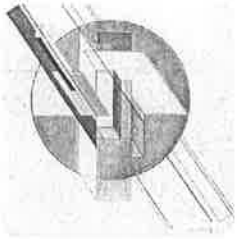
Oxford Bibliographies
Your Best Research Starts Here



World Literature

Sowon Park, Jernej Habjan

LAST MODIFIED: 26 JULY 2017
DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780190221911-0025

Introduction

As a global academic branch of studies, world literature emerged around the turn of the millennium, though thinking about literature with reference to "world," however defined, can be traced back to at least two hundred years earlier. The underlying factors for the emergence of world literature studies are many. The end of the Cold War and the rise of non-Western economies, the advent of a global literary marketplace, and the proliferation of digital platforms are seen as some of its preconditions. In general terms, the expansion of world literature can be seen to reflect the rapid integration of the world into a single market. As a field of inquiry, world literature continues to grow in response to the problems encountered by teachers, students, and readers in their daily contact with literature from around the world. Historically, a prevalent way of thinking about world literature in the Western literary tradition was as the selection of masterpieces from around the world. This serviceable notion was, however, shown to fall below its own theoretical requirement and to be clearly in need of revision, since the "world," in practice, referred to the "First World," and world literature had simply been another name for the classics from the five major European states—Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy—and from Russia and the United States. The urgent need to acknowledge and validate occluded regions of the non-Western world as unique literary and historical spaces that contribute to the whole has necessitated an altogether different framework for theorizing concepts such as language, nation, and masterpieces. In its current form, world literature studies aspires to overcome some of the problems that have arisen from the methods and procedures of traditional nation-based literary studies, as well as to address unresolved tensions within comparative literary studies, which have sometimes implicitly equated world literature with European literature. In this it overlaps with critiques of cultural imperialism and Eurocentrism raised by postcolonial studies. Where it differs markedly is in its thinking about the global system of literary production, dissemination, and evaluation beyond Europe and its former colonies, and in its focus on the methodological issues that emerge from the barely manageable inundation of literary texts now made available by digital multimedia platforms. In this effort, world literature studies is often joined by other recently established disciplines, especially globalization studies, translation studies, cosmopolitanism studies, and transnationalism studies.

General Overviews

Scholarly work on world literature often takes the form of either anthology or theoretical study. General overviews, which are limited to either cumulative sampling or theoretical reflection, are thus rare. The renewed interest in world literature around 2000, however, has resulted in monographs that can serve also or primarily as general overviews of world literature. This is the main aim of D'haen 2012, a detailed history of the terminological, conceptual, pedagogical, and geopolitical aspects of world literature; Goethe's definitions, Pascale Casanova's and Franco Moretti's theories, and European and US-American academe are given special attention. Similarly, Pizer 2006 focuses on the theoretical reception and pedagogical institutionalization of Goethe's notion of world literature. The problem of teaching world literature is also a concern of Damrosch 2009, where readers of world literature are offered ways of appreciating texts linguistically or culturally, or formally

challenging them while learning to recognize their universal features. Gupta 2009 examines the roles of English studies, world literature studies, and translation policies in the collaboration between globalization scholars and literary scholars; it adds to the dialogue by focusing on the relation between globalization and literature.

Damrosch, David. *How to Read World Literature*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

A practical companion to Damrosch 2003 (cited under Turn of the Millennium), where world literature is defined primarily as a mode of reading across national boundaries, this book suggests ways of reading literary works whose language, cultural context, or genre seems foreign to the contemporary English-language reader.

D'haen, Theo. *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature*. London: Routledge, 2012.

This compendious and accessible presentation of world literature traces the history of the notion, its recent theorizations, and its institutionalization in comparative literary studies, world literature courses, and translation studies. It also addresses the relationship between world literature and postcolonial and postmodern literatures.

Gupta, Suman. *Globalization and Literature*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2009.

Gupta presents and intervenes in the recent debates in globalization studies and literary studies. Focusing on the relationship between the two disciplines, as well as between their respective objects of study, he addresses the lack of scholarly collaboration and sees in globalization both the prevalent condition for and a theme of contemporary literature.

Pizer, John. *The Idea of World Literature: History and Pedagogical Practice*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

Combining historical presentation with programmatic intervention, Pizer argues for and exemplifies the adoption of a Goethean dialectical approach to world literature in US academia. To this end, he offers concise accounts both of the academic reception of Goethe's approach and of contemporary courses on world literature in English translation.

Anthologies

Besides single-authored or collaborative theoretical studies on the concept (and paradigmatic examples) of world literature, anthologies of representative texts are the most common type of publication devoted to world literature. While most anthologies sample and comment on literary works representative of various national and regional literatures, recently there have also appeared anthologies of the most influential theoretical studies on the concept of world literature.

Literary Works

The first English-language anthologies of world literature were based on the post-Romantic notion of literature as aesthetic writing and favored Western European classics. This is typical for Henry Cabot Lodge's and Charles Eliot's anthologies from the late 1900s, as well as, in part, for Philo Buck's attempt in 1934. After 2000, a new rethinking of world literature resulted in a new six-volume edition of the Norton anthology (Puchner, et al. 2012), as well as six-volume anthologies published by Longman (Damrosch and Pike 2007) and Bedford (Davis, et al. 2009). Here, as well as in the two-volume HarperCollins

anthology (Caws and Prendergast 1994), Western classics gave way to representative literary and even nonliterary works from non-Western cultures.

Caws, Mary Ann, and Christopher Prendergast, eds. *The HarperCollins World Reader*. 2 vols. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

Published also as a single volume, this anthology predates the last wave of anthologies and theories of world literature by a decade. While surpassing previous anthologies in its geographic and generic scope, it still retains the traditional chronological order of presentation and the format of a series of excerpts.

Damrosch, David, and David L. Pike, eds. *The Longman Anthology of World Literature: Compact Edition*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.

This is the compact edition of a six-volume anthology from 2004. Unlike Caws and Prendergast 1994 and the 2002 predecessor of Puchner, et al. 2012, it not only follows the chronological order but also collects resonances between or perspectives shared by works written in different periods and cultures.

Davis, Paul, Gary Harrison, David M. Johnson, and John F. Crawford, eds. *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature: Compact Edition*. 2 vols. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

This is the compact edition of a six-volume anthology from 2003. Like its 2004 competitor from Longman (Damrosch and Pike 2007), it selects the works on the basis of cultural diversity as well as aesthetic exceptionality, and combines them thematically as well as chronologically, thus diverging from the 2002 predecessor of Puchner, et al. 2012.

Puchner, Martin, Suzanne Conklin Akbari, Wiebke Denecke, et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of World Literature: Shorter Third Edition*. 2 vols. New York: Norton, 2012.

This is the short edition of a six-volume anthology from 2012. Compared to earlier editions, which go back to 1956, this edition of the most commonly referenced English-language anthology of world literature forsakes the focus on Western literary masterpieces in favor of a greater inclusion of texts from other literatures as well as nonliterary texts.

Literary Studies

Since the revival of world literature studies around 2000, a sampling of texts has become a popular form for presenting not only world literature but even theories of world literature. David Damrosch, an editor of major anthologies of world literature, also edited Damrosch 2014, an anthology of world literature studies. Another such anthology is D'haen, et al. 2012. Like their literary counterparts, these anthologies of theory broaden the selection of texts considerably. While these readers present the two centuries of the world-literature debate and thus add to its revival, Prendergast 2004 anthologizes this revival itself, even adding new essays. This revival is also seen in Connell and Marsh 2010, a reader on literature and globalization.

Connell, Liam, and Nicky Marsh, eds. *Literature and Globalization: A Reader*. London: Routledge, 2010.

This reader brings together key English-language texts on globalization, literature, and their relationship. The editors introduce the book as a whole as well as each of its three sections, on globalization theory, literary theory, and case studies centered on environmentalism, the market, technology, exploitation, and cosmopolitanism.

Damrosch, David, ed. *World Literature in Theory*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

This selection of scholarly essays, speeches, and conversations presents the history of the world-literature debate from Goethe's *Weltliteratur* to Nicolas Sarkozy's *francophonie*. Like the editor's anthologies of world literature, the volume expands the canon to include thinkers from British India, the Republic of China, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union.

D'haen, Theo, César Dominguez, and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, eds. *World Literature: A Reader*. London: Routledge, 2012.

Like Damrosch 2014, this reader introduces and re-publishes excerpts from canonical as well as lesser-known texts on world literature and related issues, starting in Goethe's time and ending with the recent discussions about postcolonialism, globalization, canonization, and comparative literary studies.

Prendergast, Christopher, ed. *Debating World Literature*. London: Verso, 2004.

This book gathers some of the essays that revived the debate on world literature at the turn of the millennium. In an attempt to bridge the gap between globalization studies and literary studies, the essays revisit the canons of world literature and world literature studies from the perspectives of global capitalism, postcolonialism, and nationalism.

Edited Collections of Essays

Threading together the immensely diverse modern thinking on world literature, the various essay collections present an array of methodologies as well as a picture of the rise of the discipline. While nearly all the volumes, such as Lindberg-Wada 2006, Simonsen and Stougaard-Nielsen 2008, Helgesson and Vermeulen 2015, and Küpper 2013, link world literature to globalization and other historic changes, the essays do not offer a single unified thesis, but instead compare and contrast selected authors' theoretical views to point to the disagreements in scholarly discussions (D'haen, et al. 2012). Questions on what is written, how it is read and interpreted, and who decides what will be included or excluded yield variable conclusions, which themselves provide the basis of further consideration (Lawall 1994). Each contributor provides a singular definition of modern world literature, though a principally European cultural vantage point still dominates.

D'haen, Theo, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir, eds. *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*. London: Routledge, 2012.

A comprehensive introduction to the field that charts the disciplinary relationship of world literature to areas such as philology, translation, globalization, and diaspora studies. With fifty essays by authors from Goethe to Said, Casanova, and Moretti, the companion outlines the most prominent studies on world literature.

Helgesson, Stefan, and Pieter Vermeulen, eds. *Institutions of World Literature: Writing, Translation, Markets*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

The thirteen essays in this collection investigate how institutional structures such as the "market," the publishing house, and the university produce world literary works, while addressing terminological and methodological issues that emerge from this exploration. Translation is given special emphasis in this study.

Küpper, Joachim, ed. *Approaches to World Literature*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013.

A collection of essays that were first presented at a conference at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2012. It contains concise versions of the works of leading theorists on the role of language in world literature studies, and as such makes for a good introduction to the latest developments in this field.

Lawall, Sarah, ed. *Reading World Literature: Theory, History, Practice*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Based on her experience compiling several editions of Norton anthologies, Lawall collaborates here with twelve other contributors to rethink the methods and the aims of literary anthologies within the American educational system through perspectives such as canonical variations and patterns of understanding.

Lindberg-Wada, Gunilla, ed. *Studying Transcultural Literary History*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006.

Contributors to this collection discuss global literary history and the critical and methodical challenges that world literature brings to organizing different cultural systems of genre. Issues that emerge from the focus on transculturation range from the Persian epic of Majnun Layla and Zulu praise poetry to South Korean novels and Brazilian *antropofagismo* (Cannibalism).

Simonsen, Karen-Margrethe, and Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, eds. *World Literature, World Culture: History, Theory, Analysis*. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2008.

This collection of essays examines the pioneering texts of world literature studies as well as discussing the roles played by translation, migration, and literary institutions. The focus is on how literary analysis can be enriched by attention to the border-crossings attempted by migrants, as well as writers, publishers, translators, and texts.

Special Journal Issues

One of the most visible forums for debates on world literature has been scholarly journals, especially those dedicated to comparative literary studies. Often publishing proceedings of notable conferences (such as Gunn 2001, Ning 2011, and Juvan 2013), these journals have brought together a remarkable number of leading scholars of comparative and postcolonial literary studies to engage with the state of literature in the globalized world. In most cases, the study of world literature has been recognized as the most immediate response to this state. This has led to a rethinking not only of world literature, but also of contemporary comparative and postcolonial literary studies. Eurocentrism, multiculturalism, translation, and canonization have been revisited in particular; Brown 2007 and Park 2016 are entirely dedicated to the non-Western world. Among the many languages in which the debate has been held, the sections published in globally distributed English-language journals have been the most influential, with some of the articles (especially in Rowe 2010, Cohen 2008, and Kadir 2004) already being canonized in anthologies cited under Literary Studies, and with some of these special English-language volumes (including Ning 2011, Lukas and Talviste 2015, and Damrosch 2016) being published outside the English-speaking world.

Brown, Marshall, ed. *Special Issue: Globalism on the Move. Modern Language Quarterly* 68.2 (2007).

Recent collections of essays on world literature tend to expand the space offered to discussions of non-Western literature. Few, however, are as devoted to the topic as this one. All eight articles focus either on literary traditions outside the Western canon or on the global scope of such neglected phenomena as travel poetry, utopias, and writing systems.

Cohen, Ralph, ed. *Special Issue: Literary History in the Global Age. New Literary History* 39.3 (2008).

With contributions by leading US comparatists, this volume joins the renewed world-literature debate by rethinking literary history from the perspective of globalization. Issues such as translation, global media, cosmopolitanism, and academe are discussed in articles that have since become chapters of seminal research monographs and anthologies (such as Apter 2013, cited under Translationalism, and D'haen, et al. 2012, cited under Literary Studies).

Damrosch, David, ed. *Special Issue: Inaugural Issue. Journal of Comparative Literature* 1.1 (2016).

This is the first issue of a journal intended to serve as an outlet for the study of world literature. The volume brings together articles by leading scholars that show some of the ways in which focusing on world literature can avoid nationalist bias and Eurocentrism.

Gunn, Giles, ed. *Special Issue: Globalizing Literary Studies. PMLA* 116.1 (2001): 16–188.

This special issue of the journal of the Modern Language Association of America features articles by leading scholars working on globalization and literature. Although world literature is not given special emphasis, the focus on cultural globalization makes this volume an important early contribution to the recent return to world literature.

Juvan, Marko, ed. *Special Issue: World Literatures from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century. CLCWeb* 15.5 (2013).

This collection of essays is organized around the idea that the notion of world literature changes as it travels around the world, so that different cultures may have different notions of world literature. This idea is theorized and exemplified in articles contributed by both prominent and emerging scholars of world literature.

Kadir, Djelal, ed. *Special Issue: Globalization and World Literature. Comparative Literature Studies* 41.1 (2004).

This is an early reflection on the state of literary studies from the perspective of contemporary globalization. Individual articles reflect on globalization's challenge to comparative literary studies, postcolonial theory, world literature studies, ecocriticism, translation studies, and book history.

Lukas, Liina, and Katre Talviste, eds. *Special Issue: Taming World Literature. Interlitteraria* 20, Suppl. 1 (2015).

After a general section in which European comparatists and their American colleague Gerald Gillespie discuss the challenge of world literature studies to comparative literary studies, contributions on peripheral literatures or individual writers and their international reception can be read as so many attempts to meet the above challenge.

Ning, Wang, ed. *Special Issue: Comparative Literature: Toward a (Re)construction of World Literature. Neohelicon* 38.2 (2011).

Based on a Sino-American conference attended by leading literary theorists and comparatists, this special issue of a major European comparative literature journal addresses the state of the art in world literature studies, its relation to comparative literary studies and globalization theory, and the Chinese reception of the European canon.

Park, Sowon S., ed. *Special Issue: The Chinese Scriptworld and World Literature. Journal of World Literature* 1.2 (2016).

This volume brings the issue of script to the discussion of world literature. It analyzes and demystifies the differences and the similarities between the Chinese scriptworld and the alphabetic world, providing a starting point for comparative studies on various script cultures across the world, as well as on scripts within the borders of the Chinese scriptworld.

Rowe, George E., ed. *Special Issue: World Literature. Comparative Literature* 62.4 (2010).

The five articles published here, some of which have already been anthologized, scrutinize the study of world literature as it has developed in the first decade of the new millennium. The potential of comparison is said to be stifled by the prevalence of identity politics, world literature in translation, and literary theory in English.

Historical Debates

Some of the most influential theories of world literature emerged out of, and were responding to, larger intellectual and political movements. The category of world has proved invaluable for reconfiguring literatures outside the rubric of nation-states. Some of these debates took the form of explicit exchanges between contemporaries, while many others shared only the terminology in a general sense.

Romanticism

Toward the end of the cultural nationalism of German Romanticism, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and then also Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, related world literature to the world market. Before Goethe, world literature was thematized by another exponent of Weimar Classicism, C. M. Wieland, and even by the Enlightenment historian A. L. Schlözer. It was Goethe, however, who in 1827 (Eckermann 1971) and the following years (Goethe 1994) influenced the subsequent debate by recognizing world literature in an unprecedented exchange of texts on the emerging cultural equivalent to the world market. Twenty years later, Marx and Engels 1998 turned this metaphor into a metonymy: instead of likening world literature to the world market, both were seen as parts of the rising bourgeois society.

Eckermann, Johann Peter. *Conversations with Goethe*. Edited by J. K. Moorhead. Translated by John Oxenford. London: Everyman's Library, 1971.

Conversing with Eckermann in 1827, Goethe announces the age of world literature, in which literary works are equally comprehensible regardless of their origin because they all register the same humanity. Although world literature is for him often synonymous with European literature, he does envision it as communication between all national literatures.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. "On World Literature." In *The Collected Works*. Vol. 3, *Essays on Art and Literature*. By Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Edited by John Gearey. Translated by Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff, 224–228. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

This is a selection of Goethe's thoughts on world literature sketched between 1827 and 1830 and partly published in his journal *Über Kunst und Altertum*. Goethe sees world literature as either private or published international exchanges of information on national literatures. Most of Goethe's examples are contemporary and from Western European literatures.

Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition*. Translated by Samuel Moore. London: Verso, 1998.

In this famous manifesto commissioned by the Communist League, the bourgeoisie is both praised in comparison to feudal society and dismissed in comparison to a communism to come. World literature is mentioned as an emergent negation of the particularities of national and local literatures in the conditions of the world market and world history.

Turn of the Century

Reflecting the sociohistorical conditions that culminated in the Great War, "turn of the century" elaborations on world literature attempted to avert the looming global conflict through ideas that fostered unity, harmony, and humanity. Invoking Goethe's cosmopolitan ideas and Enlightenment heritage (Brandes 2009 [first published 1889], Tagore 2001 [first published 1907]), there was a particular focus on literature that promoted understanding among peoples of all cultures and nations. The model of literature that was favored was thus a unified whole (Moulton 1911). However, this idealist aim to transcend nationalist interests was proven insufficient to address political differences about what exactly the whole constitutes. The attempt of Gorky 1919 to revive world literature for the ideology of the newly created Soviet Union is an early example of the tensions inherent in the idealist romanticist notion.

Brandes, Georg. "World Literature." In *The Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature: From the European Enlightenment to the Global Present*. Edited by David Damrosch, Natalie Melas, and Mbongiseni Buthelezi, 61–66. Translated by Haun Saussy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

First published in both Danish and German in 1899, Brandes notes the rising nationalist spirit of the times and reflects on the concept of world literature as defined by Goethe. Many of our current concerns are articulated here: questions surrounding texts in the original language, creative translations, circulation, universality, and locality.

Gorky, Maxim. "Introduction." In *Katalog izdatel'stva "Vsemirnaya literatura" pri Narodnom komissariate po prosveshcheniyu*. By Maxim Gorky, 5–30. Leningrad: Vsemirnaya Literatura, 1919.

This is the English-language version of Gorky's introduction to the inaugural catalogue of the Vsemirnaya literature (world literature) publishing house, which he helped establish with the aim of producing a library of translations of world-class masterpieces. Gorky seeks to recuperate world literature to build new forms of social life.

Moulton, Richard G. *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture*. New York: Macmillan, 1911.

Moulton sketches the literary field of English literatures with expositions of "masterpieces" while advancing the case that world literature belongs to every stage of general culture, from the most elementary to the most advanced, and that it comprises a unified whole.

Tagore, Rabindranath. "World Literature." In *Selected Writings on Literature and Language*. By Rabindranath Tagore. Edited by Sisir Kumar Das and Sukanta Chaudhuri. Translated by Tista Bagchi, et al., 138–150. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Like Goethe, Tagore examines the category of world to rethink the relations between national literatures in the wake of a historic tumult. Speaking in 1907 at the newly established National Council of Education, he addresses "Visva-Sahitya" (world literature) to reassert the interconnectedness of all beings.

Post–World War II

After World War II, several modern histories of world literature appeared, most notably the twenty-four-volume *New Handbook of Literary Studies* (1972–2002) in Germany, the eight-volume *History of World Literature* (1983–1994) in the Soviet Union, and the seven-volume *Literary History of the World* (1985–1993) in Scandinavia. The Soviet *History* overtly rejected the practice of privileging European literature and broadened the field of world literature to include Asian and African texts. In the United States and Europe, meanwhile, the second half of the 20th century saw Central European comparative textual scholarship assuming a more central position in literary studies, guided by the research of Romance and comparative literature scholars such as Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, and Ernst Robert Curtius, who wrote during the war while in internal or external exile (Auerbach 1969, Curtius 1973, Spitzer 1948).

Auerbach, Erich. "Philology and *Weltliteratur*." Translated by Maire and Edward Said. *Centennial Review* 13.1 (1969): 1–17.

Auerbach reconsiders Goethean humanism. He argues that it is the task of philologists, whose field of study is said to be the world of human history, to keep open a dialogue between the multitude of discourses, in order to avoid deceptive abstractions, and to retain the concreteness and precision of literary texts.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. "Fundamental Features of Goethe's World." In *Essays on European Literature*. By Ernst Robert Curtius. Translated by Michael Kowal, 73–91. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

Curtius had traced recurring styles, themes, and motifs in European literature from the Middle Ages to modern times in his 1946 *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. This essay revisits Goethe's cosmopolitanism from a postwar perspective to illuminate synergies between diverse cultural traditions and build a case for a new European civic order.

Spitzer, Leo. *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1948.

Spitzer's stylistic criticism is based on his impressive learning in the historical and comparative linguistics of France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Germany, England, and the United States from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. Like Auerbach and Curtius, his notion of world is humanist and responds to the urgencies of history after World War II.

Post–Cold War

Toward the end of the Cold War, literary studies came into contact with the Three Worlds Theory. Itself a product of the Cold War, this political theory distinguished between the capitalist First World, the real-socialist Second World, and the postcolonial Third World. Advocated mainly by newly emerged socialist nation-states, the theory argued for state-supported national forms of anti-imperialism. Jameson 1986 saw one such national form in Third World literature, with its literary characters functioning as national allegories. Ahmad 1987 responded by arguing that the category of Third World literature is too abstract. Jameson 1987 reiterated his regret that the nationalism of Third World literature is absent from the postmodernist First World.

Ahmad, Aijaz. "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory.'" *Social Text* 17 (1987): 3–25.

This is an avowed Marxist critique of a fellow Marxist, arguing that Jameson's notion of Third World literature is too diverse to be meaningful. While the western Marxist may see Third World nationalism as an opposition to imperialism, Ahmad himself, as a Marxist from India, grants this potential only to socialism.

Jameson, Fredric. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65–88.

In this companion piece to his influential critique of postmodernism, Jameson outlines Third World literature as the literature of national allegories, narratives whose protagonists embody the histories of their respective nations, a politically emancipatory narrative device presumably lost in First World postmodernism.

Jameson, Fredric. "A Brief Response." *Social Text* 17 (1987): 26–27.

A methodological and political reply to Ahmad: Jameson argues that, methodologically, the category of Third World literature was supposed to enable comparisons both within and between the First, the Second, and the Third Worlds; and politically, he contends that the category was intended as a reminder of what is missing from First World postmodernism.

Turn of the Millennium

Around 2000, world literature became the main concern of literary studies. A series of studies returned to the project of world literature, all focusing on the kinds of reading it may entail. Moretti 2000 proposed that close reading at the level of the text be supplemented by distant reading at the level of world literature. Spivak 2003 downgraded distant reading to a source of reference tools for new kinds of close reading. Focusing on nonscholarly reading, Damrosch 2003 argued that world literature comprises any text that is read outside its original literary field. Casanova 2004, published in France in 1999, can be read as a claim that this "outside" is often Paris, the city where a text has to be read in order to enter world literature.

Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Translated by M. B. DeBevoise. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

This 1999 book uses Braudel's economic historiography and Bourdieu's structuralist sociology to outline world literature as the world of aesthetic writing. The capital of this world republic of letters is Paris, whose press, publishers, and academia have the symbolic power to grant, or deny, texts from all over the world the status of world literature.

Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.

This elaboration on Goethe's scarce mentions of world literature retains their openness, as it presupposes as many versions of world literature as there are local receptions of world literature. As exemplified in his anthology (Damrosch and Pike 2007, cited under Literary Works), Damrosch treats as world literature any text whose reception extends its local readership.

Moretti, Franco. "Conjectures on World Literature." *New Left Review* 2.1 (2000): 54–68.

Like Casanova 2004, Moretti uses Braudel to outline world literature as a world of its own. Applying world-systems analysis, he sees this world as an unequal structure, with cores colonizing peripheries. Entrusting world literature to distant reading (readings of close readings), Moretti received many critiques, which he addressed in a 2003 follow-up.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

In this book-length version of her 2000 Wellek Library Lectures, Spivak pleads for collaboration across the humanities and social sciences in an attempt to revive comparative literary studies at a time when world literature in translation seems to reduce the plurality of the planet's literatures to the uniformity of globalized English.

Theoretical Approaches

While anthologies of representative literary texts approach world literature as the sum of all verbal art written in history, theoretical studies on the concept of world literature (which are sometimes themselves anthologized) treat world literature as a dimension of literature that is irreducible to any set of literary texts and therefore demands conceptualization. Among such theoretical investigations, a number of distinct approaches to studying world literature can be distinguished, many of which have formed as commentaries on the key Historical Debates. The categories overlap to a varying degree.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism, the meaning of which can be traced to "world citizenship," flourished in 19th- and 20th-century European literature. Constructed then as an alternative to rising nationalism, cosmopolitanism, alongside internationalism and transnationalism, has been revived as a widespread concept within world literature studies (Kristmannsson 2007, Biti 2016). Idealist Romantic notions of world literature underwent a sharp revision around the time of World War II. European Romantic underpinnings were rejected, being considered as that which led to nationalism, in particular National Socialism (Guérard 1940, Strich 1949), and gave way to a more expansive model of a humanist ideal (Etiemble 2014, Said 2004).

Biti, Vladimir. *Tracing Global Democracy: Literature, Theory and the Politics of Trauma*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016.

Biti charts the emergence of the cosmopolitan idea of literature and its impact on the democratic reconfiguration of global cultural and political spaces. He examines trauma as a political concept in Voltaire, Kant, Herder, the Schlegel brothers, Goethe, the Russian Formalists, Bakhtin, Lévinas, Blanchot, Derrida, Deleuze, Luhmann, and Rancière.

Etiemble, René. "Should We Rethink the Notion of World Literature?" In *World Literature in Theory*. Edited by David Damrosch, 85–98. Translated by Theo D'haen. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

A caustic critic of Eurocentric models of world literature, Etiemble, who was well versed in Arab and Chinese literatures, argues that a conception of literature that is not acceptable for all people is worth nothing. For him, one needs to escape the determinism of one's birth in order to be able to study world literature.

Guérard, Albert. *Preface to World Literature*. New York: Henry Holt, 1940.

A prominent opponent of nationalism, especially German National Socialism, Guérard looks to pre-Romantic literature to formulate his concept of world literature. He warns against claiming Goethe as our master and proposes the idea that world literature begins in the nursery, not in the graduate school.

Kristmannsson, Gauti. "The Nordic Turn in German Literature." *Edinburgh German Yearbook* 1 (2007): 63–72.

Kristmannsson shows that Goethe's and Herder's canonical references to *Weltliteratur* are predated by A. L. Schlözer's invention of the term in 1773. Against this background, Kristmannsson examines the idea of a "Nordic turn" with reference to European literature in the 18th century.

Said, Edward. *Humanism and Democratic Criticism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Addressing the crisis in the humanities and following Auerbach's lead, Said proposes a return to philology as a strategy for revitalizing a democratic form of humanism. He sees words as vital agents in historical and political change and pleads for the social responsibilities of writers and intellectuals in an ever more interdependent world.

Strich, Fritz. *Goethe and World Literature.* Translated by C. A. M. Sym. New York: Hafner, 1949.

Published immediately after World War II, Strich draws a parallel between Europe at the end of the Napoleonic wars and his own time. He attributes to the notion of world literature an opportunity to promote mutual understanding across national borders and the means to circulate ideas that develop harmony and tolerance.

Historical Materialism

The mention of world literature alongside the world market in Marx and Engels 1998 (cited under Romanticism), and especially Marx's subsequent historical-materialist theory of world history as a history of class struggle, inspired the formation of Marxist literary studies, a key focus of which is world literature. Prawer 1976 remains the best presentation of the notion of world literature in Marx and Engels 1998. Conversely, Marx's historical materialism was recently applied to the study of world literature: Moretti 2006 and Jameson 2008 outline historical-materialist approaches to literature beyond any sum of individual works, while Brown 2005 and Schwarz 2007 use the Marxist concept of the world market to analyze literary works from the global periphery.

Brown, Nicholas. "Introduction." In *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature.* By Nicholas Brown, 1–34. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

This study reads British interwar modernism and African postcolonial literature within a common horizon of 20th-century capitalism and builds on the way Marx and Engels 1998 (cited under Romanticism) historicizes Goethe's notion of world literature by deriving world literature from the unequal capitalist world market rather than from a utopian free market.

Jameson, Fredric. "New Literary History after the End of the New." *New Literary History* 39.3 (2008): 375–387.

Anticipating Jameson's 2008 Holberg Prize lecture on world literature, this essay applies Marx's concept of the world market to globalization, whose privileging of the English language suggests that world literature is tenable as a global exchange, not of literary works, but of information on these works, which was also Goethe's idea of world literature.

Moretti, Franco. "The End of the Beginning: A Reply to Christopher Prendergast." *New Left Review* 2.41 (2006): 71–86.

In this defense of his introduction of scientific graphs, maps, and trees in the study of world literature, Moretti advances Lucio Colletti's critique of historical materialism as being too teleological and dialectical to be a science. He pleads for a kind of use of scientific tools in historical materialism that can trace the social aspect of literary forms.

Prawer, S. S. *Karl Marx and World Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1976.

In chapter 7 of this book-length examination of Marx's uses of literature, the invocation of world literature in Marx and Engels 1998 is traced back to Eckermann 1971 (both cited under Romanticism), as well as valorized in view of the 20th-century worldwide dissemination of literature. In turn, Marx and Engels 1998 is read as belonging to world literature.

Schwarz, Roberto. "Competing Readings in World Literature." Translated by Nick Caistor. *New Left Review* 2.48 (2007): 85–107.

Schwarz, who prompted Moretti to reassess the critical potential of historical-materialist literary studies (see Moretti 2006), draws, in this essay, on Casanova 2004 (cited under Turn of the Millennium) to critically analyze the introduction of the Brazilian writer Machado de Assis into world literatures, as defined by Western publishers and academics.

Comparativism

A growing number of comparatists are challenging the assumptions upon which some of the traditional "humanist" comparative methods are based. The core strand of skepticism in their contestations revolves around the insight that comparisons which uphold equality and universality on the surface have too often been unequal in method and incomplete in scope. From the 1877 statement of Meltzl 1973 to the more recent examples of Aldridge 1986, Saussy 2006, and Young 2013, critics point out that traditional methods of comparison can result in a circular argument that confirms one's norms as universal and timeless. It is also argued that such lack of attentiveness toward one's assumptions has resulted in the universal privileging of Western literary norms in the world cultural heritage.

Aldridge, A. Owen. *The Reemergence of World Literature: A Study of Asia and the West*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986.

A relatively early attempt to incorporate the literatures of Asia and Africa as equal partners in the development of the conception of universality. Aldridge's deep involvement with Japanese and Chinese literatures and his commitment to translation makes this book a forerunner of many studies today.

Meltzl, Hugo. "Present Tasks of Comparative Literature." In *Comparative Literature: The Early Years*. Edited by Hans-Joachim Schulz and Phillip H. Rhein, 53–62. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973.

In this 1877 essay, the editor of the first known comparative literature journal advocates multilingualism, or "polyglottism," as a standard for comparatists. He is skeptical toward nationalist versions of world literature and calls for a reformation of world literary history through an application of the comparative principle.

Saussy, Haun, ed. *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Bringing and commenting on the report of the American Comparative Literature Association for 2004, the collection of essays in this volume examines how the condition of globalization impacts on the practices of comparative literature, whether in the classroom or as a governing mode of thought.

Young, Robert J. C. "The Postcolonial Comparative." *PMLA* 128.3 (2013): 683–689.

Young argues that for the postcolonial, comparison is never a matter of choice with a view to bringing out parallels across cultures; it is a burden thrust upon the people by the ascendant authority, which has rendered local readings invalid. Hence, for him, postcolonial authors have always written comparative literature.

Formalism

Many systemic approaches to world literature rely on works of Russian Formalism, such as those translated in Matejka and Pomorska 1971. Around 1930, Boris Eikhenbaum and Yury Tynyanov integrated their earlier work on literary form and medium to produce concepts such as literary environment and literary evolution. Their view of literature as a system related to other social systems was a major source for the polysystem theory of Even-Zohar 1990 and for the theory of the interliterary process of Ďurišin 1993. The Russian Formalists and Even-Zohar were used, respectively, in Casanova 2008 and Moretti 2003 for the study of the global literary system. Recently, Ďurišin's and Casanova's systemic approaches were reviewed in Pokrivčák 2013, and Moretti's in Habjan 2014.

Casanova, Pascale. "The Literary Greenwich Meridian: Thoughts on the Temporal Forms of Literary Belief." Translated by Nora Scott. *Field Day Review* 4 (2008): 7–23.

Summarizing Casanova 2004 (cited under Turn of the Millennium), where Paris is seen as the center of a global system of literary canonization, Casanova draws on Russian Formalism to note the modern canon's quest for novelty and thus self-reinvention, while adding that this process is not spontaneous, but institutionalized in the system's center.

Ďurišin, Dionýz. "World Literature as a Target Literary-Historical Category." *Slovak Review* 2.1 (1993): 7–15.

In this article, Ďurišin assesses the two main notions of world literature—a sum of works, and a selection of masterpieces—and sketches his alternative (on which he elaborates in his 1992 Slovak-language book on world literature): world literature as an open system of genetic and typological relations between national (or larger regional) literatures.

Even-Zohar, Itamar. *Special Issue: Polysystem Studies. Poetics Today* 11.1 (1990).

Even-Zohar combines the work of Pierre Bourdieu, the main reference in Casanova 2008, with that of the Russian Formalists to present his polysystem theory. Not unlike Ďurišin 1993, Even-Zohar sees literature as a system of such systems as national literatures but also larger literary communities formed by shared languages, translations, or other mediums.

Habjan, Jernej. "World-Systems Analysis and Form: Distant Reading as Structural Poetics of World Literature." In *Deterritorializing Practices in Literary Studies*. Edited by María Constanza Guzmán and Alejandro Zamora, 21–35. Cuernavaca, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, 2014.

This essay reviews Moretti's distant reading in its relation to Formalist close reading. Far from rejecting close reading, as is believed by many philologists and deconstructionists, distant reading is shown to be close reading at the level of world literature, where the objects of reading are not texts, but devices and genres shared by them.

Matejka, Ladislav, and Krystyna Pomorska, eds. and trans. *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1971.

This selection of works by the Russian Formalists and their successors, while omitting their founding essays, includes synthetic articles such as Tynyanov's "On Literary Evolution" and Eikhenbaum's "Literary Environment," whose systematization of literary history inspired the literary sociologies of Even-Zohar, Ďurišin, Moretti, and Casanova.

Moretti, Franco. "More Conjectures." *New Left Review* 2.20 (2003): 73–81.

Returning to Moretti 2000 (cited under Turn of the Millennium), where a world literary system dominated by Western Europe is sketched by analogy with Immanuel Wallerstein's economic world-system, Moretti refers to Even-Zohar 1990 in order to defend his main thesis that the global literary system, not unlike the economic one, is hierarchical.

Pokrivčák, Anton. "On Some Worlds of World Literature(s): A Book Review Article on Ďurišin's, Casanova's, and Damrosch's Work." *CLCWeb* 15.6 (2013).

This article reviews Ďurišin's Slovak-language book on world literature (1992), Casanova 2004, and Damrosch 2003 (both cited under Turn of the Millennium) as key attempts to base world literature in communities beyond national literatures, namely in supranational literary regions, the global literary system, and transnational literary communities respectively.

Third-Worldism

Distinguishing between the capitalist First World, the real-socialist Second World, and the postcolonial Third World, the Three Worlds Theory was a theory of anticolonialism developed in postcolonial conditions. Similarly, this typical theoretical product of the Cold War entered literary studies mostly after the Cold War. While Jameson 1986 (cited under Post–Cold War) still used it to outline Third World literature, Ahmad 1987 (cited under Post–Cold War) and Ahmad 1992 rejected the project as being abstract. The debate was soon commented on in McClure and Mufti 1992; Appadurai, et al. 1993; and Buell 1994. After the immediate preoccupations of the post–Cold War conjuncture, it was resumed in commentaries such as Buchanan 2006, Paik 2010, and Lazarus 2011.

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso, 1992.

Contextualizing his earlier critique of Jameson's Third-Worldism, Ahmad historicizes both the Three Worlds Theory and some of the literatures of the Third World. While reiterating his critique of Jameson, Ahmad regrets that it has often been used in order to denounce Jameson's Marxism, rather than to refine it.

Appadurai, Arjun, Lauren Berlant, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dilip Gaonkar, eds. Special Section: Controversies: Debating in Theory." *Public Culture* 6.1 (Fall 1993): 3–191.

Concluded with a reply by Ahmad, this collection of essays brings forth a series of mostly post-structuralist readings of Ahmad 1992, which address either Ahmad's critiques of Jameson, Said, and Rushdie or his more general Marxist critique of the Three Worlds Theory in general and the concept of Third World literature in particular.

Buchanan, Ian. "National Allegory Today: A Return to Jameson." In *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalization*. Edited by Caren Irr and Ian Buchanan, 173–188. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.

Replying to Ahmad 1987 (cited under Post–Cold War) as the paradigmatic critique of Jameson 1986 (under Post–Cold War), this is an attempt to rehabilitate Jameson's concept of Third World national allegories by stressing that these allegories are national, not nationalist; that they are allegories, not symbols; and that the Third World is the truth of the First World, not its opposite.

Buell, Frederick. *National Culture and the New Global System*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

This survey of the theoretical, cultural, and political shift from the Three Worlds Theory to post-nationalist notions of interconnectedness includes, in chapter 10, a comment on the Jameson-Ahmad debate. The book reiterates Ahmad's rebuttal of Jameson, but reframes his Marxist critique of abstractness as a post-Marxist critique of essentialism.

Lazarus, Neil. "Fredric Jameson on 'Third-World Literature': A Defence." In *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. By Neil Lazarus, 89–113. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Arguing that for Jameson the Third World is a politics rather than a place, this analysis of the Jameson-Ahmad debate claims that between Ahmad 1987 (cited under Post–Cold War) and Buell 1994, the critique of Jameson 1986 (cited under Post–Cold War) changed from a Marxist critique of Third-Worldism to a Third-Worldist critique of Marxism, a change that Ahmad (in Ahmad 1992) is said to be the first to regret.

McClure, John, and Aamir Mufti, eds. *Special Issue: Third World and Post-Colonial Issues*. *Social Text* 31–32 (1992).

This cluster of essays on the postcolonial condition includes two essays on the Jameson-Ahmad debate: Santiago Colás traces the paradox of Jameson's Third World (a world both commodified in and an alternative to late capitalism) back to the contradictions of capitalism; similarly, Madhava Prasad asks about the historical reasons for Third World nationalism.

Paik, Nak-chung. "Notions of the Third World and National Literatures in the Age of Globalization." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11.4 (2010): 488–495.

"World," whether defined normatively or descriptively, has been constructed as opposed to nation. Paik rejects the world-nation binary. Instead, he proposes Third World national literatures as comprising a shared platform that reveals and resists the hegemonic First World and SecondWorld views. His key term *minjok* (nation) is explained.

Postcolonialism

World literature overlaps with the literatures of empire in postcolonial studies, the common focus of which is on literatures that have emerged in response to a globalizing world and are anti-Eurocentric (Amin 1989). While some postcolonial critics appraise versions of world literature studies as neoliberal cosmopolitanism (Hitchcock 2009), others develop ideas of the world on the foundation of postcolonial theories (Said 2003, Mufti 2010, Cheah 2016, Mukherjee 2014). A particularly strong synthesis between postcolonial studies and world literature studies is world-systems literary theory, which examines the relations between a literary culture and its incorporation into the capitalist world-economy (Warwick Research Collective 2015).

Amin, Samir. *Eurocentrism: Modernity, Religion and Democracy*. Translated by Russell Moore and James Membrez. London: Monthly Review Press, 1989.

Amin develops a historical materialist concept of Eurocentrism, in which he argues that "Europe" is a culturalist construction that masquerades as a universality. Amin examines "European civilization" as an ideology that developed after 1492, during the epoch of modern colonialism.

Cheah, Pheng. *What is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Cheah takes a critical stance toward recent theories of world literature, especially in terms of their failure to address the "world," Cheah articulates a normative theory of literature's world-making power. His emphasis is on world as a temporal process, based on German idealism, Marxist materialism, phenomenology, and deconstruction.

Hitchcock, Peter. *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Hitchcock scrutinizes contemporary analyses of globalization and world literature studies and provides a critique of neoliberal cosmopolitanism. Through a series of discussions of Guyanese, Somali, Indonesian, and Algerian writers, he charts the postcolonial struggle to create transnational states that are free from colonial structures.

Mufti, Aamir R. "Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures." *Critical Inquiry* 36.3 (2010): 458–493.

Mufti sheds light on the question of Orientalism in the current revival of the concept of world literature. He argues that the introduction of literature from Asia and the Middle East to the West had important effects both in the West itself and in the cultures from which these literatures originated, exploring global cultural relations on a planetary scale.

Mukherjee, Ankhi. *What Is a Classic? Postcolonial Rewriting and Invention of the Canon*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Asking how classics emanate from postcolonial histories and societies, Mukherjee compares and contrasts the fields of postcolonial and world literature in relation to their contestations of literary value and the global politics of identifying and perpetuating so-called core texts.

Said, Edward. "Orientalism." *Counterpunch*, 5 August 2003.

Said's work on Orientalism has had an immeasurable impact on comparative literature as well as launching postcolonial studies proper. *Worldly* and *worldliness* are introduced as critical concepts here. This 2003 piece discusses Goethe's *Weltliteratur*, written as it was after the millennial reemergence of the world-literature debate.

Warwick Research Collective. *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015.

This study poses the "problem" of world literature by scrutinizing the literary implications of the theory of combined and uneven development. The collective diagnoses a single, but radically uneven, world-system and a world literature that registers this unevenness in both its form and content.

Transnationalism

While world literature scholars seek common ground beyond national boundaries, the nation remains a historical reality. Radicalizing postcolonial studies and its expansion of the national framework, transnational approaches address ongoing questions regarding nation, language, and culture and interrogate past terminologies of nationhood. Critical of global national hierarchies, the potential of transnationalism as a critical methodology for the study of literature is explored in Thomsen 2008, Ramazani 2009, and Jay 2010. The development, expansion, and form of transnational capitalist modernity are the foundational planes upon which literary circulation is analyzed in Kumar 2003 and English 2005.

English, James. *The Economy of Prestige*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

English looks to the economic dimensions of culture and the logic of exchange in the market for so-called cultural capital. Documenting the ascendency of the awards industry and its role in what he describes as an economy of cultural prestige, English embeds world literature in the specific workings of prizes.

Jay, Paul. *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010.

Centering world literature in the symbiotic relation between the globalized culture and economy, Jay sketches the relations between multiculturalism, postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, globalization, world-systems, and border studies. His textual examples are contemporary Anglophone fiction from Europe, Africa, and the Asian subcontinent.

Kumar, Amitava, ed. *World Bank Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Kumar and his contributors, from a diverse array of disciplines, bring together literary texts with international financial documents to probe globalization, political economy, and the social role of literary and cultural studies. The essays interrogate academic enterprises, publishing markets, and critical pedagogical engagements.

Ramazani, Jahan. *A Transnational Poetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Ramazani advocates the crucial role of poetry in the cultural exchanges that are produced from colonialism, migration, and globalization and makes a case for a hybridized canon. He argues for a reassessment of modern and contemporary poetry that defies national and cultural boundaries.

Thomsen, Mads Rosendahl. *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures.* London: Bloomsbury, 2008.

Thomsen develops the concept of *literary constellations* to trace patterns in world literature. His focus is on transnational canons, which he maps while providing a history of world literature studies and its underlying conditions of globalization. He bases his discussions broadly on the market and material dimensions of world literature.

Globalism

Literary studies that focus on globalism seek to assess literature as part of a whole, mapping the world in a cultural set of relations (Beecroft 2015, Annesley 2006, Hayot 2012, Leonard 2013). *Planetarity* is proposed as a philosophical and political alternative to *globality* (Ferguson 2008). One of the differences between postcolonial studies and world literature studies is the latter's focus on globalism and even planetarity rather than inter- or post-nationalism, which brings East Asia into the discussion. Shih 2004, Gu 2013, and Park 2015 propose a range of theoretical frameworks to incorporate the literatures from the only major region not to be directly colonized by a European state.

Annesley, James. *Fictions of Globalization: Consumption, the Market and the Contemporary Novel.* London: Continuum, 2006.

Annesley historicizes the relationship between commerce and literature and provides an interpretation that resists a prescriptive resolution. The thematization of the global market in contemporary fiction is seen as a sign of a productive exchange between global forces of commerce, offering unique ways of understanding contemporary social reality.

Beecroft, Alexander. *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day*. London: Verso, 2015.

Effortlessly traversing "literary ecologies" ancient and modern, Western and non-Western texts, small societies, and the world, this ambitious study explores the environments in which literary texts are produced and circulated. The science of ecology is offered as a methodological framework.

Ferguson, Frances. "Planetary Literary History: The Place of the Text." *New Literary History* 39.3 (2008): 657–684.

Ferguson discusses what it might mean to read literature globally, and introduces the idea of "planetary literary history" to repudiate inductive social scientific modes of reading. Instead, she advocates deductive close reading that is linked to distant knowledge but not subsumed by it.

Gu, Ming Dong. "Sinologism, the Western World View, and the Chinese Perspective." *CLCWeb* 15.2 (2013).

Gu examines how sinology as a field of knowledge has veered between Orientalist constructions and Western hegemonic motives. He is critical of the predominance of Western ideologies and a perspective that striates sinology, and focuses on the ways a variety of factors work to undermine and delegitimize "native," "Third World" knowledge.

Hayot, Eric. *On Literary Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Hayot revises the literary history of the last four hundred years from the perspective of "literary worldedness," proposing a new methodology and taxonomy for the study of national literatures. He advocates a more systematic method for classifying texts, rather than recommending a resistance to classifications and categorizations.

Leonard, Philip. *Literature after Globalization: Textuality, Technology and the Nation-State*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Leonard resists the idea of globalization as a collapse of national cultures and considers how national sovereignty has been reshaped in the face of technology's transnational effects. He argues that an inclusive globalization has been replaced by a sense of globalism, and charts recent literary and theoretical responses to this shift.

Park, Sowon S. "The Adaptive Comparative." *Comparative Critical Studies* 12.2 (2015): 183–196.

Park examines the organic botanical model of literature that proved powerful as a conceptual framework for literary histories. While it helped historians engage with the rise of nationalism in 19th-century Europe, she argues that discussions of world literature demand a more dynamic, behavioral, and migratory view of literary development—the "adaptive."

Shih, Shu-Mei. "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition." *PMLA* 119.1 (2004): 16–30.

Shih casts a critical eye on the West-centric "technologies" of recognition that define global literatures. She argues that such an "omnipotent definition," which misreads non-Western texts under the banner of global multiculturalism, fetishizes reified cultures as embodiments of difference.

Humanitarianism

Humanitarianism has developed into a universal discourse over the past six decades. Literary humanitarianism (Appiah 2003) attempts to rescue the universal in the face of global sociopolitical and economic conflicts, dealing with concrete issues related to social justice, environmentalism, censorship, and torture. The humanitarian critique seeks to distinguish itself from humanitarian imperialism by focusing on the limits of the discourse of social justice as well as on how literature pushes against them (Slaughter 2007, Palumbo-Liu 2012). The novel, in particular the European *bildungsroman*, occupies a central place in these discussions.

Appiah, K. Anthony. "Citizens of the World." In *Globalizing Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1999*. Edited by Matthew J. Gibney, 187–232. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Appiah, who has elsewhere written on cosmopolitanism, investigates the relationship between globalization and human rights and addresses the range of obligations that a truly cosmopolitan identity of global citizenship confers, creating space for thinking about global political discourse.

Palumbo-Liu, David. *The Deliverance of Others: Reading Literature in a Global Age*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

Palumbo-Liu proposes reading literature, especially literature from different cultural traditions, as an ethical act, a way of thinking through our relations to others. He examines notions of commensurability, communicability, and commonality between selves and others through the process of reading world literature.

Slaughter, Joseph R. *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.

Taking a critical view of the close alignment between human rights discourse and corporate culture, Slaughter examines the rapid diffusion of human rights discourse in today's global culture. He proposes that through the *bildungsroman*, the concept of rights has been incorporated into modern human subjectivity.

Translationalism

At the center of world literature is translation, which makes possible the reception of literature from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Until recently, translation was regarded as more or less a vehicle, and several modern definitions of world literature are based on a translational mode of circulation and of reading. Recent approaches to translation (Apter 2006, Apter 2013, and Walkowitz 2015) resist the idea of translation as a tool for circulating literature and treat it instead as part of the process of literary creation, restoring theories of translation to the center of world literature studies. Investigating changing attitudes to the relationship between the original and the translation, the impact of new translational technologies, and the politics of circulation, translationalism has revived earlier achievements of translation studies, such as the work on scriptworlds in Pollock 1996.

Apter, Emily. *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Apter examines the role of translation studies within comparative literature as a discipline. Instead of an insistence on philology, she emphasizes the impact of translation technologies on how translation is defined. She also provides a political analysis of translation technologies in a world that is ever more translated.

Apter, Emily. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability.* London: Verso, 2013.

Instead of market-driven notions of readability and universal appeal that govern notions of world literature, Apter proposes a plurality of "world literatures" oriented around discussion of literary world-systems, narrative ecosystems, language borders and checkpoints, and planetary devolution.

Pollock, Sheldon. "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, 300–1300 CE: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology." In *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language.* Edited by Jan E. M. Houben, 197–247. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1996.

Pollock challenges the ideological underpinnings of global modernism and offers the literary cosmopolis of Sanskrit as an earlier manifestation. The study describes how, for more than a millennium (300–1300 CE), Sanskrit was used across southern India and Southeast Asia, and goes on to explore this scriptworld.

Walkowitz, Rebecca L. *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Walkowitz theorizes on the "born-translated" novels; that is, contemporary novels that treat translation as a primary medium of writing rather than a secondary tool of reading. It situates contemporary literature in a new type of social and political solidarity, recasting literary history as a series of convergences and departures.

back to top

Copyright © 2017. All rights reserved.