

Time and difference in comparative world literary history

Session at

XX11 Congress of the ICLA, Macao SAR, China, 2019, July 29-August 2,

Chairs:

Haun Saussy (Comparative Literature, University of Chicago)

Karen-Margrethe Simonsen (Comparative Literature, Aarhus University)

(please see call below list of participants)

Program for the session:

Chengzhou He, Nanjing University:

How to Do Things with Drama: A Comparative Approach to the History of 20th Century Chinese Drama

Svend Erik Larsen, Aarhus University:

Landscapes of Realism: Ideas and strategies of a new project on Realism

Lipika Das, IIT University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

The 'world' in World Literature : Raising new questions.

Stefan Helgesson, Stockholm University:

Notes Towards a Decolonial Conceptual History of Literature

Karen-Margrethe Simonsen, Aarhus University

Anachronism and Untimeliness. The Transatlantic and African Slavery as a challenge to World Literary History

Haun Saussy, University of Chicago

Concluding Remarks

CFP

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For more than a hundred years, Western historicism has been criticized severely as being Eurocentric, too focused on nationhood, teleological, etc. During the 20th Century, we witnessed a spatial turn that seemed to be more open to different developments. We also saw many experiments with episodic,

multiple, or non-continuous history (e.g., Hollier, Gumbrecht, Cornis-Pope and Neubauer). At the same time, a new awareness of world literature put pressure on the genre of historiography. Despite the understanding of the need for more openness, it seemed difficult to include the whole world's literature into any known model of historiography.

First of all, it is evident that different areas of the world have different histories, indeed different temporalities, and thus that different concepts of periodization are needed (cf. Zhang 53; Prendergast 6; Valdés, "Hacia una historia" 35). Can literary history accommodate this range of variation? Indeed, world literature may be too vast and too varied to be contained in one history. Some scholars have even suggested that we should give up writing a true world literary history since it would be immensely big and impossible to read (Damrosch, 2008). However, this has not hindered experiments in the genre, for instance *Studying Transcultural Literary History* (ed. G. Lindberg-Wada, 2006), and a new world literary history which is under way under the auspices of ICLA (ed. Zhang Longxi et al).

Yet historicization goes on all the time and is the backbone of many different scholarly practices. The question is not only how to write an all-encompassing world literary history; it is also how to historicize on a minor level, when one contextualizes readings and compares different literary traditions and genres.

In this panel we invite an open discussion about possible models and practices of world literary history in a global age. If the Western model of literary historiography (including, its rationality, its focus on modernity, its concept of literature etc.) does not hold for world literature, we have to ask the question: is there another way of historicizing that fits world literature better? And how does the perspective of world literature cause us to rethink the historicity of literature?

For instance, how can a global literary history be rethought from the perspective of Africa, Asia or South America? How will Western historiography be changed in light of perspectives from other parts of the world? What are the consequences for periodization? How restrictive is the concept of literature, and how do we study the travel of genres and text forms across borders and periods? What hierarchy is there between genres? How do we decide what decisive literary (or political) events create the framework of literary histories? And why would we even want to write literary history? What is the function of literary history in a global world? Is it educational, political or ethical?

In the panel we invite new approaches and reflections on world literary history, whether theoretical or focusing on specific case studies.

List of possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Practical and theoretical problems of writing world literary history
- Contextualization at different levels
- Transcultural perspectives on literary history
- Periodization in light of world literature
- Canonization in varied contexts
- Comparative approaches to world literary history
- Reading practices in light of world literary history
- The concept of literature and development of genres across borders
- Temporalization: scale, *longue durée* vs. micro histories
- Epistemological frameworks: narrative vs. encyclopedic models, normative vs. factual
- Problems of translation related to literary history
- Multidirectional history writing
- The political/ethical/educational function of (world) literary history

Abstracts

The panel will be Part of XX11 Congress of the ICLA, Macao SAR, China, 2019. Please see this homepage for details: <http://icla2019.medmeeting.org/8045?lang=en>