

**2023 IWL, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA**  
**‘World Literature and Translation 2,’ Colloquium 12**

**Colloquium leader:** Caterina Domeneghini (DPhil candidate, University of Oxford)

The colloquium ‘World Literature and Translation 2’ consisted of four different sessions devoted to various topics at the intersection of translation studies and world literature. The presentations were followed by a response from another participant and touched upon the literary and cultural traditions of a wide range of countries, including Iran, France, China, Belgium, Israel, Cuba, Australia, the US, and India, among others.

The first panel, *Reading, translation, adaptation*, centered around the meanings and functions of ‘translation’ in a loose sense, its relationship with time and with readers of different ages/social and geographical backgrounds, and the future of translation studies. Two presentations focused on the work of Marcel Proust in different historical traditions. In the first paper, **Xena Amro** (Northwestern University) uncovered the neglected translators and readers of Proust in the Arab world (where *À la recherche du temps perdu* remained untranslated until 1977), persuasively arguing that Proust’s role as a comparatist also trains the reader to read comparatively, i.e., across multiple languages. In ‘Marcel Proust and Translation: New perspectives,’ conversely, **Valèria Gaillard Francesch** (University of Barcelona) surveyed Proust’s role as a translator of John Ruskin, as well as metaphors of translation in *À la recherche* and the influence of Walter Pater on Proust’s ‘traductology.’ Finally, **Martina Mattei** (UC Santa Barbara) looked at the cartoon adaptation of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for the BBC series *The Animated Tales from Shakespeare* in the 1990s, raising questions about intermedial cultural transmission, bowdlerization, and the ‘digestibility’ of certain Western canonical authors for children.

The second panel, *Authenticity and the ‘other’: Cross cultural encounters*, prompted an interesting discussion on the applicability of ‘domesticating’ approaches to translation for the purpose of promoting cross-cultural understanding, especially when such exchanges occur not only between different countries but also *within* a single one. **Yishan Jiang** (University College London) compared American author Pearl Buck’s trilogy *The Good Earth* (1931) and Chinese writer Lin Yutang’s trilogy *Moment in Peking* (1939) in her presentation, ‘The “Authentic” Discourse of China, Domestication, and Foreignization,’ providing two contrasting portraits of China in English for Western

readers in the 1930s. This was followed by ‘Crossing (and connecting?) the poeto-political border,’ a paper in which **Timothy Sirjacobs** (KU Leuven) described the political, linguistic, and literary situation of trilingual Belgium at the time of its federalization (1970-2020), when a project of ‘culture planning’ was implemented by issuing bilingual serial editions of translated poetry (Dutch and French). In the third presentation, ‘Viva La Revolution,’ **Vallaire Wallace** (University of Virginia) explored the relations between Afro Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen and African American poet Langston Hughes during the Cuban Revolution, from 1959 until 1961, posing emphasis on material correspondence and the archive as an increasingly important transactional site for world literature and Black internationalist exchange.

The third panel, ‘*Peripheries*’ and ‘*centers*,’ offered a variety of responses to Pascale Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters* and other sociological models of world literature. **Caterina Domeneghini** (University of Oxford) talked about cheap ‘classic’ editions from the twentieth-century London-based series ‘Everyman’s Library’ and their distribution across the colonies (India) and dominions (Australia) of the British Empire, presenting world literature less as the ‘battlefield’ model which Casanova has so influentially described and more as a form of cross-cultural collaboration between British and vernacular literary/publishing institutions and agents. In ‘Women In and Out of Translation,’ **Zahra Meshkani** (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign) explored the liminal space that select female writers managed to carve out for themselves in post-revolution Iran, deploying literature and most importantly *translation* as a ‘weapon,’ in Casanova’s sense, to enter a ‘world’ canon and leave marginality behind. Finally, **Ohad Zeltzer Zubida** (Princeton University) adopted a theoretical perspective grounded in cultural sociology to examine the relationship between translation and nationalism in Israel over the past sixty years, noting the substantial changes that translation discourses in Israeli book-reviewing underwent during this period and pinning down ‘loyalty’ (to the text *and* the country) as the main criterion for evaluating literary translations into Hebrew.

The fourth and last panel, *Translation and its discontents*, featured two presentations that dealt with the complex issue of translating from and into Hebrew—a language with a history of impermeability to foreign contacts. In ‘Sloppy Amateurism or a Norm Governed Activity?’, **Martijn Jaspers** (KU Leuven) argued against views that conceive of Saint Jerome’s Latin translation of the Book of Psalms as the product of an amateur with little familiarity with the source language, showing instead how his translation

followed a specific ideological and theological agenda. In the last presentation, **Ido Nitzan** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) examined contacts between the Hebrew and Arabic languages in Muslim Spain during the tenth century, uncovering what he called a ‘literary dissonance,’ or a tension between diverging impulses (segregation vs. assimilation, anti-translation vs. translation culture); the resulting picture exposed a minority culture, Judaism, which draws on the Arabic poetic tradition with admiration whilst striving to preserve the ‘uniqueness’ and ‘sacredness’ of the mother tongue.

Overall, the colloquium contributed to foster a spirit of generous cross-cultural cooperation with the occasional intellectual challenges and points of criticism, eliciting productive conversations that continued even outside the classroom. The feedback provided by the participants and respondents was perceptive, the papers varied and beautifully rich, and the issues raised by the enthusiastic questions and comments throughout the four sessions had much to do with the urgency to recenter translation as an indispensable practice within world literature studies and recalibrate a still dominant Anglo-American tradition. The colloquium leader looks forward to seeing how all these exciting research projects will develop and hopes to meet again with the participants for future collaborations on the international academic scene.