guerra, / para tomar la calle, las armas / contra la paz duradera que la guerra, / se decía, iba a aportar cuando concluyera."

[24]"lucha por la articulación de / ideas, [en la que] las mujeres / nunca estuvieron completamente solas, / con ellas han estado los desarticulados del mundo / con ellas ahora más que nunca / los palestinos cristianos, los musulmanes palestinos / las musulmanas veladas y descubiertas / que carecen de una imagen apropiada / en el discurso político, que carecen / de fuerza legal para mover / sus legítimos reclamos, para hacer trascender sus / *ideas palabras voluntades.*"

[25]"[s]iempre les falla la mayoría."

numbers and relative ratios, but they are truly *minor* when they enable the potential 'becoming minor' of languages as a whole.

What, then, is the becoming-world of literature? It is not the result of transnational circulation, translations, readings, nor their inclusion in anthologies and canons that a literary work becomes worldly. The becoming-world of literature happens alongside an analogous becoming-minor process; or, to return to Meruane's poem:

> It is our time to write
> to rummage again in the fictions of history, of memory
> to measure the words again against the elusive reality
> to free them from their kidnap
> to return to the language
> that dares
> to think beyond all
> crystallization.[26] (*Palestina, por ejemplo* 36–37)

Volverse, or how to "become-return" in Palestine

Meruane's trilogy of sickness constitutes what is understood as the "first phase" in the author's writing. The Palestine writing is, therefore, considered her second phase, displacing sickness in order to introduce "Palestinity" as a central axis in the text. Yet, if we consider some of the traits common to both phases, understanding her writing as a literary machine allows us to identify a series of disarticulated, entangled features that link both the narrative lines together. Among these are constant motion, and the reflection on inheritance and its *becoming*-something different. The characters in Meruane's stories are landless people, caught between territories. Yet their stories are not about nationality, nor roots, nor even identity. Their stories are about a sort of movement that triggers transformation; they are therefore created in motion. There is action in displacement in all four books: (1) in the New York-Chile flights Meruane takes in *Sangre en el Ojo* (Smith), where an incipient sort of cannibalism is awakened; (2) in the cosmopolitan journeys undertaken by fruit and characters in *Fruta Podrida* (Recchia); and (3) in the rare displacements between planes and times in *Sistema Nervioso* (Bournot). Likewise, *Volverse Palestina* is a story about displacement and inheritance. It is about displacement inasmuch as it is about *returning* somewhere, about a journey in both the transformative and the expeditious sense. Yet, as we will discuss, it is also a book in motion itself, as the different publications and versions demonstrate, lived and written in an entangled motion.

> *Volverse Palestina* is also about an inherited disorder; just as the sicknesses from the trilogy are inherited pathologies, the *Palestinian* is also thought of as a contagion brought by the main character's filial relations. In Meruane, inheritance is a contagion with predisposition; an abeyance that is triggered and attempts to take over the host's body. However, Meruane still sees a potential appropriation in contagion and inheritance: genetics are not always a destiny, but a road to self-

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[26]"nos toca escribir / volver a hurgar en las ficciones de la historia, de la memoria / volver a medir las palabras contra la esquiva realidad / liberarlas del secuestro / regresar al lenguaje / que se atreve / a pensar más allá de toda / cristalización."

expression, as the main character in *Fruta Podrida* demonstrates by the chant "this sickness is mine, I won't let anyone take it away from me"[27] (89).

The contagion in *Volverse Palestina*, although the result of an inherited history, surpasses the filial relationships shared by the land and character: "The recap of the past has become dubious even for my father,"[28] the author writes in the first part of the book (20). Furthermore, the father usually delegates hindsight to the sisters "he has left" (21), yet the main character's needs and memories often differ from those offered by the aunts: "What was done of the rest, of the sheets that hung from a rope in the garden, of the tiny ivory elephant that my aunts say I invented because they do not remember it. Palestinian things mysteriously disappeared while I was killing time with other things"[29] (33). The character rejects neither her inheritance nor her Palestinian heritage, yet the confused reasons that take her to actually *return* to Palestine transcend family history. Moreover, the filial relations and the supposedly inherited sensibilities towards her Palestinian family and towards the Palestinian landscape are not lived as expected from the character:

> I don't know what I expected to feel when I met Maryam Abu Awad [...]. I don't know if I expected to see a family trait in her or to feel a stirring, to hear the call of genetic recognition. Suddenly someone raises a hand and crosses the street, gesturing. Nothing. No emotion, just uneasiness: this could be a mistake. That short and almost old woman could be looking for a niece or a friend who is not me. And now that woman is hugging me without asking me if I really am who she believes me to be.[30] (75)

The family bond is not enough for the character to actually *become* Palestinian, just as much as it is not enough for her to *return*. Neither is the Palestinian cause itself, nor the landscape she encounters: "The four parts of the old city should seem extraordinary to me, its Jewish, Armenian, Christian and Muslim markets should enthuse me. The guides proclaim that the old walled city is unforgettable and I am looking for something special in it, something that will leave a mark on my transient memory"[31] (85). The actual "emissaries," as the author puts it, that bring Meruane to *return* to Palestine are anomalous subjects, with whom she establishes affiliative alliances that can mirror the filial relations that constitute her Palestinian heritage. One such is Jaser, the New York taxi driver who instigates her return by claiming she *is* already Palestinian and therefore she should visit her land, instantly "triggering" the character's "Palestinity" (40). Other

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[27]"la enfermedad es mía, no dejaré que me la quiten."

[28]"La recapitulación del pasado se ha vuelto dudosa incluso para mi padre."

[29]"Qué se hizo de lo demás, de las sábanas que colgaban de una cuerda en el jardín, del minúsculo elefante de marfil que mis tías aseguran me inventé porque ellas no lo recuerdan. Las cosas palestinas desaparecieron misteriosamente mientras yo mataba el tiempo en otras cosas."

[30]"No sé qué esperaba sentir cuando me encontrara con Maryam Abu Awad [...]. No sé si esperaba ver en ella un rasgo familiar o sentir un pálpito, recibir la campanada de un reconocimiento genético. De pronto alguien alza una mano y cruza la calle haciendo señas. Nada. Ninguna emoción, apenas desasosiego: esto podría ser un error. Esa mujer bajita y casi vieja podría estar buscando a sobrina o a una amiga que no soy yo. Y ahora esa mujer mujer se está abrazando a mi sin preguntarme si verdaderamente soy quien ella cree."

[31]"Las cuatro partes de la ciudad vieja tendrían que parecerme extraordinarias, sus mercados judío, armenio, cristiano y musulmán tendrían que entusiasmarme. Las guías pregonan que la vieja ciudad amurallada es inolvidable y yo busco algo especial en ella, algo que deje huella en mi memoria transeúnte."

emissaries include a writer friend from Jaffa of Jewish descent, in love with a Muslim writer, who congratulates Meruane for being recognized as Palestinian at Heathrow, and who welcomes her to his house in order for her to visit "the land of her ancestors" (45); and Hamza, the "almost Palestinian" student from her university class, who encourages her to go back and visit his family's land "Yalo, or Yalu," on the outskirts of Ramla, the city of sand. Even Meruane's past self is at times an emissary, as when she recalls what she wrote for a Chilean newspaper after 9/11: "I thought of my own Palestinian genealogy, of my own surname dragged into this battle, of the possibility of becoming a suspect before a community of individuals who came together in the time of the calamity to claim their rights and demand security guarantees against a supposed adversary"[32] (49). The truly transcendental relationships the character establishes before, during, and after the Palestinian *return* are not those born out of inheritance as the reader would expect. They are not filial but transversal affinities, crosswise communications between anomalous and heterogeneous subjects. Exceptional subjects that, like Meruane herself, do not entirely belong to the community in which they find themselves entrenched.

In reality, *Volverse Palestina* is neither about "returning" nor "becoming" Palestinian in the common significance of the word. It is not merely about joining a cause, nor about rediscovering past roots. As Emanuela Jossa points out, the verb "volver" has two differentiated meanings in Spanish: the first one is *to return*, and, the second, in its reflexive form (*volver*se), to *turn into* (281). Yet neither of these meanings actually occur in the book per se. As Meruane regularly says in the first part of *Volverse Palestina,* the Palestinian return is not a return at all, since you cannot *return* to somewhere you have never been. The author writes, "it wouldn't be my own return. It would be a borrowed return, returning in someone else's place"[33] (17). The term *return* anchors the narrative to the previous texts, placing nomadism, motion, and movement in the center of the plot. It also refers to the longing for Palestinian "right to return" although such a return is also impossible in itself: to return somewhere that no longer exists. In the second part of the book, Meruane meets Hamza and they discuss Meruane's *return*, which fills the student with enthusiasm as his own family has been denied entrance to Palestine since the eighties:

> What is there, in Yalo or Yalu? I ask him instead, not knowing what else to ask. Nothing, he says, there is nothing more than truncated biographies and sliced stone walls at ground level. Over what was his house and that of so many neighbors, there is now a national park. A park, that is, a protected area under an ecological premise where those Palestinians, even if they could return, could not build again. A park where history was covered with trees. Traces of the eviction can still be found there, the foundations of those uprooted houses. Because the olive trees, says Hamza, continue to grow where they were left off, they continue

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[32]"Pensé en mi propia genealogía palestina, en mi propio apellido metido en esta batalla en la posibilidad de convertirme en sospechosa ante una comunidad de individuos que se unen en el momento de la calamidad para reclamar sus derechos y exigir garantías de seguridad contra ese supuesto adversario."
[33]"no sería un regreso mío. Sería un regreso prestado, un volver en el lugar del otro."

to fill their branches with olives even though there is no one left to harvest them.[34] (51–52)

The impossibility of return is also embodied in the constant negations that can be found throughout the text. *Returning* to Palestine is, according to the character, a way to "add to that subtraction" (50). The text is filled up with incompatibilities that refer to the impossibility posed by the title of the book. Meruane's house is not her house, "the telephone bell reaches me at the door of my house which is not mine but leased, and not even all of it"[35] (47), as much as her inheritance leads her to an impossible return. On her second encounter with Jaser, he argues that his family, "clings to what little he has left because that's all they have to do now […]. Hold on to what's left of Palestine so it doesn't disappear. Don't let them erase it because we've left the doors open. This is the time to stay, it is the time to go back"[36] (43). The last phrase is as contradictory as Meruane's return. Through the presence of incompatibility, contradiction, and negation, the author presents the impossibility of fulfilling the first of the meanings evoked by the word *volver*. It is also present in the last sentences of *Volverse Palestina*: "I don't know if I have returned. I'm not sure I can […]. Don't ever say you won't return, Meruane, you will return. You'll be back soon"[37] (107). The character can be found "compulsively surrendering to abandon" "not living" somewhere or even speaking in a language she has already started to forget (41, 35, 29–30). The rare structure of negation that floods the text hints at the *impossibility of return* the book continually refers to, in both (of its) senses.

Impossibility and negation thus play a corresponding role throughout the text. The architecture of denial and incompatibility reinforces the contradictory statement Meruane articulates through her alleged *return*. Yet returning is not the only impossibility to be found in the book's title. Phrased in its reflexive form, the verb volver(*se)* can also signify to transform, become, grow, or turn *into*. The book thus displays a journey towards a new form of self that is born from the main character's Palestinian heritage. Such heritage is, in the first place, commonly avoided, not only by Meruane, whose interest in Palestine emerges subtly as a "slender rumor," but also by her father, who constantly refuses to engage with the subject (17). The first part of the book begins with the narration of the two different occasions on which Meruane's father found himself at the border of his former homeland: once on the border between Gaza and Egypt and later in the Jordan Valley. On both occasions he turned around and walked away:

[34]"¿Qué hay ahí, en Yalo o Yalu? Le pregunto en vez, sin saber qué otra cosa preguntar. Nada, dice, no hay nada más que biografías truncas y muros de piedra rebanados a ras de suelo. Sobre lo que fue su casa y la de tantos vecinos hay ahora un parque nacional. Un parque, es decir, una zona protegida bajo una premisa ecológica donde esos palestinos, aun si pudieran regresar, no podrían volver a construir. Un parque donde la historia quedó tapizada de árboles. Todavía se pueden encontrar ahí las huellas del desalojo, los cimientos de esas casas arrancadas de cuajo. Porque los olivos, dice Hamza, continúan creciendo donde quedaron, siguen cargando las ramas de aceitunas aunque no haya quien las coseche."
[35]"el timbre del teléfono me alcanza en la puerta de mi casa que no es mía sino arrendada, y tampoco toda."
[36]"se aferra a lo poco que le va quedando porque eso es lo que hay que hacer ahora […]. Aferrarse a lo que queda de Palestina para que no desaparezca. Que no la hagan desaparecer porque dejamos las puertas abiertas. Este es el momento de quedarse, es el momento de volver."
[37]"Yo no sé si he vuelto. No sé si nunca pueda […]. No digas nunca que no vuelvas, Meruane, que sí vuelves. Vuelves pronto."

Another time he found himself at the edge of Jordan: his sight could encompass the desert that crossed the border […]. Seeing an opportunity in doubt, my mother pointed, in the distance, her small, stretched and stiff index finger, to the extensive valley of the Jordan River that flowed from Mount Nebo […]. But my father turned around and walked in the opposite direction. He was not going to put himself through the arbitrary waiting, the meticulous search of his suitcase, the abusive interrogation of the Israeli border and successive checkpoints. He wasn't going to risk being treated with suspicion. To be called a foreigner in a land that he considers his, because it still contains, intact, his father's house.[38] (18)

The father not only refuses to go back to Palestine, he also delegates the Palestinian conversation to his sisters, particularly to Meruane's oldest aunt, albeit with the fear that that time might have sown oblivion with them as well (21). The Palestinian heritage is a bond that slowly fades away throughout the text, adding distance between relatives and family memories. Therefore, even though inheritance is what draws Meruane to Palestine in the first place, what actually sets her *return* in motion are the singular affiliations she establishes along the way, as debated in the section above. Those same affiliations are the ones that will set in motion the character's *becoming*-Palestine, which will determine the nature of her *Palestinity*. In other words, those same affiliative relations are the ones that will condition the sort of *becoming* the character will experience throughout her *becoming*-Palestine.

A literal approach to the book's title would suggest Meruane's becoming is smoothly defined, i.e., from Chilean to Palestinian. Yet the actual situation the character finds herself in is an entangled mesh of inherited family histories and a multiplicity of affiliative relationships that problematize the *purity* of the result—if indeed there still is such a thing as being *truly* Palestinian (*Volverse Palestina* 21). Furthermore, Meruane refuses to simply become a Chilean with Palestinian roots, as much as she refuses to be a Palestinian born in Chile, or any sort of identity mixture, a *Chilestinian,* as she states in the note written for the White Review in June 2021: "I've spent years explaining that I'm not *French Italian Greek Egyptian Spanish Turkish*," the author writes, right after being *recognized* as Hebrew at Berlin's Tegel Airport.[39]

The sort of becoming that *Volverse Palestina* is concerned with is a non-resulting one, a fruitless transformation. Deleuze and Guattari's approach to *becoming* in *A Thousand Plateaus* is interesting in this sense, for they understand the concept as a form of transformation that, even though *real*, lacks the terminology for the resultant subject. A *becoming-* has no other subject than the self, the authors write (238). Meruane does not mimic the Palestinian, she does not mirror her family's traditions nor does she completely identify herself with her heritage. In the same way, Deleuze and Guattari

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[38]"Estuvo, otra vez, mi padre, en el borde de Jordania: su vista pudo abarcar el desierto que atravesaba la frontera […]. Viendo una oportunidad en la duda, mi madre señaló, a lo lejos, su pequeño índice estirado y tieso, el extenso valle del río Jordán que se desprendía del monte Nebo […]. Pero mi padre se dio la vuelta y caminó en dirección opuesta. No iba a someterse a la espera arbitraria, a la meticulosa revisión de su maleta, al abusivo interrogatorio de la frontera israelí y de sucesivos puestos de control. No iba a exponerse a ser tratado con sospecha. A ser llamado extranjero en una tierra que considera suya, porque ahí sigue, todavía intacta, la casa de su padre."

[39]https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/from-our-archive-faces-in-a-face/.

assert that "becoming is not a correspondence of relationships. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, and ultimately an identification" (238). The Deleuzian *becoming* endured by Meruane arouses nothing but her*self,* a new and changing form of selfness.

If Meruane was to strictly adhere to her inherited relations, such *becoming-*Palestine would have been impossible. The sort of *becoming-* Deleuze and Guattari propose is always "of a different order than that of filiation" (238). Meruane's inherited relations towards people and places lead her to situations without continuity, often part of a "saga of losses" (*Volverse Palestina* 31)—the earthquake, the seaquake, the burned church, and, finally, even Mayriam's death—all that is geographically placed in Meruane's inherited *Palestinity* is broken or impossible to pursue. What is pursuable of her *Palestinity* is only what is created in the alliances she establishes along the way. These alliances between heterogeneous subjects—sometimes affinity affiliations, sometimes hostile encounters—are what make her transformation into a Palestinian a *becoming-*Palestine, where the result lacks a conceptual term because it is itself a difference beyond differentiation. Such affiliations are forms of recognition, manners in which the character relates to her surroundings, either identifying the subjects as allies or enemies, nevertheless displacing the significance of the conventional symbols and situations she encounters. For instance, when an agent of Israel in the airport discovers the insulin bomb Meruane carries on her skin, it is mistakenly identified as a *real* bomb, a real threat that instantly activates Meruane's *Palestinity* and causes her to be seen as a terrorist. However, since her forms of affinity fluctuate and are often a response to singular situations, Meruane never becomes a new Palestinian entity capable of becoming part of the Palestinian-group. She is still a landless subject, still caught up in between territories. She will now be a foreigner in her own land, as much as she will be a foreigner in Palestine. But being a foreigner in Palestine is more alluring than being foreign anywhere else: since Palestine is an occupied territory, no territory can be Palestinian land, and thus Meruane is bound to be a *foreigner everywhere.* She is meant to be displaced, conjured by her anomalous affiliations.

Her *becoming*-Palestine is thus a sort of involution. *Becoming-*, according to Deleuze and Guattari, does not imply a familiar relationship. "If evolution implies true becomings-," the authors argue, "it is in the vast domain of symbiosis, that brings into play beings of completely different scales and kingdoms, without any possible filiation" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 238). Likewise, evolution, *inheritance*, is what brought the slender rumor of Palestine towards Meruane, yet it is because of the *symbiosis that brought into play completely different scales and kingdoms, without any possible filiation,* that Meruane's *becoming*-Palestine was assembled, transcending conventional transformation. Evolution would have made Meruane a *Palestinian citizen*, involution is what makes her Palestine, the projection of a cultural context. Through her Palestine Writing, Meruane does not become a part of the Palestine collective, but an expression of its alterity. As Deleuze and Guattari assert in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "Becoming- is involutional, and involution is creative" (245). With Meruane a whole new form of *becoming*-Palestine arises. It does not resemble *being* Palestinian. It does not refer to *looking* Palestinian. It has nothing to do with any sort of looking nor being *like* anything else. The form of *Palestinity* Meruane "suffers from" has nothing to do with the Palestinity that may have existed before, because it does not refer to the Palestine

demonym. It is not *becoming*-Palestine in the sense of *belonging* to Palestine, nor in the sense of *being* Palestinian. A demonym is a word that identifies a group of people in relation to a particular space. However, Meruane does not relate to the Palestinian-group but to the herd of heterogeneous, anomalous subjects she encounters, and with whom she establishes affiliative relationships. Her *becoming*-Palestine transcends adjectivation. When Meruane *becomes*-Palestine, she becomes "not a demonym but a nation"[40] (*Palestina, por ejemplo* 24).

Conclusion

Understanding world literature with a universal scope means understanding there are several attributes inherent to the text itself that make the oeuvre world-*ish*. The "world" in world literature is not a fixed space, nor simply a *worlding* in the sense that it "shapes or constitutes" the world as we know it, as Pheng Cheah would argue, but *worldish* in the sense that it is constantly *becoming*-world(s). Although it might sound odd, the word *is* indeed worldish, in the sense Wittgenstein talks about reddish-green or yellowish-blue in his *Remarks on Colour*. Wittgenstein argues that if two colors are seen in the same place at the same time, they are not two colors, but one (120). For instance, as Bernhard Ritter explains in his article "Reddish Green – Wittgenstein on Concepts and the Limits of the Empirical," "the only way for red and green to be perceived as being present in one colour is to perceive reddish green" (12). Just as Wittgenstein's reddish green is not simply a combination of red and green but an "intermediary color," the result of a becoming- is not a hybrid entity born out of a mixture; they both are "-ish" substances, always *almost-*, *sort of-*, *roughly*-something. The word shall be world*ish* because it is not the world per se, yet it actually *is* to some extent, since it is a continuous *becoming*-world, that is, intrinsically a non-achievable, unnamable entity. Its literatures generate a form of reality that was previously undisclosed, and this reality is not only caught up within the narrative, but can expand upon and contaminate its surroundings.

The worldish texts include a series of affiliative relations that alter the nature of the self, instigating a transformation that constitutes the journey itself. Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, in James Joyce's *Ulysses,* are meant to find each other; not because of their similarities, not because of their resemblance, not because they *are* the same, but because they are intrinsically different; two heterogenous anomalies that, once encountered, do not create a new hybrid form, nor adapt to each other, nor merge into a new entity. They simply become themselves, yet the journey to do so is intrinsically *a becoming*. In *Ulysses*, the Circe chapter acts as the *becoming-*'s triggering moment. In *Volverse Palestina*, the emissaries she encounters along the way activate her Palestinity. In Han Kang's book, *The Vegetarian*—also a book in motion, much like *Volverse Palestina*—the main character's dreams are what triggers the involution. In her *becoming-*, the protagonist Yeong-hye ultimately *refuses* to belong to the human race. In her *becoming*-tree, the affiliations are created among completely different species, in altogether distinct scales. All three books are instances of a *becoming*-world, understanding such a *becoming-* as a revelation of an extraordinary form of both self and world. The world is not only an unstable, ever-changing entity in the tradition of Cheah's interpretation of Heidegger, but a series of unstable and ever-changing forms of reality.

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[40]"no un gentilicio, una nación."

The *becoming-world* is real, but to rephrase Deleuze and Guattari's question: what form of reality is it? For if *becoming-* does not consist of making- or of imitating-, it is also evident that one does not "really" *become-*. *Becoming-* does not produce anything other than itself, which means the world is nothing other than the world itself, yet—and here we find ourselves at a critical milestone—the world is new in form, the world configuring a new form of reality. Furthermore, the autonomy achieved by the characters in their *becomings-* is not an emancipation, nor a growth, nor a maturation. They do not evolve as their species would require. It is an involution in the sense that it requires *becoming-*minor. To a greater or lesser extent, it is a rebellion against one's own evolution.

The *becoming-*Palestine encompassed in Meruane's *Volverse Palestina* configures a new reality about *Palestinity,* one that could not have existed if it were not for the anomalous conditions she encounters. The term-less realities born from different *becoming(s)-* are the unstable result of a process that constitutes a reality in itself; in other words, the new reality exists in and because of the *becoming-* process they are part of. Yet who then, or what, *becomes-*Palestine? It is not the author herself, nor simply her literary character. It is something bigger, something that allows the new reality of Palestine to contaminate and spread over new formats, patterns, and structures. *Volverse Palestina* is the story of a unique process, created in the midst of a series of singular and unrepeatable moments of assemblage between heterogeneous subjects. It neither offers nor explains a new way of *being* Palestinian, it does not present the reader with a third neutral space that can embrace Meruane's *abnormal*[41] Palestinity. Indeed, her abnormal Palestinity does not even belong to the character, since it surpasses the narrative voice, infecting the new instances of the text and its new narrative forms. Ultimately, it is Meruane's writing that has been infected, that has become-Palestine. It is her writing that has been altered, resulting in nothing but itself, a new term-less reality of writing that is, essentially, Palestine. A literary machine that is now a Palestine-literary machine. *Volverse Palestina* is a world*ish* book not because it presents itself as a canvas where we can "articulate, in the idiosyncratic syntax of our critical desires, the urgency of confronting an end of the world that might just never end," as Mariano Siskind argues (232), but because there is no canvas, no representation, and no unfolded reality[42]; simply a process of *becoming-*world that might just never end, never be, and never *actually* become. The term *world* in world literary studies does not work as a stabilizer of similarities in the sense that it encompasses a canonical motif of ways of "doing literature" around the world. The term world refers to the massive, immeasurable amount of literatures which, under their own miscellaneous processes, contain a form of

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[41]In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari propose the following distinction between the anomalous and the abnormal:

> It has been noted that the origin of the word anomal ('anomalous'), an adjective that has fallen into disuse in French, is very different from that of anormal ('abnormal'): a-normal, a Latin adjective lacking a noun in French, refers to that which is outside rules or goes against the rules, whereas an-omalie, a Greek noun that has lost its adjective, designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization. The abnormal can be defined only in terms of characteristics, specific or generic; but the anomalous is a position or set of positions in relation to a multiplicity. (243–244)

[42]In this sense, it differs from, and sometimes even contradicts, the recurrent characteristics of the Palestinian diaspora that Helena Lindholm in *The Palestinian Diaspora* situates around an absence of homeland and a new transnational condition.

becoming- that brings out a previously hidden form of anomalous reality, which is the result of a subject's *becoming*-self. It is not that a different reality is created in the text, towards which we run in order to "displace the unbearable sense of loss and the inescapable violence that define our present" (232), but that the text registers the alterity contained in specific, singular encounters, exposing forms of existence that were hitherto concealed. It is in such cases that we can say that literature world-*ishes*.

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Appendix A

de idea. «Me duele tener que escribirte este mensaje.
Desafortunadamente no podré escribir el texto. En los
últimos meses a dos ciudadanos israelíes se les ha impe-
dido el acceso cuando regresaban de viajes de turismo
(un eufemismo para decir que fueron deportados). Los
~~dos eran judíos por línea materna, es decir, judíos en~~
~~toda regla~~, y los dos ~~habían hecho aliyá, el proceso por~~
~~el cual un judío pide ser miembro del Estado de Israel~~

Source: Meruane, Lina. *Volverse Palestina*. Conaculta, 2013, pp. 44–46.