

1 problematizing comparative literature

[E]verywhere under God's sky all humans express in their language the same and kindred emotions. . . . [T]he importance lies in our discovery of the eternally unchanging human in all guises.

—Max Koch, Introduction to *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*

Comparative Literature as a Discourse of Identification

To analyze two or more literary phenomena that transcend national, cultural, or linguistic boundaries, the discipline of comparative literature must depend on the legitimacy of an act of bringing two items together. What makes this act legitimate? The ground is usually sought in “similarity,” empirical, speculative, or other. Therefore, comparison is a kind of perception that is first realized by ignoring a distance from a certain “common” axis. Comparative literature is, then, fundamentally a discourse of identification: we begin comparing when we identify, not when we differentiate, two objects.¹

This presumption of "comparative" methodology becomes clearer if one thinks of the traditional form of comparative literature at its incipient stage, when it took shape in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Europe. As many have pointed out, the term *comparative literature* was a misnomer. Scholars of comparative literature in nineteenth-century Western universities hardly "compared," but were simply engaged in a literary history that crossed national borders. If the discipline of comparative literature shared something with comparative linguistics, a discipline that had a large role in formulating the concept of comparative literature, it was a general framework of the objects of research which these two disciplines equally possessed.

This framework was, of course, Europe. A common root for a set of any phenomena was guaranteed beyond doubt as long as a researcher was confined within the realm of the greater European linguistic/cultural unity, rendering it a subsequent task to establish the genealogy of related entities, and to describe variants in sundry soils. It was not necessary to give reasons for comparison, for crossing boundaries, and for bringing together the two "different" items within the monolithic and homogeneous entity of Europe, fictional though it may be. It was the tacit but unshakable presupposition of early "comparativism" that objects of inquiry were variants, stemming from the same root.

For instance, comparative linguistics had two main tasks:

1. To find out the general laws of phonetic transformation, in which case identification of objects was pre-given; in other words, we took it for granted from the start that $\pi\alpha\tau\eta\rho$ (pater) and "father" meant much the same thing, a recognition from which derived Grimm's law: "Classic Greek (ancient Indo-European) [p] changed to English (Germanic) [f]."
2. To reconstruct the lost root (an unknown signifier of the Indo-European for the original signified "Father"), applying these laws, a gesture in the quest

for an origin that could relate all its various manifestations in the later linguistic formation.

In the field of comparative literature during the first half of this century, when the so-called French school was dominant, the discipline also abided by a principle of identification, similar to that utilized in comparative grammar. The study of "influence" and the search for "sources," for which French comparativism has now fallen into bad repute, quite faithfully reproduced the disciplinary model of comparative linguistics, that is, the determination of the common root and the analysis of its variations in multiple but restricted milieux. The *Stoffgeschichte* (history of a theme) approach, which René Etiemble labeled as "one of the favorite subjects of the so-called French school" (*Crisis in Comparative Literature* 43), was also the application of the traditional model of comparativism in terms of a literary theme and a character within the boundaries of Western literary tradition. Thus, the field of research continued to be based on, and to contribute to, a common European destiny. When such typical literary themes as Don Juan, Hamlet, or Faust in various national traditions were discussed, the emphasis was not so much on the comparison of two markedly different objects as on the historical transformation of one specific denominator that served as the common origin of its various spatial/temporal embodiments. It was a primary identification and an undoubted continuation of the phenomenon that further motivated an investigation of a difference, humbly attached to the original, that is, in more concrete terms, a feature which has turned an original Don Juan into a classical Don Juan, a romantic Don Juan, a Byronic Don Juan, a rationalist Don Juan, and so on. That a given researcher was speaking about one and the same topic was so obvious that it would have amounted to absurdity to doubt it: despite varied nuances and overtones, what we call "Don Juan" remained "Don Juan" after all.

Naturally, such "Eurocentrism" in the methodology of earlier comparative literature largely discouraged East-West comparison, where there was no such common origin, and

where a historical connection, which was a prerequisite of the French method, was scarce or nonexistent. One of the major early theoreticians of the French school, Ferdinand Brunetière, unhesitatingly dismissed the East from the scope of inquiry with the following statement: "[T]hese faraway and mysterious civilizations [of the Far East] have developed outside ours, and, having therefore few points of contact with ours, consequently offer very few possibilities of comparison" (158).

Then, sometime in the middle of this century, a new task was acknowledged, mainly on the other side of the Atlantic, of subsuming two literary phenomena without any historical contact as objects of research. Instead of genealogy, source studies, and the historical account of a theme in literature, uses of a comparative frame of two (or more) completely different phenomena that may or may not have actual connection began to insist on its legitimacy as a task for comparative literature.

The new move was made possible by a method of "criticism." By devising a form of explanation, based on some "critical" term, or a "theoretical" concept which can bridge separate phenomena, the comparatist was now authorized to make any kind of comparison. In the formulation of one of the dominant proponents of the emerging methodology, A. Owen Aldridge, "[c]omparison may be used in literary study to indicate affinity, tradition, or influence. Affinity consists in resemblances in style, structure, mood, or idea between two works which have no other connection. As an example, the Russian novel *Oblomov* may be compared to *Hamlet* because each work is a character study of indecision and procrastination" (3).² It is the "critical" concepts about characters, "indecisive" and "procrastinatory," not the historical relations, that now relate the two heroes to the same category. Thus, this shift in methodology, which can roughly be encapsulated as a shift from the dominance of the "French" to the "American" school,³ can also be characterized as one from historicism to criticism.

René Etiemble's *The Crisis in Comparative Literature* vividly captured this shift in the history of comparativism, and was itself a manifesto of the new thinking, passionately defending comparison not among nations belonging to the same civilization but among historically unrelated civilizations:⁴ "The other tendency [the American school] considers that even though two literatures have not had historical relations, it is legitimate to compare the literary genres which each developed for its own use" (35).

The new tendency naturally legitimized an East/West comparative scheme, which had hitherto been taboo. If the earlier comparative literature had relied on the relatively high degree of sociocultural, linguistic, and historical homogeneity of Europe, the new principle opened up a way to incorporate any writing deemed "literature" into comparative research.⁵

We should be aware that in this newer form of comparative literature that deals with non-European literary traditions, "literature" is often presented as a given empirical reality. The question as to what constitutes literature in non-Western discourse is seldom asked. Instead, works that are considered "literary" are first cited, then compared, and finally a conclusion is given as to what it is that may be called "literary," and what these examples show as a universal feature of literariness. For instance, we have a comparison of *La Chanson de Roland* and *The Tale of Heike*, a classic study by a Japanese comparatist, Satō Teruo.⁶ It compares the two works as representatives of oral literature and as "epics." Whether either belongs to the category of "literature" is not self-evident, though. Then, what makes it so ostensibly obvious as Satō presumes that it is an issue of comparative "literature"? The Japanese comparatist should have begun by defining "literature," and then convinced us of the "literariness" of *The Tale of Heike* and of the general nature of the "oral literature" which could be revealed through comparison with *La Chanson de Roland*. Satō's method was contrary to this and "tautological." He

took it for granted that *The Tale of Heike* was a work of literature, from which he subsequently drew conclusions as to the nature of (oral) literature.

Conversely, Hutcheson Posnett starts his *Comparative Literature* by asking "What Is Literature?" in an effort to specify objects of the discipline. The study radically points to the diversity of the phenomena, and the infeasibility of the standard of "literariness" as something universal. However, at the end of the first chapter, he reduces all his arguments to an anticlimactically conventional definition of literature: "works which, whether verse or prose, are the handicraft of imagination rather than reflection, aim at the pleasure of the greatest possible number of the nation rather than instruction and effects, and to appeal to general rather than specialized knowledge" (18-19). Actually, though, this standard definition puts the status of *The Tale of Heike*, which is a historical narrative, in a debatable position.

Let us return to the examination of the new school of transcivilizational comparative literature. "Comparison" in this newly established method claims to encompass the poetic features of the literary discourse of the world as it is an analytical tool, based on philosophical, metatextual abstraction. What associates Pushkin's *The Stone Guest* and Da Ponte-Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is the Russian poet's familiarity with the opera and the actual use, in the drama, of motifs and characters taken from it (historical method). In contrast, what puts Tirso di Molina's *Don Juan* and, say, the Shining Prince (Hikaru Genji), the hero of *The Tale of Genji* of eleventh-century Japan, in the same arena is one or more features that a comparativist may project upon both characters through speculation and critical analysis, whether those features be "love," "passion," "lust," "seduction," and so on (analytical method).

This new concept of "comparison," based on critical considerations of "similarity," "analogy," and "affinity," well answered the need to expand horizons, pointing to infinite possibilities, gloriously described as "an inexhaust-

ible reservoir" that "[p]urely comparative subjects constitute" (Remak, "Comparative Literature, Its Definition and Function" 5). Or it could have been, on the contrary, that the latter, that is, the expansion of the field, responded to the shift in approach. In any case, "expansion" now became legitimate, and theoretical. The result was the emergence of such methodological concepts as comparative stylistics, genology, typology, thematology, and so on, in systematic collaboration.

"Analogy" and the notion of abstract "types" are the theoretical tools that have enabled the Euro-American scholarly discourse to incorporate other "literary" traditions. An American comparatist asserts: "One field in which the possibilities for research are almost limitless is that kind of comparative literature study which seeks to provide pictures of world literature as shown by the investigation of *typological analogies* as distinct from cultural interactions" (Wrenn 19; emphasis added). Or, in the formulation of Friederich, a pioneer of American comparative literature, "it is often not at all important to dwell on influences that are actually demonstrable but to find evidences of a so called 'Zeitgeist' or a spirit of the time which produced, independently of each other, *similar* mentalities and hence *similar* works and styles in the most diverse countries" (40–41; emphasis added).

Claudio Guillén's formulation of the models of a comparative method may correspond to the above described history of comparative literature. In *The Challenge of Comparative Literature* he proposes three models of what he calls "supranationality." They are: (model A) the study of "phenomena and supranational assemblages that imply internationality, that is, suggest either genetic contacts or other relations between authors and processes belonging to distinct national spheres or common cultural premises"; (model B) "phenomena or processes that are genetically independent, or belong to different civilizations, [but] are collected and brought together . . . to the extent that common sociohistorical

conditions are implied"; and (model C) "genetically independent phenomena [which] make up supranational entities in accordance with principles and purposes derived from the theory of literature" (70). Obviously, he evaluates the last method most highly, judging that it displays the greatest degree of "theoreticity" and "supranationality." Guillén's models, in which model A probably refers to the "French" method and models B and C to the "American," thus show a sense of evolution and hierarchy, although he is not explicit about it, nor does he completely dismiss the type of research done according to model A. We see here in collaboration the ideal of "theoreticity" and that of "supranationality" just as "criticism" was responsible for opening up the horizons at the dawn of the "American" school. The higher one climbs on the ladder of theoretical abstraction, the wider the scope one is endowed with.

Another concept that has formed part of such a constellation, and that needs some examination, is the idea of "aesthetics." In *Truth and Method* Hans-Georg Gadamer remarks, quoting Graf Yorck: "Comparison is always aesthetic, it is always concerned with the form" (206). René Etiemble, too, justifies comparativism on the ground of "aesthetic" considerations:

[A]s soon as we enter the realm of the abstract, the concepts of a given language only rarely coincide with those of another language[.] Rather, they overlap, each being composed of parts of several foreign concepts, and the latter varying with the language in question: in German *Volk* is charged with an affective and racial meaning which does not inhere in our term *peuple*. *Völkisch* does not mean *populaire* at all, but rather adds to *rassisch*, a quasi-scientific notion which can be translated by *racial*, a romantic and leftist nuance which did not prevent it from deviating toward the monstrously normative meaning of *raciste* under the Nazi influence. Historically, German classicism has few traits in com-

mon with French classicism. *Aesthetically* [my emphasis], however, they do possess some characteristics in common. How can one explain historically that all the themes of European pre-romanticism are found . . . in ancient China and the China of the T'ang? Yet, aesthetically, the analogies *force* themselves into consideration. (*Crisis in Comparative Literature* 40)

We will have to return to the problematic of what I would call the "metaphysical" elements of Etiemble's thought in respect to the relationship between a signifier and a signified. A special note, however, should be made now about the "violence" with which the metaphysics of aestheticizing is justified. Etiemble starts his discussion by giving an example: *Volk* and *peuple*, two notions that he strongly insists upon differentiating. A reference to Nazism must suggest an essential discrepancy between these two terms. Nonetheless, when Etiemble abruptly mentions French and German classicism, which "possess some characteristics in common," the context conversely requires readers to understand that *Volk* and *peuple* are after all the same concepts, or at least, have the same core of meaning in spite of their differences. This is not an idea difficult to accept, for we probably believe at the bottom of our hearts that *Volk* translates into *peuple*.

The unexpected shift in the course of logic may demonstrate Etiemble's predominant interest in what is identical, rather than what does not overlap. Given this new direction of argument, he can conclude, without much reasoning, that European and "Chinese" preromanticisms belong to one and the same order despite all the apparent differences, just as French and German classicisms are essentially identical literary phenomena. This twist is, finally, reinforced by the claim to "aesthetic" terms: classicism is classicism in any sociolinguistic formation; therefore, we are "forced" to notice the aesthetic affinities of French and German classicisms and European and "Chinese" preromanticisms.

Although it is unclear how the interrelation of the signs *Volk* and *peuple* helps to demonstrate that French and German classicisms are comparable, Etiemble pushes his argument even further by expanding the discussion to the transcivilizational comparison of "aesthetic" phenomena. This is a suspicious move, since he is engaged in two different kinds of activity. In a European context, he compares what is called classicism in Germany and what is so called in France, and then concludes that there is something in common in the final instance. In a transcivilizational comparison, he first decides to call some features in a Chinese work "preromantic," and then insists on the ubiquity of preromanticism, the basic feature of which, he argues, is shared by every culture "aesthetically," if not historically.

Whether or not preromantic features are to be found in Chinese literature is a theory that can be agreed upon or contested. But such considerations are dismissed by Etiemble's unchallenged formulation: "Chinese preromanticism." To put it differently, comparison is already legitimized the moment he has started to perceive some aspects of Chinese culture as "preromanticism." When the two are compared (under the rubric of "preromanticism" in this case), they are already identified with some signification projected onto one or the other.

This is quite a different procedure from comparing French classicism and German classicism, both of which are, after all, categorized as classicism of some kind. In defiance of such problems, Etiemble violently closes the argument by writing: "aesthetically, analogies *force* themselves into consideration."

Probably, a certain aesthetic "violence," revealed by this sentence, is invariably required in comparison. Now the axiom has been arrived at: even among cultures belonging to different civilizations, based on different linguistic formulae, essential aspects of culture are always identifiable and comparable if only one observes them from an "aesthetic" point of view. The complicity of aesthetics and comparison is thus achieved.

In this manner, the comparative method of the American school as endorsed by Etiemble has such an anti-historicist, "metaphysical" character. The object of the present study is to analyze the nature of "criticism," "theoreticism," "aestheticism," and "metaphysics" as concepts of comparative study, especially in the American method, taking the comparison of "Don Juan" across civilizations as an example.⁸

Problems of Transcivilizational Comparison of Don Juans

What is the nature of a comparative study of Don Juan(ism) on an "international" (or "supranational," if you will) scale? What enables a transcivilizational comparison of Don Juans? While French scholars on the whole have been intent on the variation of a character identically called "Don Juan" in the West, a scholar is now, according to the new American concept, or to Guillén's models B and C, expected to find and compare "Don Juan-like" figures in other, non-Western literatures.

It is the abstractness, or the theoreticity of thematology, aesthetics, and criticism that enables the concept of "Donjuanesque," which authorizes this kind of comparison. Such an attempt, however, can be a futile endeavor. In order to achieve higher "theoreticity" and abstractness, and to subsume ever larger groups of objects to be studied and compared, a researcher in turn has to resort to ever broader and therefore even vaguer terms. The more theoretical it gets and the more one subsumes, the more trite it becomes. To find a candidate for comparison of a Don Juan in radically different cultural milieux, and to discover the gist of Don Juanism, the concept of "Donjuanesque" has to be as broad and comprehensive as possible.

Let us take a look at some of the candidates for the point of comparison of Don Juans East/West that have been proposed so far. Guillén variously suggested "an inveterate

woman-chaser," "an untiring and incorrigible lover," or an even plainer "seducer" (84). Etienneble (and his English translators) proposed a comparative chart of "Men who love" (xxii). Other candidates have been: (a man who embodies) inconstancy (Gendarme de Bévoite), betrayal (Jonathan Miller), insincerity, passion, desire, sensuality, lust, and ultimately, of course, masculinity, that is, Don Juan as the "man": "Don Juan is the man who before the woman is nothing but man, neither father, nor husband, nor brother, nor son" (José Ortega y Gasset, *Don Quijote, Don Juan y la Celestina: ensayos de simpatía*; qtd. in Weinstein 3-4).

It is, however, open to question whether, by retreating from a tangible Don Juan to a supposedly more abstract, inclusive notion of a "seducer," a "lover," and so on, a scholar of literature enters the realm of neutrality, comprehensiveness, and universality. Take the concept of "seduction," for example. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb "seduce" changed its central meaning in the sixteenth century from "1. To persuade (a vassal, servant, soldier, etc.) to desert his allegiance or service" via "2. To lead (a person) astray in conduct or belief" to "3. To induce (a woman) to surrender her chastity." The date of the first example of definition 3, which the dictionary notes is "now the prevailing sense," is taken from A. Scott's poem of c. 1560. The note further remarks, under definition 3, that: "[I]n English law, the plaintiff in an action for seducing a virgin is the parent or master who is supposedly to have been deprived of her services."

Thus, "seduction" in the sense of corrupting a woman is a historical phenomenon. It must depend on a social structure, on that of the modern West, for example, where women's sexuality belongs to someone else, most likely, to men. This is why their loss has to be described as "deprivation," and why "the parent or master" can report to the court for the damage done to them. Chastity is ultimately a property to be defended not by women, but by men, the real possessors. Seduction is imaginable solely in the confines of the ideology implicit in such a gender hierar-

chy and with a notion of "property" actively operating in it. Let us remember that most of the adventures of Don Juan involve his confrontation and conflict with a father, a brother, or a fiancé.

In other words, seduction is a meaningful category only where "chastity" is at work; for instance, in the framework of Catholic society, where virginity is categorically encouraged, or of Puritan married lives, where constancy and loyalty are emphasized, or of Edo samurai society (1603–1868), where "feudal" morality strictly harnessed women.⁹ Conversely, it could not have been meaningful, say, in the polygamous society as described by Morgan and Engels (if there was such a society), or, in Tokugawa Japanese rural communities, where an occasional sexual orgy was institutionalized, or, more evidently, in the Edo (Tokyo) urban system of masculine sexuality, where an erotic relationship largely lay within the boundary of the pleasure quarters. For can a man "seduce" a prostitute? Seduction, therefore, is a concept which functions under particular social conditions, and in conjunction with certain related denotations and connotations, historically formulated.

Not only Euro-American comparativists, but also Japanese scholars of the "American school" explore paths for evoking transcivilizational comparison. A professor in comparative and Spanish literature, Ōshima Tadashi, makes a preliminary call in his *A Study of Don Juan Types* for comparison of Western Don Juans and corresponding figures in Japanese literature such as Hikaru Genji (the hero of *The Tale of Genji*) and Yonosuke (that of *The Life of an Amorous Man*). This, to my knowledge, is the only attempt of this kind of some length up to the present day.¹⁰ He writes in the preface:

The theme [of Don Juan] spread from its native Spain, via Italy, France, England, Germany, to Northern and Eastern Europe, Russia, and America. One may say that Japan also has its own image of Don Juan. . . . Hikaru Genji and Yonosuke are said to be Japanese Don Juans. (5)

What is already questionable in Ōshima's proposal, though, is the way he surreptitiously and smoothly switches from a *Stoffgeschichte* (history of a theme) to a more general thematology, that is, from the actual spread of the Don Juan legend in Europe and America to the transcivilizational comparison of Donjuanesque types, as if these were one and the same approach: "Japan *also* has its own image of Don Juan." Such a tricky reasoning in the preface is justified by reference to a French comparatist, Guyard, whose comment in his supposedly classic text, *Littérature comparée*, is quoted by the Japanese scholar in the postscript:

We have, in our culture, such Donjuanesque figures as Hikaru Genji and Yonosuke. Maybe, some Japanese should write a book *Don Juan in World Literature*, analyzing all the Donjuanesque types of the World. Marius-François Guyard states that: "And the history continues to the present day: more and more Don Juan is regarded as a symbol," and that: "It is better to study Don Juanism than Don Juan." (217)

Transcivilizational comparison is thus justified by the recognition that it is Don Juanism, not Don Juan, that has to be studied. Given this, Ōshima can safely insist that the crucial object is what it means to be "Don Juan," not individual manifestations which carry that name; it is the comparison of Donjuanesque figures, East/West, not the spread of the Don Juan theme in Euro-American literatures, that may prove to be more significant.

In a subsequent publication, *Invitation to Spanish Literature*, Ōshima himself launches on such a project: a comparison of Western Don Juans and such Japanese "equivalents" as Hikaru Genji and Yonosuke. In the preface of the book he attempts to justify the possibility of the project:

Just like Don Quixote, Don Juan will continue to exist as an eternal philanderer. Perhaps we could say that the image of Don Juan has settled down in our soil, being confused or overlapped with representative Japa-

nese philanderers such as Hikaru Genji, Narihira, Yonosuke, and so on. However, even if we tentatively conceive Hikaru Genji and other figures as Japanese Don Juans, there is a profound difference. (14)

The proposed scheme of comparison, upon which Ōshima's entire project depends, raises several questions. First of all, it raises a question about the basic meaning of comparison itself. Ōshima begins with an ostensible and meaningful similarity of the Don Juan phenomena in the West and the East, and then concludes that they differ significantly. But if the two are completely different, the ground for comparing collapses, and if the two are almost identical, why do we bother to compare? What do we learn from it? Comparison on an international scale is always such an operation, a tightrope walk which sways between identity, elementary and essential, on the one hand, and difference, contingent and marginal, on the other. A comparativist gains nothing by reaching either end of the rope.

Of course, comparative studies are expected to negotiate these conflicting poles. They are highly evaluated when they convincingly identify and meaningfully differentiate two objects: the Shining Prince *is* basically a "Don Juan," with a distinct character that is expected to represent cultural differences. However, the primary identification must necessarily imply hierarchy: identity is essential and primary; difference, peripheral and secondary. Don Juan as an eternal masculine type is central; cultural mutations are ancillary. For all the differences Ōshima claims to be significant, within the comparative scheme Hikaru Genji is *essentially*, that is, at the most profound layer of his existence, a Don Juan, an identification that is open to question. In other words, whatever differences a comparativist may later offer, by formulating the Shining Prince as a "Japanese Don Juan," the features in common with a Western Don Juan are taken to be central in his characterization.

Now, with such a precarious presupposition, Ōshima proceeds to compare them in the eighth chapter of the above

book, entitled "A Study of Don Juan, East and West." In that chapter, he resumes his discussion by reconfirming the definition of Don Juan. However, it now has a slightly different nuance.

The Don Juan that appears in European literature is, in short, the incarnation of male instinct. Or he is a symbol of a man who arouses a swirl of lust (*aiyoku*) between a man and a woman, confronting each other.

When we turn to Japanese literature, we find figures comparable to Don Juan, such as Narihira (*the man [otoko]*), Hikaru Genji, and Yonosuke. (225)

We are not really sure what Ōshima means by "male instinct." Is it lust? Is it an urge to chase after women? Is it desire to seduce? Neither are we sure what "*the man*" is except in the specific context of *The Tales of Ise*, of which Ariwara no Narihira is supposedly a hero, who is, however, referred to simply as "a certain man from bygone days (*mukashi otoko*)" in the tale. Ōshima, it appears, though, is trying to make a broader statement in the above quotation than that. Most likely, he is using the term *otoko* as representing *the Man*, or the essential masculinity that is transcendently acknowledgeable in any male on earth. Under the pretext of a scientific and "neutral" but powerfully convincing term, "instinct," Ōshima strengthens a not unanimously acceptable presumption that every man has the deeply embedded urge to excite a "swirl of lust" in men and women, an urge which, however, Don Juan is believed to incarnate in a perfect manner.

Given this presumption, he makes another ultimate comparative definition of Don Juan, East/West: "The only feature shared by the Don Juans of the West and of the East is the huge number of women they have loved" (245). If it is only the number of women conquered that associates "Don Juans" of the two civilizations, if the rest of the features are not shared by them, if they are that different, are we speaking of the same character, Don Juan, or not?

This ultimate characteristic of Don Juans, as claimed by Ōshima, is all the more doubtful because the above statement of Ōshima is immediately belied, or at least downplayed, by his subsequent observation: "Male homosexuality is a special feature of the Japanese Don Juan, Yonosuke" (256). Have we not understood that Don Juan is a symbol of "male instinct," which is paraphrased as a will to inflame lust between two sexes? Have we not reconfirmed that the only common element shared by the Western Don Juan and Japanese "Don Juan" is the number of *women* they conquer?

The difference between Don Juan and the Japanese heroes that Ōshima calls attention to, namely, the absence or the presence of the homosexual passion, also belies Guillén's definition of the "archetype" of Don Juan as "an inveterate *woman*-chaser." Thus, even the supposedly most elementary definition is prone to collapse.

There are two ways for comparativists to respond to this situation. One is to retain the definition of an archetype as it is, and consider the Japanese hero as a deviation. We will be exploring the problems of this solution later. The other is to change the definition of the archetypal Don Juan to "an inveterate chaser of human beings of *both* sexes," and then consider the Western Don Juan also as a deviant subtype. Both explanations involve marginalization, yet the latter does not seem to have been attempted in any relevant comparative studies. Most accounts of Don Juan expect him to be a paragon of masculinity, challenging, confronting, and conquering the feminine world. In the Western conception, Don Juan is a heterosexual myth. This leaves out the possibility of conceiving the archetypal Don Juan as a chaser of women *and* men as a point of comparison.

In truth, however, the Edo "Don Juan," Yonosuke of *The Life of an Amorous Man*, is a bisexual, not homosexual, figure. "Exploring both homosexual and heterosexual love so intensely day and night that people nicknamed him 'The

Dreaming Guy' " (*Kōshoku ichidai otoko* 101).¹¹ This partially prevents Ōshima's definition of Don Juan (a conqueror of a number of women) from completely collapsing: he chases after men [boys], but he hunts women, too. In the Edo paradigm of sexuality, expertise in "both ways" of sexuality (*ryōdō*) was considered a great accomplishment for a playboy. Saikaku's *The Life of an Amorous Man*, demonstrating the hero's development toward a perfect "libertine," includes a chapter of his initiation into homosexual activity immediately after his first adventures in heterosexual affairs. While being an expert in "both ways" was considered to be an ideal, however, there was also rivalry between these two orientations. Literature abounds in the Edo period representing one camp or the other, each insisting on its superiority over the opponent. This, however, merely demonstrates the independent standing of homosexual love in feudal Japanese culture. Consequently, in the Edo sexual context, there could even be a homosexual (and purely homosexual) "Don Juan," an inveterate lover of boys, a concept that is probably inconceivable, or unacceptable, within the Western tradition.

Thus, the conclusion of Ōshima's comparative analysis contradicts his initial proposition, which defines Don Juan (as a transcivilizational literary phenomenon) as a philanderer, a chaser and conqueror of women. With the initial definition which has allowed us to set forth a comparison of Don Juans East/West undermined by the subsequent analysis of their differences, we come back to where we started, still uncertain in our search for the irrefutable ultimate core of what a Don Juan is, and what standard authorizes a transcivilizational comparison once and for all.

In such a manner, comparison according to Guillén's model C, that is, comparison on a supranational scale, is subject to infinite problematization, at least until one decides to be content with nearly pointless theoretical schemes such as "a man who loves," "a man with desire," "a man who is (especially) sexual," and so on. Admittedly, these schemes,

which are apparently too general, may serve as a point for comparison. For instance, the problem that has arisen through the comparison of the Western Don Juan and the Japanese "Don Juan," of the possibility of a homosexual Don Juan, may tentatively be circumscribed by the formulation of Don Juan as "a man who loves" (provided, of course, that it be granted that homosexual passion is also an expression



Figure 1. A scene showing the first homosexual adventure of Yonosuke. Courtesy of Osaka Nakanoshima Library.

of "love"). However, even such a framework of comparison, which appears unproblematically applicable but is instead too general to be analytically meaningful, is also open to question, as we will see in subsequent chapters.

The "Metaphysics" of Comparativism

As we have seen, the move in the focus of comparative research from the study of Don Juan versions to a comparison of Don Juan-like figures conceals in itself a switch from an interest in Don Juans to an interest in Don Juanism. While a study of the evolution, variation, or ramifications of Don Juan types may be justified by the common name "Don Juan," comparison of a Western Don Juan and a non-Western Don Juan presumes some category of Don Juan-ness, which will be, it is now believed, represented by a variety of signifiers such as Don Juan, Casanova, playboy, libertine, *iro-otoko*, Xi Menqing,¹² and so on. In schematic terms, then, the shift from the French method to the American can be defined as a shift from the axis of the signifier to that of the signified. A scholar of the French school seeks various versions of signifieds for one signifier "Don Juan." Conversely, an American scholar attempts to make an inventory of signifiers that represent one single signified "Don Juanism."

In other words, the American discipline is based on a belief in the primacy of a signified, or, more precisely, a belief that a signified precedes a signifier. One can compare a Don Juan and a (Edo) Japanese dandy, *iro-otoko*, as "Don Juan-like" types on the condition that this concept "Don Juan," then un verbalized in Japan, is embedded in human nature, awaiting expression.

We should not take the contrast of two schools too seriously, though. This shift from the French to the American discipline was not anything resembling a sudden rupture, or an epistemological break such as Foucault describes. The French comparativists, too, appear to have been ultimately interested in signifieds. As a matter of fact, Gendarme de