

Colloquium Group “Politics, Poetics, and World Literature 3”

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The colloquium group “Politics, Poetics, and World Literature 3” brought together fifteen scholars from around the world, focusing on a diverse range of topics from exile and migration to ecology and disability. Over four weeks there were discussions on literary journals as transnational platforms, lists as literary devices, ideologies of tourism narratives, and modernist utopias, as well as many others.

In the first week two themes that are broadly related to borders and boundaries stood out in the presentations: the interactions among locality, globality, and liminality and the potentials of thinking about narrativity and beyond. **Cristina Fernandez Morales** presented her paper titled “**The Spaces of Comparative Literature: Geopolitical Distribution in a Multiple World,**” in which she explored the potential of borders as points of contact, conflict, and contiguity. She pointed to the refugee camps as spaces where margins “exist in a constant and permeable contact” and “the conventional distinctions are blurred.” **Kim Youngmin** discussed the dialogue between modernists such as T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats and traditional Japanese forms such as the *Noh* theatre in his “**Foreign Form and Local Materials in World Literature.**” He endorsed Franco Moretti’s assertion of “a structural compromise between foreign form and local materials” in world literature through examples of silence and masking as ways of crossing representational boundaries and maintaining meaning worlds. **Bernardo Ferreira** provided an alternative way of thinking about literary scholarship beyond narratives by examining lists and their uses in texts. In his “**Man and World as List,**” he proposed a methodology of “comparison without hegemony” and promoted the relational potential of lists in literature. The final paper of the first week was **Alexandra Irimia’s “Unwritten Books and Unpainted Canvases: The Politics and Poetics of Empty Signifiers,”** in which she asked the semiotic question of whether an empty signifier can still be a part of the signification system. She presented the Bartleby-esque significance of the “complete refusal of writing” as “the ultimate literary gesture.”

The discussions in the second week revolved around nations, identities, and politics of world literature. In her presentation, **Challenging Work: Spirits of Capitalism in U.S.-American Literature from the New Deal to Neoliberalism,** **Elizabeth Kovach** discussed the changing paradigm of the conception of labour and its values within American literary and cultural sphere. While she highlighted the associated literary challenges to dominant norms, she also promoted “the work of writing” as a form of labour. Her presentation was followed by that of **Ernest de Clerck** on the place of journals and magazines in transnational literary scenes. Ernest presented his notes on the effects of letters, book reviews, and real and fake translations on the relationship between national identities and the perception of the foreign under the title “**National Identity, an “assemblage of antitheses”: Foreign presences in British Late-Romantic Literary Magazines.**” **Benedetto Passaretti** focused on Christina Stead, an often overlooked Australian expatriate writer within the Anglo-modernist literary sphere. In his “**I Am Poor Yorick?: Farce and Left-Wing Melancholy in Christina Stead’s *I’m Dying Laughing: The Humourist,*” he explored various aspects of Stead’s writing, such as her use of humour and**

intertextual references and promoted the political potential of her writing. **Ariel Horowitz** was the final presenter of the week with his paper on “**Tourism, Colonialism and History in Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*.**” He talked about the relationship between colonialism and tourism and capitalism and neo-liberalism along the lines of the identity formation of the Bahamans in relation to the Western tourist. His discussions on “buying an experience” questioned how far we are actually able to challenge and transform predominant ideological constructs.

Contemporary issues concerning humanity and the humanities stood out in the presentations of the third week. **Jemma Deer** talked about animism, anthropocene, and the end of “the age of man” in her presentation titled, “**Within or Without Walls: Anthropocene in/securities and Kafka’s ‘Burrow’.**” She argued that “data” does not trigger a strong enough reaction when it comes to serious environmental issues and that narratives make it easier to engage with the possibility (and reality) of species extinction, including that of the human beings. **Emily Szpiro** similarly discussed ecology as being a significant part of the relationship between narratives and humanity, represented particularly through “transcorporeality.” In her presentation, “**Ecological Artistry in H.D.’s Madrigal Cycle,**” she talked about Hilda Doolittle’s modernism along the lines of ecological artistry. **Andries Hiskes** presented close analyses of the film *The Elephant Man* along the lines of disability and performativity in his “**Games of make-believe: performativity and the aesthetics of appearances in *The Elephant Man*.**” He argued how the gaze upon the deformed body is not only a spectacle of/at the periphery (i.e. the freak-show) but also is similarly so of/at central institutions such as the medical, educational, and scientific enterprises. **Megan Smith** presented her paper on “**Science Fiction at the Border,**” in which she linked the walls and their ideological frameworks in utopian/dystopian fiction to contemporary issues of borders. She explored the technological futurity of glass and steel constructs in Soviet science fiction alongside ecological and ideological imperatives of today.

The final week of the colloquium had three speakers all of whom talked about world literature along the lines of border crossings and mobility. **Burcu Alkan** presented her preliminary analyses of *My Exiled Soul* by the Ottoman-Armenian writer Zabel Yesayan along the lines of the representations of the exilic mode. In her paper, “**Profound Complexities of Exile,**” she argued that Yesayan portrays a complex and multi-layered conceptualisation of exile that reaches beyond its practical and political consequences. Her presentation was followed by that of **Claire Baytaş** who examined the interrelations between Islam and French Republicanism in the film *Les hommes libres*. In her presentation, titled “**Embodied” Islam and French Republicanism in Ismaël Ferroukhi’s *Les hommes libres*,**” Claire employed Naomi Davidson’s theorisation of “embodied Islam” to understand how Islam is perceived in France in the early 1940s as a racialised identity. The final paper of the colloquium was **Jonathan Foster’s “Border Control and State Administration in H. G. Wells’ *A Modern Utopia*, Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* and Hari Kunzru’s *Transmission*,**” which discussed how Wells, Rushdie, and Kunzru depicted worlds without borders and with largely migratory populations. Jonathan argued that these writers envisioned utopias of globalisation and futures that were emancipated from locality.