

## Major Histories, Minor Literatures, and World Authors

Theo D'haen  
*University of Leuven*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#), [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), [Television Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <[clcweb@purdue.edu](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)>

---

## Recommended Citation

D'haen, Theo. "Major Histories, Minor Literatures, and World Authors." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.5 (2013): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2342>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 806 times as of 11/07/19.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <[clcweb@purdue.edu](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)>

---

**Volume 15 Issue 5 (December 2013) Article 9**

**Theo D'haen,**

**"Major Histories, Minor Literatures, and World Authors"**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/9>>

---

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 15.5 (2013)***

Special Issue ***World Literatures from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century***. Ed. Marko Juvan

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/>>

---

**Abstract:** In his article "Major Histories, Minor Literatures, and World Authors" Theo D'haen discusses how the idea of world literature has made a remarkable comeback in literary studies. A major feature of this revival has been increased attention from a "world perspective" to literatures until recently little studied beyond disciplinary boundaries, particularly so some "major" literatures such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and various Indian-language literatures. As such, these literatures have come to join what has usually been thought of as "European" world literature. What this move, however to be welcomed in itself, obscures is the even further peripheralization of a number of "smaller" literatures, amongst them many European ones. Thus world literature in its newly emerging guise is merely upping the ante for such minor literatures, or, alternatively, reshaping such literatures in the image and interest of the few "major" literatures which are deemed worthy of inclusion in the "new" world literature.

## Theo D'HAEN

### Major Histories, Minor Literatures, and World Authors

For the longest time, European literature was "world literature." This is rather ironic if we stop to think that the writer who in 1827 first popularized the term *Weltliteratur*, Goethe, did so as an immediate result of his reading of a number of Chinese novels in translation (see Eckermann). Goethe himself in later pronouncements on the phenomenon practically equated European literature with *Weltliteratur*. Still, Fritz Strich, one of the most astute readers of Goethe, comments that for Goethe "world literature is, to start with, European literature. It is in process of realising itself in Europe. A European literature, that is a literature of exchange and intercourse between the literatures of Europe and between the peoples of Europe, is the first stage of a world literature which from these beginnings will spread in ever-widening circles to a system which in the end will embrace the world. World literature is a living, growing organism, which can develop from the germ of European literature, and in his *West-Eastern Divan*, which was to throw a bridge from East to West, Goethe himself began the task of incorporating in it the Asiatic world" (Goethe 16). Therefore, Strich, writing in 1945 and thus well before the invention of the term "Eurocentrism," laments that "in present-day speech practically no distinction is made between world literature and European literature — and this is a serious error" (Goethe 16).

If there is one culprit for this error, it is the discipline of comparative literature. In fact, both world literature(s) as a more or less current subject of discussion and comparative literature emerge almost simultaneously in the first half of the nineteenth century. We can see the first glimmers of the new discipline, rooting itself explicitly in the equally, but more rapidly emerging disciplines of comparative philology (and biology, physiology, etc.) in the teaching and writing of a number of nineteenth-century French intellectuals, for example Philarète Chasles with his twenty-volume *Etudes de littérature comparée* (1846-1875). In fact, as this period is also that of the emergence of the systematic study of Europe's various national literatures, world literature — concerned as it is with more than one literature — came to be seen as belonging to the province of comparative literature when it came to its academic study, although the various loads covered by the term could differ considerably.

For Goethe himself, it is now generally agreed, the term covered the rapidly increasing exchange of literary products and ideas among Europe's intellectuals at the close of the Napoleonic era. Soon, however, and especially in scholarship, the term came to stand for either all of the world's literatures, present, past, and future or for a canon of the best of the world's literatures. The former concept gave rise to a series of histories of world literature, perhaps better referred to as world histories of literature. The latter concept became relevant when it came to develop curricula of world literature requiring anthologies on the subject. The latter problem posed itself particularly in the United States, where after World War I courses in world literature, under varying denominations, but in practice covering much the same material became institutionalized as part of undergraduate curricula with the aim of remedying what was felt as a deficiency of US-American students when it came to their cultural heritage. Given the inevitable linguistic limitations of such undergraduates, the materials included in these anthologies of necessity were given in translation (see, e.g., Blair; Bruck; Moulton). At the same time, practitioners of comparative literature in Europe, as well as in the United States, under the guise of world literature studied a combination of several literatures in the original. If there is one thing that all these approaches to world literature shared is that in practice they limited themselves to primarily studying European literature.

After World War II and particularly so after the end of the age of colonialism and empire, roughly speaking as of the 1960s, this exclusive or almost exclusive attention to European literature under the terms of what passed for world literature came under attack. René Etiemble in 1964 launched an impassioned plea for extending world literature to include all of the world's literatures and not just those of Europe. Albert Guérard had already in 1940 lamented that in what commonly passed as the canon of world literature "the East is woefully under-represented ... the term World Literature is an obvious exaggeration" although it might be retained "as the voicing of a distant hope" (34). In the meantime, Guérard suggested that it would be more accurate to call the field "Western World Literature: a literature for Westerners, wherever they may be, and for Westernized Orientals" (34).

Across a distance of more than two generations Guérard's lament is echoed by Shu-mei Shih who posits that "while many scholars resuscitating th[e] concept [of world literature] offer a nominal apology for its Eurocentric origins, this Eurocentrism's [or Westerncentrism as she calls it further on] constitutive hierarchies and asymmetries are seldom analyzed" (16). Discussing what Shih calls "technologies of recognition" — which she defines as "the mechanisms in the discursive (un)conscious — with bearings on social and cultural (mis)understandings — that produce 'the West' as the agent of recognition and 'the rest' as the object of recognition, in representation" (17) with regard to world literature, Shih concludes that a Western-centered world literature in the worst case simply does not recognize what is distant to itself thus neglecting, ignoring, or silencing it and at best misrecognizes the non-West by "omnipotent definitions" which recall Edward W. Said's branding of "Orientalism" as a power discourse enabling and legitimizing Europe's suppression of the non-West under colonialism and imperialism. A case in point, for Shih, is Franco Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" which she sees as a prime example of the technology of recognition she baptizes "the return of the systematic" (18).

What Shih finds "most curious" with Moretti's article is that "even as the author frequently admits his limited knowledge about literatures outside Western Europe ... these caveats become not so much obstacles as enabling mechanisms for sweeping generalizations" (19). Specifically, she faults Moretti for having applied his theory of the spread of the European novel over the rest of the world hastily as a combination of "foreign plot, local characters, and then, local narrative voice" ("Conjectures" 65; Shih 19) also to Chinese literature via his "distant reading" approach. "A cursory look at Chinese literature," Shih remarks, "would ... have led Moretti away from taking one scholar's work in English as the authoritative last word on the Chinese novel and from taking the Chinese novel at the turn of the nineteenth century as representative of the entire period from 1750 to 1950. Any genealogy of the modern Chinese novel has to examine its relation with the classics of the genre, which include (if we limit the list to Moretti's period) *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (1791), *The Scholars* (1803), and *Flowers in the Mirror* (1828), as well as the late-nineteenth-century novels that Moretti refers to" (19).

Other "omnipotent definitions," for Shih, are what she calls "the time lag of allegory," "global multiculturalism," "the exceptional particular," and "post-difference ethics." Allegory, Shih contends, taking as her example Fredric Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," allows Western readers to select and read works from non-Western cultures as confirming stereotypes the West has with regard to the non-West: global multiculturalism extends the US-American culturalization of its ethnic minorities to the rest of the world, thus leading to an identity politics that bypasses real relationships in the fields of economics, politics, and so on. The exceptional particular refers to that work or individual that is recognized by the dominant West as having attained the validity of universality while also serving paradoxically as a most typical representative of the reified identity posited by global multiculturalism for his/her culture. Post-difference ethics calls for the transcendence of difference in favor of a new universalism based on the recognition of individual equality. Applying all these technologies of recognition to what it is of China that is recognized as being part of contemporary "world culture," Shih argues that what is most valued by allegorical "third world" approximations to Chinese culture is the new Chinese cinema, that global multiculturalism foregrounds Chinese cultural revolution trauma narratives by diasporic Chinese exiles and that world literature's Chinese exceptional particular is Xingjian Gao, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2000 and living in exile in France for some time before that. All of which goes to prove that in world literature the West only re-cognizes that which it already "knows" and that the return of world literature upon the literary-theoretical scene around the turn of the third millennium — like that of all kinds of "post-" and particularly poststructuralism in the period leading up to that date — is merely another way for the West to extend and continue its hegemony in the literary-theoretical domain as in others, thus minoritizing "the rest" *in perpetuo* and, if I understand Shih correctly, *ad nauseam*.

What I find curious in Shih's view of world literature as Eurocentric is the facility with which she generalizes about the West assuming that the hierarchical relation she sketches between the West, or Europe, and "the rest" applies wholesale for everyone in that "West." Just as she accuses the West of tarring every "rest" literature with the same brush, she herself does much the same with the West. In order to see what I mean, I refer to Werner P. Friederich who at a conference entitled "The Teaching of World Literature" held at the University of Wisconsin in April 1959 humorously, but also scathingly

rehearsed all that was wrong with world literature syllabi from the point of view of "legitimate" departments of comparative literature. They promised more than they could deliver: "sometimes, in flippant moments, I think we should call our programs NATO Literatures — yet even that would be extravagant, for we do not usually deal with more than one fourth of the 15 NATO nations" (Friederich 14-15). Friederich does not specify which literatures he is thinking of, but given NATO-membership at the time we can easily infer that he means French, English, German, and Italian literature. Spain at the time was not a member of NATO, but we probably might safely add its literature to the quartet. Friederich in first instance targeted then contemporary U.S. undergraduate education and its world literature courses often offered not in departments of comparative literature, but in departments of English and not in the original, but in translation. At the graduate level, where literatures were read, taught, and discussed in the original, Friederich pleaded for extending the reach of comparative literature beyond its traditional European domain to embrace the cultures of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. That this was done in the spirit of the Cold War then raging may become clear when we consider that Friederich argued that the United States — with its mixture of races and cultures, its history of migration, its geographical location, and its world leadership in matters military, economic, and political — was uniquely well placed to take the lead also in matters cultural and part of such leadership would be a greater opening to the world beyond Europe and the U.S. itself.

Friederich was arguing with regard to the study and teaching of world literatures much of what Shih accuses world literature proponents of today: "Instead of working through the problem, one gives recognition to it, which serves as an expedient and efficient strategy of displacement, a tropological caveat, able to push aside obstacles on the path to globalist literary studies of global literature" (16). In the interest of Cold War considerations, Friederich — while recognizing the problem of hierarchical imbalance also with regard to a world literature that in essence was European literature — displaced the problem to more "global" dimensions, thus obviating the need to redress any imbalance on the Western front. This, in fact, is a not uncommon strategy in world literature circles also today: see, for example, the six-volume *Longman Anthology of World Literature* (Damrosch, Alliston, Brown, duBois, Hafez, Heise, Kadir, Pike, Pollock, Robbins, Shirane, Tylus, Yu). Of course, the scope of the *Longman Anthology* — as that of the *Norton Anthology of World Literature* (Puchner, Conklin; Akbari, Denecke, Dharwadker, Fuchs, Levine, Lawall, Lewis, Wilson) — is much wider in "world" terms than that of its mid- to late-twentieth-century predecessors, but apparently this expansion has not overturned the old established hierarchy within European literature evaluated as world literature. In fact, it almost seems to have reinforced it: in the volumes on the Early Modern period and on the nineteenth century, the selections included for Europe continue to correspond to Friederich's roughly "one fourth" of NATO-literatures. Using Moretti's terminology borrowed from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems approach, we might say that Europe's "semi-peripheral" or "peripheral" literatures stand out by their absence, the lone Dane or Norwegian included being a case of the "exceptional particular" in Shih's terminology, or of the "lone canonical" in that of Mads Rosendahl Thomsen's classification (48-49).

In a 1997 special issue of *symplokē: a journal for the intermingling of literary, cultural and theoretical scholarship* dedicated to "refiguring Europe," Anna Klobucka — drawing on Immanuel Wallerstein's economics-based world-systems theory and invoking Goethe's metaphorical use of the market to speak about the "value" of a particular literature — posits that "the almost uniform characterization of the biased perspective of traditional comparative literary studies as 'Eurocentric' generally fails to take into account the fact that literatures and cultures of the European periphery have only on token occasions been considered as rightful contributors to the common 'European' cultural identity" (128). The same is true in the recent theorizing about world literature(s). It should be noted that these terms, at least in the cultural or literary context, do not necessarily apply to geographically or economically out-lying countries, but may just as well pertain to the culture of countries which in all respects would seem to be "central" such as for instance Holland or Belgium (see Spoiden). In fact, nowhere is there any mention (with the lone exception of Erasmus, who of course wrote in Latin) of any writer or work originating from either one of these countries or from the Dutch-language area. This literature, then, is the most minor of the minors, the most peripheral of peripherals.

The situation is not any better when from *the Longman Anthology* we turn to theoretical work on literary history. The theories of both Pascale Casanova and Moretti in their "irradiationist" or

"diffusionist" perspectives centered upon Paris or London cast Europe's minor literatures as purely reactive in relation to the "center" or "centers" of Europe (on this, see, e.g., Juvan, "World Literature[s]"). Since World War II, the earlier French and German dominance in the fields of comparative literature and literary theory has been replaced by US-American quasi-hegemony, even if frequently built on originally European and again particularly French and German ideas. Under the twin pressures of multiculturalism and postcolonialism — arguably the reigning paradigms of literary study in the United States in recent times — the renewed interest in world literature in US-American scholarship has led to an ever greater interest in non-European literatures and hence to the progressive inclusion of ever more non-European texts in US-American anthologies of world literature. In practice — because of evident reasons of linguistic and market reach — these are the only such anthologies widely available at the moment. A similar shift in attention also on the more theoretical-analytical level shows likewise from what over the past decade has become a seminal text, David Damrosch's 2003 *What is World Literature?* in which Damrosch pays attention to Gilgamesh and to Rigoberta Menchú, as well as to Goethe, Kafka, and Mechthild von Magdeburg, but not, apart from a very thorough and interesting discussion of the Serbian writer Milorad Pavić, to any of Europe's "minor" literatures.

Of course, given Damrosch's perspective to include more of the world than just Europe, it is understandable that something has got to give. But what has to give is what was never any getting to begin with: Europe's "minor" literatures. If anything, the "provincializing" of Europe, to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's term, in the "new" world literature has only led to an even growing marginalization or perhaps we should say "peripheralization" of Europe's minor literatures (see also Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári). If in recent re-castings of world literature it is the world's other "major" literatures, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Indian which understandably and rightly so gain equality with those of the "old" European or latterly perhaps rather Euro-American center or "core," Europe's minor literatures no longer are even semi- or wholly peripheral: they simply disappear from sight. However, even some "major" European literatures run the risk of being marginalized. Above I refer to Friederich's 1959 "flippant" (his own words) remarks on comparative literature programs in the United States, but actually the same would have applied to similar programs in Europe at the time as being essentially limited to "NATO Literatures" (14-15) and I then define the latter as English, French, German, Italian and (with some historical license) Spanish with the latter two following the first three at a respectable distance. In fact, Italian and Spanish literatures were even then in a tenuous position. Damrosch, in his 2008 "Toward a History of World Literature" qualified one of the most widely admired twentieth-century works in comparative literature, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, as not really being as the subtitle to the book has it — *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* — about "Western literature," but as being more narrowly a history of French and Italian literature as by far the majority of the book is about these two literatures. Indeed, next to the chapters devoted to said two literatures or to texts in Greek or Latin, there are only two chapters on English (Shakespeare and Virginia Woolf), one on German (Schiller), and one on Spanish (Cervantes) literature. If, moreover, we look at the historical spread of the materials covered, we see that the selections from the Italian are limited to a narrow band from the late medieval period. Auerbach's *Mimesis* may be an extreme case and after all its author did not pretend for his book to be about world literature, yet for all practical purposes a book about "Western" or "European" literature for most of the history of the discipline of comparative literature and of the study of world literature would in effect have been taken as being "on" world literature. The point I am re-iterating, then, is that even from what we would now call a "Eurocentric" point of view "Europe" is in itself as far as its literature is concerned already a limited concept and restricted to a few "major" modern literatures. Surprisingly, in the recent anthologies of world literature in translation as used in US-American universities, Spanish-language literature seems to gain a more prominent place.

The inclusion of more Spanish-language literatures in US-American anthologies seems a good thing, especially when taking into account the fast-growing Latino/a population in the U.S. However, this development also calls for some reflection. To begin with, we note that in these anthologies there is a sharp distinction between what is included from Spain and from Latin America. The material from Spain is largely limited to classical Spanish Golden Age literature, especially so in the earlier editions of the Norton (i.e., Mack, Knox, McGalliard, Pasinetti, Hugo, Wellek, Douglas, Lawall), but to a large

extent also in the current Norton and Longman versions. In the earlier versions of the Norton only Borges was included from Spanish America. In the later versions and in the Longman anthology we see the selections from Spanish America roughly equaling those from Spain. However, in the Longman anthology a number of works in Spanish do not figure in their own right as independent selections, but as entries into sections of "perspectives" and "resonances" on other works which are themselves featured independently as "major" selections. This is the case of the earlier Spanish material illustrating the perspective of Iberia as a meeting of three worlds evocative of the Iberian peninsula's being shared, and contested, by Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the medieval period.

Roberto Dainotto and César Domínguez argue that Southern Europe in literary historiography as in all sciences and scholarship since the early nineteenth century has consistently been relegated to a peripheral position with regard to the "center" of Europe, i.e., France, Germany, and England. Part and parcel of this peripheralization is the notion that "modernity" is exclusively the product of Western Europe as largely defined by the said triangle. Southern Europe was not perceived as contributing to modernity, but as being stuck in an earlier phase of development seen as "backward." Consequently, these countries and their cultures were regarded as having little or nothing original or of value in the present to offer to the rest of Europe and the world. Small wonder that whatever selections were made from Spanish-language literature for what constitutes "world literature" in the evaluative or canonical sense — especially if such selections were made from the perspective of those considered and who consider themselves to be at the vanguard of modernity, in our particular case US-American scholars or at least working in US-American academe and for a U.S. audience — should limit themselves to works from "pre-modernity," in this case the Spanish Golden Age. Bart van den Bossche observes much the same thing with regard to Italian literature when he remarks that in all overviews of Western or world literature Italian names abound for the medieval and Renaissance periods, but are largely absent after 1600. This is actually a time-honored scheme of French comparative literature from Chasles to Paul van Tieghem: the evolution of European literature as a sequence of dominance of Italy, Spain, France, England, and Germany (see also Juvan, "Peripherocentrism"). For Italian literature this situation, to judge from the most recent anthologies of world literature, continues unabated. For literature in Spanish, as I posit previously, the situation seems to have improved significantly, or has it?

Undeniably, literature in Spanish originating from Latin America has gained considerable ground in US-American driven world literature anthologies since the late 1990s. And to a certain extent the same can even be said of Iberian Spanish literature too. However, both these developments, and especially the latter, come at a price. Monika Schmitz-Emans shows how anthologies of world poetry reflect the perspective of their compiler or compilers as influenced by the latter's historical and geographical circumstances. From this perspective we can see that the recent US-American interest in world literature is at least partially motivated by a desire to make the world more comprehensible to twenty-first century generations of college students through giving them greater exposure to the varied cultures of the world than was the case for earlier generations. The decisive event in this respect, I think, is that of 9/11, which painfully brought home to the United States that it is not, as it had been accustomed to thinking, "apart" from the rest of the world and therefore invulnerable, but that on the contrary it is very much a part of that world and that therefore to better understand this world is vital also to U.S. concerns. To a certain extent this is the thrust of both Said's 2004 *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* and Emily Apter's 2006 *The Translation Zone*, both of which refer to 9/11 as having influenced their arguments with Apter insisting on the need for knowing foreign languages and for increased efforts of translation as keys to a more equal relationship between the U.S. and the rest of the world.

One part of the world to which the U.S. is particularly close is Spanish America and because of the large population of Spanish speakers in the U.S., the inclusion of a relatively large number of Spanish American authors in recent anthologies of world literature — even apart from the intrinsic merits of the writers or works concerned — should not come as a surprise. The U.S. and Latin America share at least some parallels when it comes to discovery, conquest, settlement, the gaining of independence, and a heritage of mixed populations. But something similar holds even for Iberian Spanish rather than Spanish American literature. If in the Longman anthology there is a relatively substantial section on medieval Iberia, this reflects the growing interest in el-Andalus in contemporary historiography in

Spain itself, as well as in Europe, but it at the same time also chimes with the U.S. ideal of multiculturalism both as official doctrine and as cultural ideal of a large part of the US-American academic world. Moreover, many selections from Iberian Spanish literature serve to illustrate some other major text or issue related to Latin America. Thus, the center-periphery relationship between the colonial mother country and the colonies including matters of culture and literature is being reversed. Perhaps even more importantly, it is twisted in the interest of and through the mediation of a third-party power, in this case the U.S. In other words, the relative gain of Spanish-language literature in general and literature from Spain in particular is not owing to any recognition or at least not exclusively so of its own merit, but rather because it fits contemporary U.S. concerns.

If such is the case even with such a "major" literature written in what is a major language not just from a European, but a "world" perspective, what to say of a "small" literature in a "minor" language such as Dutch (even if in Europe alone there are some 22 to 23 million speakers of the language)? Is there any hope for any of its authors or works to be included in any of these newer anthologies of world literature, even if only in the category of the "resonances" or "perspectives" as we find them in the Longman anthology? The only chance for any Dutch text to make it in there would be if its interpretation would fit that of the "major" literature. Or if it resonates with or is perspectivized upon, meaning that whatever is original to Dutch literature would have to be passed over in favor of works which would link more easily with "the world" or perhaps more pertinently with the world as seen from the perspective of some "larger" interest as determined by a "major" player on the world stage. Would this mean, for instance, that early twentieth-century poems by Jan Jacob Slauerhoff — because of its exotic contexts (adaptations of classical Chinese poetry, descriptions of the South China seas, Dutch-language but Portuguese-style *saudades*, visions of Latin America) — would stand more of a chance to at least be included somewhere rather than texts by Martinus Nijhoff, Slauerhoff's contemporary and, at least in the context of Dutch literature itself, regarded as much the better poet? Or perhaps, to speak with Strich, Holland's hour has not yet struck and the Dutch and by extension the Dutch-language region has not ever yet been able to give the world what that world was waiting for at any given moment (see "World Literature"). The truth simply seems to be that in any "major" history of the world's literatures there is no room for "minor" literatures unless they serve "major" interests. So perhaps in the final analysis something in Dutch pertaining to or originating from the settlement of what is now New York as New Amsterdam in the seventeenth century by the Dutch stands more of a chance than anything written in Dutch in Europe itself.

The Dutch case, as that of most other "minor" European literatures, seems hopeless. However, some "major" European literatures also risk minoritization in an emerging world literature paradigm accommodating the "major" literatures from beyond the Euro-American core and in which that core of "Euro-lit" is increasingly centered upon what Jonathan Arac has called "Anglo-globalism" feeding upon the dominant position of English as universal *lingua franca* and postcolonial literatures issuing from the former British Empire. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, at least some of these larger literatures are meant to counter the tide by appealing to "-phone" relations allowing them to establish a presence outside of Europe, thus globalizing themselves while de-Europeanizing or at least de-Eurocentrizing themselves at the same time. This is the case, for instance, and in slightly different ways, with Lusophone (see Fitz; Vieira <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol11/iss3/>>) and Hispanophone (Kristal) literatures and with French *littérature-monde* (Le Bris and Rouaud) re-positioning themselves as "world" rather than "European" literatures. Interestingly, Shih, as has Ning Wang, brings into play the same concept when she talks about Sinophone literature as the literature comprising work written in the Chinese diaspora around the world, thus claiming for Chinese literature a "world" status in this sense too.

In conclusion, what we see emerging is a different "world literature" from what we were accustomed to under the old comparative literature dispensation in which "European" and "world" literature were interchangeable entities. Instead, we see a predominantly Anglo and US-American centered world literature appearing, with less attention and a different kind of attention given to European literature, which finally as a whole, but also in each of its constituent parts, comes to occupy a much diminished position within a broader constellation of major literatures written in major languages issuing from the new — yet sometimes also old, as with China, but then antedating the rise of comparative and world literature — major players on the world's stage demographically,

economically, politically, culturally, militarily even and with regard to and among which the United States positions itself at least in ambition as arbiter and leader if not power broker. In this case too, culture follows trade and money. At the same time, we see that a number of other players develop rival ambitions also in the cultural and the literary fields actually or potentially leading to rival anthologies of world literature re-ordering the world's literatures and the selections thereof according to their "world" views. Similarly, we see a number of literatures in European languages which as a result of Europe's colonial expansion have come to span the world re-aligning themselves into alternative world literature systems enabling yet other possible anthology selections. The latter development holds the risk of rending apart "European" literature as a "united field." Almost diametrically opposed to this — and at this moment perhaps remote upon the horizon — is that of world literatures from a "European" perspective overcoming the limitations of earlier such endeavors and situating the literatures of Europe and those of the world in equal relation to one another. Perhaps most remote of all, and utopian, remains the vision of universal world literatures representing equitably the world's literatures in their reciprocal relations and dependencies.

Note: The above article is a revised version of D'haen, Theo. "Minor Literatures and Major Histories." *A World History of Literature*. Ed. Theo D'haen. Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Akademie van België voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 2012. 101-108. and "La literatura en español en la literatura mundial." *Insula* 787-788 (2012): 16-19. Copyright releases to the author.

### Works Cited

- Apter, Emily. *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006.
- Arac, Jonathan. "Anglo-Globalism?" *New Left Review* 16 (2002): 35-45.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard Trask. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953.
- Blair, Walter. *The History of World Literature*. Chicago: University of Knowledge Inc., 1940.
- Buck, Philo M. Jr., ed. *An Anthology of World Literature*. New York, Macmillan, 1934.
- Casanova, Pascale. *La République mondiale des lettres*. Paris: Seuil, 1999.
- Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Transl. M. DeBevoise. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.
- Chasles, Philarète. *Etudes de littérature comparée*. Paris: Amyot, 1846-1875. 20 Vols.
- Dainotto, Roberto. *Europe (In Theory)*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007.
- Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.
- Damrosch, David. "Toward a History of World Literature." *New Literary History* 39.3 (2008): 481-95.
- Damrosch, David, April Alliston, Marshall Brown, Page duBois, Sabry Hafez, Ursula K. Heise, Djelal Kadir, David L. Pike, Sheldon Pollock, Bruce Robbins, Haruo Shirane, Jane Tylus, and Pauline Yu, eds. *Longman Anthology of World Literature*. New York: Pearson, 2008-2009. 3 Vols.
- Domínguez, César. "The South European Orient: A Comparative Reflection on Space in Literary History." *Modern Language Quarterly* 67.4 (2006): 419-49.
- Eckermann, Johann Peter. *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*. 1836. Ed. Fritz Bergemann. Frankfurt: Insel, 1987.
- Etiemble, René. "Faut-il réviser la notion de Weltliteratur?" 1964. *Essais de littérature (vraiment) générale*. By René Etiemble. Paris: Gallimard, 1975. 15-36.
- Fitz, Earl E. "Internationalizing the Literature of the Portuguese-speaking World." *Hispania* 85.3 (2002): 439-48.
- Friederich, Werner P. "On the Integrity of Our Planning." *The Teaching of World Literature*. Ed. Haskell M. Block. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1960. 9-22.
- Guérard, Albert. *Preface to World Literature*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65-88.
- Juvan, Marko. "World Literature(s) and Peripheries." *Literary Studies in Reconstruction: An Introduction to Literature*. By Marko Juvan. Bern: Peter Lang, 2011. 73-86.
- Juvan, Marko. "'Peripherocentrism': Geopolitics of Comparative Literatures between Ethnocentrism and Cosmopolitanism." *Histoire de la littérature et jeux d'échange entre centres et périphéries. Les identités relatives des littératures*. Ed. Jean Bessière and Judith Maar. Paris: Harmattan, 2010. 53-66.
- Klobucka, Anna. "Theorizing the European Periphery." *symplokē: a journal for the intermingling of literary, cultural and theoretical scholarship* 5.1 (1997): 119-35.
- Kristal, Efraim. "Considering Coldly...: A Response to Franco Moretti." *New Left Review* 15 (2002): 61-74.
- Le Bris, Michel, and Jean Rouaud, eds. *Pour une littérature-monde*. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.
- Mack, Maynard, Bernard M. W. Knox, John C. McGalliard, P.M. Pasinetti, Howard E. Hugo, René Wellek, Kenneth Douglas and Sarah Lawall, eds. *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979.
- McClennen, Sophia A. "Comparative Literature in Latin American Studies." *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee. New Delhi: Cambridge UP India, 2013. 324-36.
- Moretti, Franco. "Conjectures on World Literature." 2000. *Debating World Literature*. Ed. Christopher Prendergast. London: Verso, 2004. 148-162.

- Moulton, Richard G. *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture*. New York: Macmillan, 1911.
- Puchner, Martin, Suzanne Conklin Akbari, Wiebke Denecke, Vinay Dharwadkar, Barbara Fuchs, Caroline Levine, Sarah Lawall, Pericles Lewis, and Emily Wilson, eds. *Norton Anthology of World Literature*. New York: Norton, 2001-2009. 3 Vols.
- Said, Edward W. *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2004.
- Schmitz-Emans, Monika. "Mapping Poetry: Poem Anthologies and the Modeling of World Literature." *Journal of Romance Studies* 11.1 (2011): 37-50.
- Shih, Shu-Mei. "Global Literature and Technologies of Recognition." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 119.1 (2004): 16-30.
- Spoiden, Stéphane. "The Treachery of Art: This Is Not Belgium." *symplokē: a journal for the intermingling of literary, cultural and theoretical scholarship* 5.1-2 (1997): 137-52.
- Strich, Fritz. *Goethe and World Literature*. 1946. Trans. C.A.M. Sym. New York: Hafner, 1949.
- Strich, Fritz. "World Literature and Comparative Literary History (1930)." Trans. Theo D'haen. *World Literature: A Reader*. Ed. Theo D'haen, César Domínguez, and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen. London: Routledge, 2013. 36-49.
- Thomsen, Mads Rosendahl. *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven, and Louise O. Vasvári. "About the Contextual Study of Literature and Culture, Globalization, and Digital Humanities." *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee. New Delhi: Cambridge UP India, 2013. 3-35.
- Van den Bossche, Bart. "1861 > 2011: Celebrating Italian Unity and Literary Canon Between National, Regional and Global Perspectives." *A World History of Literature*. Ed. Theo D'haen. Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Akademie van België voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 2012. 91-100.
- Van Tieghem, Paul. *La littérature comparée*. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1931.
- Vieira, Patrícia I., ed. *Politics and Identity in Lusophone Literature and Film*. Thematic Issue *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 11.3 (2009): <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol11/iss3/>>.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991.
- Wang, Ning. "Global English(es) and Global Chinese(s): Toward Rewriting a New Literary History in Chinese." *Journal of Contemporary China* 19.63 (2010): 159-74.

Author's profile: Theo D'haen teaches English and comparative literature at the University of Leuven. In addition to numerous articles in Dutch and English, his recent single-authored book publications include *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature* (2012) and the collected volumes *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (with David Damrosch and Djelal Kadir, 2012) and *World Literature: A Reader* (with César Domínguez and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, 2013). E-mail: <[theo.dhaen@arts.kuleuven.be](mailto:theo.dhaen@arts.kuleuven.be)>