

Introduction to New Work about World Literatures

Graciela Boruszko
Pepperdine University

Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek
Purdue University Press and Purdue University

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"Introduction to *New Work about World Literatures*"

Graciela Boruszko and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek
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Introduction to *New Work about World Literatures*

Graciela BORUSZKO and Steven TÖTÖSY de ZEPETNEK

Globalization — the West's industrial, technological, social, and political expansion — took the world by storm making national boundaries porous and proposed/es a new order. New proximities fostered by globalization urge individuals to revisit the notion of "neighbor" and the laws and regulations of social conduct and we argue that this contextualizes the meaning and practice of "hospitality." We are not referring to Jacques Derrida's notion of hospitality as a relationship of power, but the age-old practice of welcome and inclusion of the "other" in a literal and imaginary sense thus literature where and through which the "other" is perceived, imagined, and becomes "knowable." And here is where — despite the many negative impacts — positive aspects of globalization can be located. The "flat" global literary realm offers a new space where there are no strangers, but readers who belong to a variety of literary contexts and discover in each literary work a new opportunity to relate to the "other" and where the writer and reader become a mirror of the "self." They are no longer strangers, but participants in the production, circulation, and reading of literary works. Granted, this "participation" is predicated — mostly — on the globalized world's *lingua franca*, English. While the impact of English — whether with regard to the circulation of books and thus reading or in scholarship — endangers the acquisition of foreign languages and thus knowledge itself, it nevertheless facilitates communication and hospitality.

In a globalized world, many currents circulate a variety of products such as capital, goods, labor, persons, information, and literary works are part and parcel of the phenomenon of globalization. Most of the goods circulating in the global world involve transactions where each party tries to get the most advantageous deal, but the human being also longs for bonds through which to share meaning. In the worlds of literatures, the publishing industry follows the path of the circulation of goods and profit; nonetheless, the production of writing is closer to the model of hospitality where one thought entertains another thought in a close and intimate proximity while reading and critiquing the formulations of the "self" being exposed by the written word. In which ways do world literatures circulate? The reader-traveler who journeys in the world's literatures stops to partake in encounters in global communication. In this sense, this is a world in constant transformation with readers in continuous formation and transformation constituting an accelerated space where distance is reduced to the closest proximity in interaction. Writers establish meaningful relationships with other cultures and languages as they travel in the geographies of the world along with the literary spaces of world literatures. These spaces of world literatures is a place where multiple guests circulate searching for literary works which captivate their attention. The reader is invited to access the space of world literatures, the "other" fascinates, and the story of the "other" is a mirror not to resist, but to embrace. The next step is a process of screening where both the host and the individual receiving hospitality get to know each other and thus feel comfortable. At this point, methodologies, theoretical practices, social contexts, and familiarity with the language or with translation cooperate to welcome the different "other" in order to host "literary communion."

New technologies in particular constitute the media to circulate literary works where tensions between maintaining boundaries of identity and welcoming the "foreign" are negotiated. Following this stage, provisions are made so that the guest and the host nurture each other partaking in a "literary feast." The spaces of the world's literatures is a realm where the constraints of national borders — physical or literary — do not necessarily rule. The geographical notions of centers and peripheries are not valid as a new geography is delineated by the "flat" world. In the process of reading there is a safe place to rest temporarily as the rules of hospitality dictate. The protection offered by world literatures consists in providing a place away from the "literary home community" where to entertain all that is new and different. The last stage of the hospitable visit is the departure because hospitality has to come to an end for both parties. The host sends the guest away with "literary, cultural and linguistic provisions" for the rest of the journey. A closer relationships of reading are established where the "self" and the "other" — the author and the reader — join in literary loci in a more intimate way as both not only share reading, but interconnect in the deeper understanding of literary, cultural, social, and linguistic contexts. It is a secluded space where powerful influences can take place as the two "belong" to one localized context while sharing two different perspectives which contribute to the hospitality of the "other" much closer to the "self."

The self and the other enjoy hospitality thus broadening the scope of attention to more contextual concepts. This interaction is based on the knowledge and practice of hospitable approaches to the "other" and that is why effective pedagogical tools should be developed in order to prepare individuals for this kind of exchange. As Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee suggest in the *Companion to Literature, World literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies* (New Delhi: Cambridge UP India, 2013), "the negotiation of the network of relationships in the rapidly transforming 'glocal' milieu requires more than appropriate pedagogies; importantly, it requires a major shift in cultural and aesthetic paradigms and attitudes and a re-orientation towards being more inclusive globally" (vii). The phenomena of geographical localization restructured the composition of spatial geography that leads to an ethical geography that in turn reshapes pedagogies in order to accommodate territories of global communication. This is why we endorse a "globalization of literature" and a "literaturization of the global world," the former indicating the extrapolation of local literatures to a global space with a formative outcome for the readers and the latter suggesting a transformative journey when the world is affected by the journeys of literary works. In the "literaturization of the global world" there is a production of literary images which convey messages of globalization where there are less language barriers as the writer and the reader exchange their views using a "bridge language" or a language chosen for the convenience of communication.

The literary work that emanates from the circulation of people and ideas in a global context does not necessarily use linguistic translation because "bridge languages" (linguistic choices which are readily accessible to the writer and the reader) are the tools of choice. The personal ideological translation emanating from an individual understanding of the literary work is the translation that counts in the transformative aspect of the "literaturization of the global world." Each literary work is conceived in a "glocal" location of a binary area of influence of the local and the global. The global is not a territory of easy accessibility to any given writer and he/she draws from personal and spiritual identity to shape thoughts envisioning an imaginary potential of discourse. The "other" is not a "linguistic other," but a fellow human who is invited to share and practice hospitality at the literary level. In this scenario attitudes replace methodologies and they frame the encounter. Comparison does not constitute the "right" approach, but the meeting and hospitality with the "other." Humanism, multi- and inter-linguistic and inter- and multicultural scenes which ended up in a curse became the characteristics or identity traits of the human life in the twenty-first century. Globalization proposed a new interconnection among the "inter" and "multi" not at an external level, but mostly at an internal level of the individual who associates with more than one author or literary work while individuals are limited to a literary and linguistic hospitality. At the same time, translation is one kind of hospitable reception: the learning and use of the language and culture of the "other" fosters a deeper communion. World humanism is not transnational: it is a human universal discourse that emerges in each individual taking a particular shape. The discourse is then read by the "other" who finds a complementary image or thought of intimate personal reflections.

Scholarship presented in *New Work about World Literatures* — a special issue of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.6 (2013): <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/>> — conveys the invitation to students of literature and culture to experience literary hospitality within the inter- and multicultural space that offers a place and a moment within the world's literatures to meet and share with the "other," a mutual hospitality as it were. Contributors to the collection reflect new and exciting perspectives and understandings of the multilingual and multicultural realities in the humanities and social sciences. *New Work about World Literatures* contains the following articles.

In "National Literatures as Intimate Expression and the Problem of Teaching World Literatures" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/2>> Kette Thomas analyzes the fundamental tension embedded in the discourse on teaching world literatures. Thomas focuses on models which contextualize the problem around the subject of allegiance either to the reader or the author rather than the commonly limited geographical, national, and politically defined complex. Focus on the reader or author is often made at the expense of the "other," but it is the tension and communication between them that offers possibilities for the development of the discipline of comparative literature (against Eurocentrism and the nation approach) and the fields of world literatures and comparative cultural studies.

In "New Technologies and Teaching Comparative Literature" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss4/3>> Graciela Boruszko discusses the use of new technologies in literary studies curricula. Innovative processes are becoming fundamental

components of our educational systems as students challenge faculty to immerse themselves in their rapidly changing world. Learning in the twenty-first century is assisted by various information technologies because the networked information economy made possible by the Internet allows students to access a rich array of online resources including community based and collaborative knowledge exchange systems. Current students are "digital natives" grown up using a variety of digital platforms. Students multitask and process information quickly and therefore demand more from the learning processes proposed to them. Rather than consuming information, students form their own information networks and participate in learning communities. The discipline of comparative literature relies on the interaction of ideas and concepts which evolve from an initial core of seemingly disconnected literary works. Technology is an important facilitator of those connections, enabling deeper thought to be given to the comparative process that follows the initial challenge of understanding how connections are formed or what a particular constellation of connections represents.

In "African Literatures and Border Issues" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/4>> Chimdi Maduagwu posits that borders or boundaries are constructions which have social and symbolic implications and that they are also relevant in a variety of social processes versus class stratification. Modern Africa is a political construction from European colonialism and what we have today as countries of Africa were closely knit nation states (which colonialists identified as "tribes") who had their distinct features. However, the advent of colonialism tore into the original nation state structure based on given ethnic relationships and in its place constructed sovereign states or countries, which only considered proximity or geographical relationships. Moduagwu examines the possibility of reconciling the severance in relationships and argues that it is possible to achieve either reunification or reintegration of the fragments of Africa by consolidating matters which unite and overcoming divisions.

In "Translation, Cross-cultural interpretation, and World Literatures" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/5>> Qingben Li and Jinghua Guo discuss how to make what is national literature become part of world literatures and posit that there are at least two ways by this can be done: translation and cross-cultural interpretation. Translation covers not only the conversion of language, but also the selection and variation of culture. In the context of modern Chinese literature, cross-cultural interpretation often emerges in the form of applying Western theories to explain Chinese texts in order to facilitate appreciation by Western audiences and to support the need of the internationalization of Chinese literature. Cross-cultural variation is not unidirectional, but multidirectional and thus cultural intersections take place across space and time thus facilitating the canonization of various literatures in world literature.

In "Interdisciplinary Studies and Comparative Literature in China and the West" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/6>> Aaron Lee Moore addresses the arguments on the part of Chinese and Western scholars against and for the full inclusion of interdisciplinary studies within the discipline of comparative literature. Interdisciplinary studies, in general, have been resisted in Chinese scholarship as it once was in the U.S. and other Western countries. Moore discusses the major Chinese arguments for and against interdisciplinary studies in general and interdisciplinary studies within comparative literature. Moore's main argument is that the study of literature by necessity must always cross-disciplinary boundaries and the argument that interdisciplinary studies often leads to "amateurism" is indefensible. Further, Moore highlights the benefits of interdisciplinary studies within comparative literature in the West and the potential benefits of a wider range of interdisciplinary studies in Chinese scholarship.

In "Fiction, Film, Painting, and Comparative Literature" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/7>> Ramona L. Cecu proposes a view of comparative literature as a "language in a process of ascertaining its proper grammar." She argues that like any language in order to survive, comparative literature must allow for a constant rejuvenation of its vocabulary and methods it must keep an "open" structure that would accommodate fresh extra-methodological approaches through a procedure of re-invention and expansion. Cecu posits that in this process the comparatist's "objective creativity" plays a crucial role and draws on Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's concept of a "new comparative literature" and applies the concept to literature, painting, and film in India.

In "Poetry and the Ethics of Global Citizenship" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss4/8>> Monique-Adelle Callahan argues that the recent work of poets Jorie Graham and Yusef Komunyakaa suggests the emergence of an archetypal poet who transgresses boundaries of place and time through measured wandering amongst cultures and

histories. Graham and Komunyakaa offer a poetic discourse on the relationship between poetry and citizenship in an increasingly global world. Through a close reading of excerpts from Graham's 2012 *Place* and Komunyakaa's 2011 *The Chameleon Couch*, Callahan uses the paradigm of the poet-as-prophet to articulate the position of the poet vis-à-vis the geopolitical spaces she occupies. Callahan argues Graham's and Komunyakas's poetry evinces a certain nostalgia for place while at the same time delineating the existential space of placelessness. In this sense, their writing compels us to recognize an emerging shift in identity politics as it relates to both national and individual bodies.

In "March's Poetry and National Identity in Nineteenth-century Catalonia"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/9>> Alice E. Popowich investigates the role Ausiàs March's (1397-1459) oeuvre played in the creation of a distinct national identity of nineteenth-century Catalonia. The sociopolitical implications of *renaixença* and the romantic notion of *Volksgeist* are employed to situate renewed interest in March's poetry, while the study of reprints from the period allow reflections on the manipulation of March's celebrity in order to move political agendas forward in the establishment of the identity and culture of Catalonia. Popowich postulates that March's poetry influenced nineteenth-century literary rhetoric and politics whereby a regional dialectic was formed and that stood apart from Castilian hegemonizing of culture in the period.

In "World Literatures in Secondary School Curricula in Iran"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/10>> Massih Zekavat argues that the inclusion and teaching of works of world literature is significant at the secondary school level because it introduces students to a dialogic and polyphonic world where difference is appreciated. Further, Zekavat posits that the pedagogical use of reading world literatures would be the case in particular in countries and cultures where essentialist and homogenizing objectives and practices of culture prevail. Zekavat's argumentation is based on the recent revival of Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* in the U.S. as a pedagogical tool and practice of reading and postulates that it would be applicable in particular to secondary education in Iran.

In "Adiga's *The White Tiger* as World Bank Literature"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/11>> Abdullah M. Al-Dagamseh reads Aravind Adiga's novel within the context of global neoliberal capitalism, especially as radical neoliberal reforms took root in India in 1991. Al-Dagamseh argues that *The White Tiger* read as world bank literature provides critiques of the globally hegemonic discourses of success story narratives by exposing the contradictions of different, but overlapping facets of neoliberal ideology. Further, Al-Dagamseh demonstrates that the novel serves to reveal the contradiction between mythical global narratives and the reality and nature of "success" and "development" achieved through violence, crime, and destruction and posits that fictional representations of violence challenge hegemonic success story narratives and development projects which turn out to be disappointments, delusion, inequality, class/caste division, corruption, violence, and uneven geographical development.

In "Generative Translation in Spicer, Gelman, and Hawkey"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/12>> Lisa Rose Bradford examines the practice of generative translation — a concept she designated — in Jack Spicer's *After Lorca* (1957), Juan Gelman's *Com/positions* (1986), and Christian Hawkey's *Ventrakl* (2010) to show how this strategy revives the original articulation as a continuation of the seminal frisson while producing an entirely new work of art and one that reflects the genius of both the original and translating authors. While generative translation represents a renovative strategy that has provided historically a constant creative force in literature, in recent years it has established a particularly fruitful, transnational space for writing in which seemingly paratextual elements, forming a confabulation of sorts, encapsulate and color the reworked texts thus modeling the entire reading process.

In "Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* as Global Literature"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/13>> Erin M. Fehskens argues that scholars readily recognize Kiran Desai's Booker Prize winning second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* as world literature following David Damrosch's and Franco Moretti's notions. However, Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is often overlooked. Although *Hullabaloo*'s focus is narrow and local, its allegorical implications encode the processes of globalization and resistance to it into the novel. Thus, the novel can be read as an example of global literature, which uses the discontinuous nature of allegory to critique the de-differentiating practices of globalization and the specter of difference that accompanies these practices. Desai uses the return of Coca-Cola to India to illustrate the effects of multinational companies on the social and ecological landscapes of the Global South.

In their article "A Survey of Twentieth-century Literary Theory and Criticism in Chinese" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/14>> Xiaoming Chen and Anfeng Sheng survey Chinese-language scholarship that for the reason of the East-West divide is less known in the West. Although heavily influenced by both Western and Soviet Marxist thought, twentieth-century Chinese literary theorization and criticism produced much incisive scholarship based on the vast knowledge existing in Chinese culture and literary scholarship. Chen and Sheng discuss pioneering works by numerous Chinese literary theorists and critics who have been influential in their own time and exerted persistent modeling influences until today and the article is meant to adjust anonymous position of Chinese literary theorization thus to contribute to the diversity of literary studies.

In "World Literatures and Romanian Literary Criticism" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/15>> Caius Dobrescu argues that the notion *Weltliteratur* of Goethe posits the concept of world literature as the conveyor of universal (i.e., cosmopolitan) skills of socio-cultural adaptation. The influence of this form of *Weltliteratur* on Romanian literary criticism is traceable from Westernization in the nineteenth century to the cultural dissent of the post-Stalinist era. Based on Norbert Elias's diffusionist theory of the civilizing process, Dobrescu contends that one of the role models of the Romanian literary scholar and critic in his/her capacity of intercultural mediator was the eighteenth-century *philosophe* in the tradition of cosmopolitan *politess*.

New Work about World Literatures includes the following book review articles: Elke Sturm-Trigonakis's "World Literature(s) and Comparative Literature: A Book Review Article of Books Published in English and German 2011-2013" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/16>>, Miaomiao Wang, "Comparative Literature in Chinese: A Survey of Books Published 2000-2013" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/17>>, Ning Wang, "Variation Theory and Comparative Literature: A Book Review Article about Cao's Work" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/18>>, Biwu Shang, "Ethical Criticism and Literary Studies: A Book Review Article about Nie's Work" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/19>>, Tian Zhang, "Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies: A Book Review Article about Wang's Work" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/20>>, and Anton Pokrivčák, "On Some Worlds of World Literature(s): A Book Review Article on Đurišin's, Casanova's, and Damrosch's Work" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/21>>.

A feature of *New Work about World Literatures* is the number of articles with regard to comparative literature in Chinese: despite the discipline's intellectual and institutional prominence, this receives limited attention in US-American comparative literature or elsewhere and we hope that there would more interest in Chinese comparatists' work.

We thank the anonymous readers of the papers submitted for their comments.

New Work about World Literatures is co-published with two further special issues of the journal on the theme of world literatures and comparative literature in 2013: *World Literatures from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century*. Ed. Marko Juvan. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.5 (2013): <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/>> and *New Work in Comparative Literature in Europe*. Ed. Marina Grishakova, Lucia Boldrini, and Matthew Reynolds. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.7 (2013): <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/>>.