



THEORIES ET PRATIQUES COMPARATISTES/ THEORY AND PRACTICE IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

COMPARING QUEERLY/QUEERING COMPARISON: TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE STUDIES

These seminars are sponsored by the Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

The Comparative Gender Studies Committee at ICLA has been in existence for 10 years, and at the 2013 conference in Paris, we seek seminar papers that bring innovative approaches to gender and sexuality that potentially transform the contours of comparative study. We are open to a wide range of topics and approaches, but we especially solicit papers that relate specifically to the announced conference themes around translation as a critical approach, 'new theories,' and 'nations and beyond' in comparing genders and/or sexualities. We also seek papers that address underrepresented areas of comparative inquiry and put pressure on traditional gender and sexual binaries—these could include, but are not limited to, the following areas: i) comparisons of early modern genders/sexualities, especially comparisons focusing on East/West encounters or comparisons outside of Occidental literary/cultural traditions; ii) comparative analyses of new conjunctions across disciplines, such as new intersections between postcolonial and queer inquiry, new analyses of feminist-queer interactions, or comparative analyses of how gender influences rhetorical practices and/or how rhetorical practices produce gender in particular periods and/or across cultures; iii) transgender as a site of comparison; iv) queering translation and theorising sites of untranslatability at the spaces where languages touch; v) explorations of the ways in which various forms of gender and sexual dissidence encounter one another, intersect, and merge in a transnational and diasporic world, while simultaneously transforming geopolitical, identity, or disciplinary borders. More broadly, how does comparing queerly, or queering comparison, challenge the normativities of the discipline and create new sites of knowledge production in comparative literary and cultural study? Papers are welcome in English or in French, and the comparative aspect of the proposed paper should be made explicit in the abstract.

CRITIQUE ET MALENTENDU

L'objectif de notre groupe de travail, organisé sous forme de séminaire, est de renouveler l'approche de la critique par le biais du comparatisme, à travers le phénomène du malentendu. Les enjeux de ce travail de réflexion nous semblent à la fois d'ordre historiographique et de nature théorique.

- L'histoire littéraire regorge de ces "malentendus" engendrés par tout type de médiation, de réception et de caractérisation des oeuvres circulant d'un contexte culturel, d'un genre et mode d'expression et/ou d'une époque à l'autre. La théorie des transferts culturels a entre autres déjà partiellement expliqué comment naissent ainsi de telles "asymétries" à travers les processus de sélection et de médiation, menant in fine à des phénomènes d'adaptation culturelle et de production réceptive. Pour en rester au seul sous-domaine des études franco-allemandes, pensons aux exemples bien connus de l'adaptation des contes de Perrault par les frères Grimm, ou plus tard de la relecture sélective des Romantiques allemands par Albert Béguin, favorisant à la lumière du présent une filiation entre romantisme et surréalisme. Notre groupe est donc ouvert à toute nouvelle étude de cas qui débouchera sur une réflexion relative à la notion spécifique du "malentendu" dans le cadre de toute pratique de traduction, de (re)lecture ou de réécriture.

- Contrairement au conflit d'interprétation, le malentendu – parfois appelé "productif" dans ce contexte – fait croire à une entente initiale ou du moins à une généralité admise. Tant qu'il demeure inaperçu, il occasionne des dialogues de sourds, des incompréhensions d'une tradition culturelle à l'autre ou plus simplement des regards croisés d'une critique à l'autre. Il faut alors un regard comparatiste pour remettre en question cette fausse généralité ou, plus concrètement, démontrer le malentendu et ses corollaires herméneutiques au sein d'une tradition critique. Ce faisant, le comparatisme n'est donc plus une simple approche critique parmi tant d'autres, il interroge le cloisonnement critique et théorique d'une tradition littéraire et permet de décrire la naissance et le fonctionnement d'un discours critique à une époque donnée, fût-il inscrit dans l'oeuvre elle-même ou plus généralement dans une culture.

En fonction du nombre de déclarations d'intention individuelles, nous souhaiterions organiser un séminaire de 2 à 4 séances de travail.



RACONTER LA THÉORIE DANS LE ROMAN

Raconter la théorie. Dimensions thématiques, structurelles et métaréflexives de la théorie littéraire narrée dans le roman.

Institution partenaire organisant le séminaire: Université de la Sarre

Les théories de la Littérature Comparée se comprennent presque toujours comme des démarches critiques : la comparaison en soi peut déjà être considérée comme une activité critique. Viennent ensuite les approches théoriques telles que le poststructuralisme, la théorie du gender, la traductologie, l'intertextualité, la psychanalyse, le postcolonialisme ou l'interculturalité qui portent également un regard critique, soit sur l'oeuvre littéraire, soit sur la réalité dans ou derrière le texte. Enfin, la littérature en tant que telle peut comporter une dimension subversive que la critique littéraire cherche à révéler. Ce potentiel critique semble se multiplier dans les cas où la théorie est fictionalisée dans le roman. Notre groupe de travail se propose d'examiner et de comparer de tels romans dans lesquels la théorie devient l'objet de la narration. Au centre de notre intérêt se trouvent donc des textes qui ne présentent pas la théorie scientifiquement, mais en tant que récit littéraire.

Les questions qui guideront nos débats seront les suivantes:

- 1) A quel niveau du roman la théorie se manifeste-t-elle? (Thème de l'action, motif, forme et structure textuelle, dimension autoréférentielle ou métaréflexive, discours du personnage, objet de réflexion philosophique ou commentaire ironique du narrateur, le théoricien comme personnage fictif, ...)
- 2) Quelle fonction occupe la théorie fictionalisée dans le roman ? (Illustration, confirmation, remise en question, réflexion, mise en pratique, expérience ludique ou esthétique, ...)
- 3) Peut-on procéder à une typologie et une systématisation du phénomène en littérature (p. ex. genre littéraire, époque, région culturelle/nation, ...) ? Et quels sont les procédés méthodologiques qui permettent d'analyser cette dimension théorique de la narration (sujet ponctuel ou central, explicite ou implicite, formes de la médiation, niveau d'énonciation, ...) ?
- 4) Et enfin: Existe-t-il des romans narrants des théories littéraires ou culturelles qui se révéleraient être particulièrement importantes ou fructueuses pour la Littérature Comparée?

Seront bienvenues des propositions qui prennent comme objet d'étude des romans et/ou d'autres textes narratifs – peu importe l'époque, la nationalité ou l'aire culturelle –, dans lesquels la théorie (littéraire ou culturelle) se fait narration. Il ne s'agit donc pas simplement de lire un roman dans une perspective théorique (à cet égard chaque roman se prêterait plus ou moins bien au jeu de la théorie), mais de trouver des textes narratifs dans lesquels la théorie est elle-même le sujet de la narration. Veuillez nous indiquer brièvement de quelle théorie il s'agit et dans quelle mesure celle-ci constitue une dimension essentielle du texte. Quelques exemples : Philip Roth, "The Human Stain" (mythocritique, théorie postcoloniale), Patricia Duncker, "Hallucinating Foucault" (analyse du discours, gender), Gilbert Adair, "The Dead of the Author" (déconstruction, théorie du sujet, biographisme) et pour donner un exemple plus classique : André Gide, "Les Faux-Monnayeurs" (théorie du genre, théorie de la fiction). Il est également possible de choisir un problème théorique particulier et d'examiner de quelle façon il est traité dans des textes différents.

Narrated Theory.

Thematic, structural and meta-reflexive dimensions of fictionalized literary theory in narrative texts

Partner institution for the seminar: Saarland University

Current literary theories are usually perceived as critical approaches. The mode of comparing, inevitably inherent in the field of Comparative Literature, already seems to promote a critical perspective in and of itself. Additionally, literature bears a critical potential which literary criticism ultimately strives to reveal. Finally, different theoretical approaches, such as post-structuralism, gender studies, translation studies, intertextuality, psychoanalytic criticism, post-colonialism, or intercultural studies equally apply a critical perspective to the piece of literature, as well as on reality within or beyond it. This critical dimension now must double if narrative texts fictionalize these theoretical approaches. Starting from this premise, our group section aims to examine and to compare novels in which theoretical concepts become objects of the narrative. We want to focus on texts which do not present theories in a scholarly manner, but which narrate them in, or as, literature. Questions that will guide us in our debate are the following:

- 1) On which level of the novel does the theory manifest itself? (as theme or motif; in the structure of the text; adding a self-referential or meta-reflexive dimension; through the characters' speech for example as an object of their philosophical reflections or as a narrator's ironic comment; a theorist appears as a fictional character in the novel; etc.)



2) What is the function of the fictionalized theory in the novel? (Serves as an illustration or confirmation; questions the theory or shows how it can be put into practice; as a critical reflection; as an experimental and esthetic game; etc.)

3) How can we develop a typology or a system for this literary phenomenon (f. ex., according to literary genres, periods, or cultural and national background)? And which methodological principles can help us to examine this theoretical dimension of the narrative? (Does it occur as an minor or a central topic in the text? Is it addressed in an explicit or an implicit way? What are the forms of its mediation and the levels of its enunciation?)

4) And last but not least: Are there novels that narrate literary or cultural theories which prove to be especially important to or prolific in the field of Comparative Literature?

If you would like to participate in this group section, we invite you to send us an abstract. Please explain which novels or narrative texts you wish to discuss or compare. Your selection need not be limited to either the period or the national and cultural background of your text. Our goal is not to read a text according to a specific theory (certainly every text could be read with the help of any theory) but rather we want to discuss texts in which theory itself is the object of the narrative. Therefore, we ask you to briefly indicate which literary or cultural theory is addressed in the novel, and how this fictionalized theory proves to be of importance to the text. Some examples include: Philip Roth's "The Human Stain" (myth criticism, postcolonial theory), Patricia Duncker's "Hallucinating Foucault" (discourse analysis, gender studies), Gilbert Adair's "The Death of the Author" (deconstruction, subjectivity theory). A more traditional example is André Gide's "Les Faux-Monnayeurs" (theory of fiction, genre theory). It is also possible to choose one particular theoretical problem and to show how it is addressed in several different novels.

WHY COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

The loose boundaries of comparative literature have continuously raised questions about the scholarly value and practical use of the field. This seminar proposes to explore the significance of comparative literature as academic discipline where the worth of global literatures in the field of humanities is persistently challenged by the pragmatic orientation of public opinion. In these conditions, Comparative Literature finds itself on the defense concerning its applicability for a new generation of students and scholars, who do not see an immediate use for literary studies. How can we justify the necessity for Comparative Literature for the 21st century university student and administration? What can Comparative Literature Departments and Programs offer to academia? How can we justify the need for scholars with graduate degrees in Comparative Literature who have often found themselves in the margins of employment because of their assumed eclecticism or amateurism? Can the field of Comparative Literature serve as a space within academia that perpetually confronts not only national boundaries between literatures and cultures, but also the neatly defined boundaries between academic disciplines and fields? Can we think of Comparative Literature as a constant rethinking of the value and structure of higher education?

THE COLONIAL LEGACIES OF CRITICAL METHOD

We propose a seminar comprising three meetings that will discuss the history of method in comparative literature and those disciplines that have most profoundly influenced it: philosophy, history, anthropology, and religion. The premise of our seminar is that contemporary approaches in the humanities and the social sciences are the unacknowledged products of colonial history. Our papers will provide colonial genealogies of basic principles that now guide critical method. Our intention is not only call those principles into question but also to open our respective disciplines to alternative forms of experience, thought, and knowledge—and indeed perhaps to radically different ways of organizing our world. Michel Foucault described the production of knowledge as an event in which institutions authorize themselves by aligning their discourses with scientific objectivity. This event is a site of struggle in which other discourses lose the truth-value they previously possessed and suddenly become 'irrational.' If such events constitute the history of Western knowledge, they must take their most dramatic form in the colonies, where the discrepancy between institutional knowledge and apparently irrational social practices was much starker than in Europe. We must keep in mind, furthermore, that academic disciplines would not have acquired the global reach they now enjoy, if each of them had not successfully conquered the diverse epistemic spaces they confronted in the non-European world and subjugated what had counted as valid speech there. We need, therefore, to see scholarly method as the living legacy of this now barely remembered conflict. Precisely to the extent that our scholarly method is such a legacy, it makes each of us tacitly complicit with the history of colonialism and its cognate forms today. In response, we advocate both critical genealogies of our discipline and what Foucault referred to as 'the insurrection of subjugated knowledges.' We would suggest



that the transformation of indigenous consciousness that occurred at the advent of colonial rule and which still guides literary theory revolves around four different, though interrelated, axes:

1. Language. Critical method thinks in terms of the sign or the correspondence between word and thing. It occludes all those approaches that believed language to be inseparable from the material word and from the very being or ontology of those who speak and hear it.
2. Temporality. Critical method oscillates between diachronic and synchronic analysis, the shift that occurred, for example, from philology to structuralism. In either case, though, our analytic framework will misrepresent a consciousness that considers the ‘past’ a living force within the present.
3. Aesthetics and Truth. We evaluate art from the perspective of the spectator, in terms of ‘taste’ and ‘judgment,’ and we evaluate truth in terms of its relationship to an objective reality. In either case, a concept of art as fundamentally productive—that is, as the practice by which something is brought from non-existence into being—is no longer available to us.
4. The sacred. Academic knowledge presupposes a divide between mythic or religious consciousness on one hand and scientific or secular consciousness on the other. From this perspective, belief in transcendent divinity forecloses epistemological access to ‘reality.’ But where do we place a consciousness that imagines the sacred to pervade the natural world and hence that is simultaneously and indivisibly both ‘religious’ and ‘secular’?

CONCEPTS AND COMPARATIVE CRITICISM

This session investigates the functions and significance of concepts in comparative literature. Not defined by a single object or consistent methodology, the discipline is characterised by its focus on the analysis of similarities and differences across national, disciplinary and other borders. This emphasis explains the historical centrality of translation to comparative literature, but it also makes comparative literature a privileged site for investigating the role of concepts in critical activity – a potential that has not been fully developed, despite the influential tradition of concept-based studies of e.g. Erich Auerbach, Ernst Robert Curtius and René Wellek. The present section aims to illustrate the usefulness of conceptual analysis to comparative literature by focusing on two central issues: the historical formation of concepts in particular contexts and the adaptation and translation of concepts across different borders. The session calls for a reconsideration of the tradition of conceptual analysis in comparative literature in the light of the recent developments in conceptual analysis. In the mid-1900 classics of the discipline, such as Wellek’s *Concepts of Criticism* which is one of the interlocutors of our session, the emergence and history of concepts was presented as a linear process leading to the crystallisation of the essence of a phenomenon or idea. Differing national variants of concepts were taken into account, but they were rather regarded as aberrations from the main narrative of conceptualisation which was taken to be universally applicable. Such essentialist accounts of concepts are still common as almost any dictionary of critical terms will attest, although in the recent decades much attention has been devoted to rethinking the nature of concepts in the humanities and social sciences. Conceptual history has shown how concepts acquire their meanings from the historical contexts of use; the notion of “travelling concepts” in cultural studies has drawn attention to the flexibility and mobility of concepts; and increased interdisciplinary has demonstrated the power of concepts in interaction between disciplines. It is perhaps surprising that these perspectives have not been more thoroughly endorsed by comparative literature – a discipline that is ideally equipped for the historical and comparative analysis of linguistic usage, shifting meanings, metaphorisation and translation. The present session will critically investigate the significance of the tradition of conceptual analysis in comparative literature from the perspective of conceptual history, investigate the applicability of different modes of conceptual analysis to critical discourse and offer new comparative perspectives to individual critical concepts such as ‘metafiction’. Moreover, the session will analyse the forms and functions of conceptual transfers between different media and academic disciplines. It investigates the dynamics of intermedial concepts and looks at the processes of translation and adaptation involved in the adaptation of concepts across disciplinary borders. It pays special attention to the legitimising function of concepts in transdisciplinary relations, especially in the complex entanglements of literary studies and the sciences in the latter half of the 20th century. The session thus emphasises concepts as sites of interaction between disciplines, cultures, ideas and individuals. Concepts are not neutral tools, but socio-culturally shaped, historical and ideological constructions that function as transmitters of knowledge and values. By analysing their nature and uses we can gain valuable insights into our changing critical practices.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN EUROPE: STATE OF THE ART



The session organized under the auspices of the European Network for Comparative Literature Studies (Réseau Européen d'Etudes Littéraires Comparées) addresses the issue of a disciplinary status and scope of Comparative Literature in Europe from different historical and theoretical perspectives. Along with inherent capacity for self-revision and self-reflection, Comparative Literature comprises a considerable deal of disciplinary insecurity due to the lack of a stable disciplinary framework. The birth of Comparative Literature coincides with the rise of nationalism and nation-building in the 19th century Europe, which has had its impact on disciplinary preferences. However, Comparative Literature develops also a strong transnational dimension by articulating heterogeneity and difference, fostering transmission and exchange between cultures, relating and attuning itself to the (disciplinary, cultural or linguistic) Other and, finally, by adopting a range of cross-cultural systemic approaches. The session aims at defining the status of Comparative Literature by answering the following questions: Is the open-endedness of the disciplinary project an advantage or a deficiency? What are the challenges that Comparative Literature currently encounters? Is Comparative Literature able to embrace the multiplicity of new theoretical approaches (post-colonial criticism, gender studies, media studies, digital humanities, medical humanities, cognitive literary studies, ecocriticism etc.) and integrate them in a coherent disciplinary framework? What is the relation of these approaches to Comparative Literature as a discipline? Or is Comparative Literature, rather, interdisciplinary by nature and operates in the interstices of other disciplines and paradigms by providing methodological support and establishing interdisciplinary links? The session aims at promoting a dialogue between various (inter)disciplinary traditions and defining the state of the comparatist art in Europe. It includes both English and French seminars.

LA LITTÉRATURE A L'OEUVRE OU : COMMENT LA LITTÉRATURE COMPAREE PERMET-ELLE DE REPERER, DECRIRE ET ANALYSER LA MANIERE DONT LA LITTÉRATURE PEUT SOURDRE DANS D'AUTRES DISCIPLINES.

L'université Paris 13-Sorbonne Paris Cité, partenaire de l'université Paris 4 dans l'organisation du XXème congrès de l'AILC, propose de prendre plus particulièrement en charge, dans la problématique générale du "comparatisme comme approche critique" la question suivante : en quoi l'approche comparatiste permet-elle de manière privilégiée de reconnaître et d'analyser la place et le rôle de la littérature dans des lieux et des domaines où elle n'apparaît pas a priori de manière évidente : dans les sciences, les sciences humaines, les autres formes d'art, etc. Nous traiterions cette problématique en cinq sessions de séminaires qui se répartiraient de la façon suivante, dans un ordre qui reste à discuter avec le comité scientifique du congrès :

Séminaire 1. Dans quels domaines, quelles disciplines et sous quelles formes ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui "littérature" se trouve-t-il dans l'Antiquité et au XVIIIème siècle ?

Séminaire 2. Comment situer épistémologiquement la littérature dans les études comparatistes internationales et dans celles qui portent sur une vaste diachronie ?

Séminaire 3. Quelles définitions, quels corpus, quels usages de la littérature trouve-t-on dans d'autres disciplines (philosophie, psychanalyse, Histoire, mathématiques, astronomie, médecine, écologie ...)?

Séminaire 4. La littérature de jeunesse, par sa nature propre, impose-t-elle une (re)définition de la littérature et des outils critiques pour l'interpréter ?

Séminaire 5. Quelles sont la nature et la place de la littérature dans le théâtre et le cinéma. Plus précisément, qu'y-a-t-il de littéraire dans le théâtre ? La littérature est-elle d'emblée présente dans certains films comme le suggère le cinématisme ?

Des discussions avec le Campus Condorcet sont en cours pour la signature éventuelle d'un contrat de collaboration à l'occasion de ce congrès.

ENJEUX METHODOLOGIQUES ET CHAMPS D'APPLICATION D'UNE COMPARAISON DIFFERENTIELLE

Université partenaire organisatrice: Université de Lausanne (Centre de Recherche en Langues et Littératures Européennes Comparées -- CLE)

Ce séminaire est consacré à la réflexion sur la comparaison comme méthode et outil heuristique. Il examinera les enjeux épistémologiques et méthodologiques d'une comparaison qui s'attache à "différencier" les phénomènes littéraires et culturels au lieu de les "universaliser". Il est certes plus commode d'aller du particulier au général, mais du point de vue heuristique, parce qu'elle est un principe de leur genèse et de leur histoire, la différenciation paraît plus adaptée à l'étude des langues, des littératures et des cultures. Une telle "comparaison différentielle"



peut se fonder sur l'idée de "diversalité", concept élaboré par les écrivains des Caraïbes et qui s'oppose à l'universalité dont il dénonce la prétention. À la différence d'une approche généraliste traitant de "la" Littérature et de "la" Culture, la comparaison différentielle invite à l'analyse des littératures et des cultures au pluriel et à l'analyse des textes et des oeuvres au plus près de la divers(al)ité de leurs langues et de leurs genres. Dans le souci de prendre en compte la singularité et la spécificité de chacune des langues et cultures comparées, une comparaison différentielle s'attache à "construire des comparables" qui placent les objets à comparer dans un rapport non-hiérarchique. Dans le souci d'éviter l'importation de préconstruits et de préjugés, elle exige l'explicitation des présupposés qui déterminent le choix des critères d'analyse, des concepts et des théories qui sous-tendent les analyses comparatives. Quels sont les plans d'analyse et les concepts particulièrement aptes à mettre en oeuvre une telle comparaison différentielle ? Quels sont les champs de recherche qui pourraient bénéficier d'une telle différenciation ? Le séminaire sollicite des contributions d'ordre méthodologique ainsi que des analyses comparatives de corpus spécifiques, sous-tendues par des réflexions épistémologiques et méthodologiques.

SCRIPTURAL REASONING AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

“Scriptural Reasoning and Comparative Studies” is a Research Committee attached to the ICLA, with its focuses on exploring “scriptural reasoning” specifically in the interstices of comparative literature and religious studies, broadening its traditionally restricted scope with Chinese resources, and deepening the intercultural, inter-lingual and interdisciplinary dimensions of comparative literature. In the past few years, we published two special issues on “Scriptural Reasoning” for the *Journal for the Study of Christian Culture*, hosted one Summer Institute and two workshops on “Scriptural Reasoning, Exegesis and Hermeneutics”, and have been working on a project of “A Collected Exegetical Interpretation of English Translations and Commentaries of Chinese Classics” with subsidy by China National Fund for Social Sciences (NFSS). For the coming conference of ICLA at Paris in 2013, we would propose a roundtable to continue the established exploration.

Since the 1990s, comparative readings of Judaic, Christian and Islamic scriptures have attracted more and more attentions. The so-called “Scriptural Reasoning” unfolded by such comparative readings has become a very important inter-disciplinary field of Religious Studies and Comparative Literature. Although originally “Scriptural Reasoning” focused more on the Judaic, Christian and Islamic scriptures, namely the Abrahamic tradition, growing attention has been focused upon comparative studies between these scriptures and Chinese Classics. Researchers and scholars gradually have agreed that the Chinese Classics translated by Western Missionaries as well as the commentaries on these Classics constitute abundant resources of “Scriptural Reasoning”, and such resources will naturally help the comparative studies become genuinely intercultural, inter-lingual and inter-disciplinary. The interpretation and commentaries based on their own backgrounds and contexts opened a great space for dialogue between China and the West. Thus, scholars from China, North America and Europe in the field of the Religious Studies and Comparative Literature have established a research network, doing research through international cooperation and inter-disciplinary collaboration. It is our hope that with the Research Committee of “Scriptural Reasoning and Comparative Studies” we can further expand the research scope of the International Comparative Literature Association. As a result, the interaction and inter-relationship between theoretical research and textual studies could be greatly strengthened.

THE UPS AND DOWNS THAT WESTERN LITERARY CONCEPTS HAVE EXPERIENCED ON THEIR WAY TO THE EAST

After the mid-19th century, a fascinating variety of literary concepts and theories (genres, currents, schools, terms, etc) streamed from the West into Eastern countries by means of translations, exerting a powerful and profound impact upon China, Japan, Korea and even Middle Eastern countries in terms of literature and the process of the modernization of culture. Enlightened by Western literary concepts and Western theoretical notions introduced by a continuous movement of translations, scholars from Eastern countries discovered a literary world distinctly different from their indigenous literatures and cultures. Hence the beginning of a communication and dialogue between the literatures of the two worlds, which had so far developed in a parallel manner. There is no doubt that the imported concepts and notions add much to Eastern countries scholars' knowledge of literature. With the strong impetus of development and advancement, Eastern countries' literatures benefited from fresh approaches, close to those of Western literature. In such a movement, literatures of various Eastern countries were integrated into the category of “world literature”, even though this was not their choice or decision. However, Western concepts and notions experienced ups and downs on their way to Eastern countries.



These movements of ups and downs are more complex than the sweeping generalization implied in a single word such as “westernization” or “modernization”. The two aspects mentioned below can be seen as ways of reflecting upon this complexity:

---- Vast differences between languages and the wide disparity between Eastern and Western cultures caused a large quantity of ‘misreadings’ and ‘misinterpretations’, due to deviation and distortion of the original meanings in the translated texts. Those unique interpretations of Western concepts and notions, to a large extent, are the footprints of the process of dialogue between national heritages in Eastern countries and Western concepts and notions, and they have, in turn, enriched the Western concepts.

---- Eastern countries exerted a mutual impact upon each other in a similar process of introducing Western concepts and notions through translations, owing to the fact that near neighbors have different histories and traditions. So a wide diversity of unique features is present in different Eastern countries, which is the result of the encounter, the clash and the integration of different literary concepts between the West and respective Eastern countries.

At this round table discussion, efforts will be made to elaborate on the issues mentioned above, and any study case that can illustrate the issues is welcome.

EPISTEMOLOGIES COMPARATISTES ET PERSPECTIVES SUR LE « REALISME» / COMPARATIVE EPISTEMOLOGIES AND PERSPECTIVES ON “REALISM”

Wokshop organised by ICLA committee for the Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages

1. Across Time: The ongoing evolution of “realism” as a polyvalent and controversial term for mimetic experiments is linked to changing epistemologies and politics of representation. This seminar will reconsider from an intercultural perspective the categories through which realist tendencies have been described, and will interrogate their connections to periodization, poetics, audiences, or politics. Do concepts of the “real,” the material, or the everyday move in tandem with theories of representation, of nature such as Darwin’s Descent , or conceptions of information and knowledge? Is the history of Western art (as Gombrich argues) an escalating reiteration that surpasses audience expectations to approximate an effect of the real? Are futuristic realisms bound to (or the “other” of) the age that simulates them? How do the “others” of realism (the virtual, the simulacrum, the performative, the fantastic) shift over time? What demarcates reinventions from a poststructuralist, postcolonial, or feminist perspective?

2. Across categories: The destabilization of epistemological categories today makes possible fresh approaches to 19th century “realist” tendencies. Do social categories such as gender, childhood, mass culture, economic and political power differ across cultural frontiers in determining constructions of the everyday or real? What terminology or aesthetic categories can best accommodate both panorama and detail, representation and caricatural deformation? Is the detail “feminine,” as Naomi Schor suggests, or is the feminine antithetical to the real? Does the quest for re-invention impel realistic tendencies to attribute aesthetic value to the socially devalued? How do conversations between “everyday” themes and hybrid forms move forward? Is realism still a valid epistemological and aesthetic category today? What connections can be drawn between nineteenth-century representational practices and recent ones that construct or deconstruct the “real” such as social realism, “magic realism,” “dirty realism,” “hyper realism,” “post realism,” and “anti-realism.”

3. Across genres and media: The seminar will analyse variable realistic practices in relation to genres that have not always been foregrounded by critics, such as poetry, urban spectacles, physiologies, or opera. While realism has been closely linked to the novel of the 19th century, other genres project different reality effects. Do different means of projecting material lives, definitions of sensory experience, or a sense of interiority produce new reality effects that differ by medium or by national culture? We hope to foreground the modifications of this paradigm as it encounters regional and local conditions, creating new hybrids. We are especially interested in how realist tendencies have been redefined on the “margins” of Europe (in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, or the Iberian Peninsula) in relation to other non-European influences. Today’s multimedia and virtual reality technologies (hypertext fiction, virtual fiction, etc.) can renovate our understanding of how new media such as photography shaped intersections with nineteenth-century literary forms, in exposing contradictions of the historical moment.