

7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Summer School of the Institute for World Literature  
University of Copenhagen, 3– 26 July 2017

**Affinity Group Report:  
Politics, Poetics, and World Literature 3**

by Stella Lange, PhD

**Organisation and Main Topics of the Colloquium**

In our nine-person colloquium “Politics, Poetics, and World Literature”, we had four sessions and in each of those, we had up to three presentations. Each 20-minute presentation was followed by a 5-minute response of one of the participants and finished with a 15-minute group discussion. Three topics returned in our discussions: firstly, the (re)writing of history and the (re)writing of the canon; secondly, East/West configurations and, thirdly, the relation between concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘transnationalism’. More specifically, we also tackled questions concerning with the (re)production, destruction and repression of literary and linguistic forms, the questioning of collective subjects and collective representations, the function of individual history writing within memory studies as well as hybrid forms of narration linked to Visual Arts and Studies.

**The Presentation of the Research Projects**

**Miriam Strieder** (University of Innsbruck) started with her vivid presentation of *History and Stories: How to be a hero in early medieval England (and Europe)* providing us with a very colourful insight into the premodern worlds of *Cynewulf* and *Cynheard* as well as *The Battle of Maldon*. Miriam explained how both heroic texts described the ideal follower of each lord by the concept of loyalty in times of the Viking age on the British Isles. In her resume, she made clear that the benefits of loyalty could vary but the most valuable was the honour to become a hero, or rather, be featured in the heroic culture in the past.

**Belen Tortosa Pujante** (University of Santiago de Compostela) elaborated on *Ways of being in the contemporary theatre scene* showing us two different performances that put into question the communicative context in theatre and, especially, the function and expectations of the audience - both normally taken for granted. In her

exemplary cases, the spectator was or confronted with a complete absence of actors and action in a theatre hall (La Ribot/Juan Dominguez), or was by chance involved into a performance by transferring the stage into a public library (Hampton/Etchells). This way, Belen turned our attention to the socially determined “minimal actions” within these performances that, besides, function as a connecting link to rethink the community of spectators.

**Marú Pabon** (Yale University) gave us an insight into the multifaceted literary writings of Dev Virahsawmy with her talk titled *Regenerative Cyclones and Destructive Toufanns: “Rewriting” The Tempest into Morisyen*. As she underlined, in his drama “Toufann, A Mauritian Fantasy”, a rewriting of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, linguistic, political, environmental, and technological aspects overlap while arguing for an independent status of Morisyen language and literature. In Marú’s innovative postcolonial and ecocritical perspective on the text, the destruction of nature by typhoons just implied the creation of a new language and nature.

**Matilda Grogan** (Monash University) gave us a presentation about *Minor transnationalism in Australian literature: Roanna Gonsalves’ The Permanent Resident*. After having explained the development of Australia’s exclusionary literary canon (due to factors such as colonisation and the Immigration Restriction Act), she elaborated on how Indian-Australian writer Roanna Gonsalves can be seen as ‘in conversation’ with Sri Lankan-Australian Michelle de Kretser and Vietnamese-Australian author Nam Le. In Matilda’s interpretation, Gonsalves - in communication with de Kretser and Le, and through the framework of global communication features as the ‘selfie’ or ‘tweet’ - has found a form of literary self-representation within her minoritarian status by ‘writing back’ to de Kretser and Le, rather than opposing the dominant voices of the canon.

**Ryan Johnson** (University of Sydney) let us be immersed in the atmosphere of the cultural mediation between Western Europe and East Asia in the beginning of the 20th century with *Paul Claudel’s “Japanese” Poems: Expatriation, Collaboration, Identity*. After having explained the various connections between the French diplomat and poet Paul Claudel with the Japanese philosophers Watsuji Tetsuro and Kuki Shuzo, he showed how a poem of Claudel’s “Cent Phrases pour Éventails” became an example of a “two-way flow of ideas” between both cultures. Tackling one of Claudel’s reimagined “haikus” with its corresponding sketch by the Japanese artist Arishima Ikuma, Ryan underlined how poetic sounds and visual effects as well as

typical Eastern and Western genres of poem come together to build a translating bridge.

**Sanja Ivanov** (University of Toronto) gave a presentation with the title “*In the Beginning was the List*”. *Time Capsules, Objects, and Nostalgia in The Physics of Sorrow*, a novel by the Bulgarian writer Georgi Gospodinov. Contextualising the present-day difficulties to speak about individual experiences during communism, she highlighted the importance of material objects for accessing and representing the past in literary works and museum exhibitions. Her discussion of Gospodinov’s novel focused on the ways material objects from the everyday during communism appear in the novel, elaborating on the significance of the fragment and the recurring form of the list for the literary representation of personal memory. She then discussed the trope of time capsules that the novel repeatedly uses, arguing that the insistence on containing and on closing off of the material remnants of the past is a manifestation of the eagerness to avoid nostalgia.

**Joy Katzmarzik** (University of Mainz) gave us an insight in her research about *The Art of the American Newspaper Comic Strips*. After an introduction to the history of the newspaper comic and the evolution throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, she introduced us to Bill Watterson and his comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes* (published 1985-1995). As Joy – herself a comic artist – pinpointed, the comics play with the concept of ‘subjective truth’ in various ways; e.g., graphically by the use of panels, by the interaction of text and image, or even by the technique of sketching out the characters. It was hard to make us not laugh about the comic’s inherent jokes while giving us a very detailed insight into comic strips as an art form.

**Stella Lange** (University of Innsbruck) gave a presentation on *The Concept of European Literature since 1989 and the Question of Relating Different National Literatures*. After having expounded the problems with still current but already obsolete concepts of European identity and literary history writing by the critical approaches of Lützeler and Segebrecht, she gave an insight into her text corpus of narrative and drama texts dealing with the manifold aspects of ‘Europe’. Being confronted with the problem of finding a ‘common ground’ in order to relate the diverse texts, she initially decided for mapping the corpus by highlighting the different ways of ego histories that met with a (re)writing of European history.

**Yamen Rahwan** (Bilgi University) finally gave a talk titled *Fredric Jameson’s national allegory: a dialectical perspective on world literature*. After giving an

introduction into the main discussed theories of world literature as a system (Casanova and Moretti), he presented the main ideas of Jameson who in 1984 and 1986 had already argued for a world literature as a system and method approach reading “third-world texts” as allegorical or rather as “national allegories”. Allegorical reading, in his perspective on Jameson, already implied a form of reading and interpreting “Otherness that is still to come” and was by no means reduced to a strict national interpretation. In Yamen’s view, Jameson’s approach was progressive for his time, as he had taken into account even antinomies.

### **Our Experience with the Colloquium**

The colloquium had broaden our horizons as we had won a lot of new insights into the various “worlds of research” of all the participants. We had “translated” our research interests to our fellows by introducing them into the various disciplines’ backgrounds and contexts. Sometimes, we registered also some limits of talking about the literatures of the world as certain problems needed more time and details. Anyway, the colloquium meant a challenge for us because due to a restricted time span we dived into a new research project and got used to its special theoretical, cultural, and historical contexts in only 20 minutes in order to comment on it. Moreover, the colloquium helped us to network with young researchers from all over the world in order to exchange ideas also in future and, especially, we made new friends. Overall, this experience was very rewarding for us.

