Overview

This module takes as its starting point the question of what we as students of literature might gain (or indeed lose) from abandoning the regional, national and even historical categories through which we most often approach literary texts – as ‘British’ or ‘English’ or ‘African’ or ‘South Asian’ or ‘postcolonial’, for instance – and instead read the world’s writing as belonging to a single system, as the component parts of a single canon.

Since the turn of the last century, a rising number of European and North American scholars have been discussing what it might mean to read literature globally, and this module will use the most notable contributions to these debates as a base for the exploration of a series of twenty-first century novels, all of which present and reflect on the nature of our contemporary world.

These works are more than mere registrations of globalisation or growing inter- and intra-national connections; they are efforts to present the world at the level of content and form. They think about the pressing concerns of the last fifteen years – from occluded histories, to gendered violence, to the challenges of migration, to growing international inequality, to the birth of a new era of international terrorism – whilst also, often overtly, considering literature’s ability to respond to these challenges. As a cohort, they offer provocations to any reader who aims to read the ‘world’, and they question, collectively, if this or any other world can be a stable object for our assessment.
Teaching Methodology

My aim for this course is for it to be a collaborative effort to explore contemporary theories of global literature and to weigh their efficacy against highly contemporary literary texts. Owing to this, this module will function more as a work of ongoing shared research – into methods and modes of thinking about and representing the contemporary world (or worlds) – than as an introduction to a bounded category of writing called ‘world literature’. It is structured to be a cumulative engagement, with each week’s readings working as new voices added to an ongoing conversation, and my hope is that through interaction with the works listed below and other seminar attendees, all participants in this module – myself included – will leave it with a more developed understanding of what is at stake when the frame of our reading is widened to encompass the earth.

Seminar Location/Time

This seminar will take place at Tuesdays at 2pm in my office at King’s College, Y6.

Assessment

Assessment for this module will take the form of one coursework essay. The title and focus of this essay are open but it must take for its focus at least one of the novels covered over the six weeks, along with anything else.

Office Hours

I far prefer in-person meetings to email exchanges, where possible, and will be in my college office, Y6, from 10am to 11am on Thursdays.

Key Critical Texts

All of the following books are excellent resources for understanding the history and contemporary deployment of the term ‘world literature’. The first, starred, text is essential reading for the history and global deployment of the term.


Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Required reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objects and</td>
<td>Erich Auerbach, ‘Philology and Weltliteratur (1952)’, in *The Princeton...</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>A World of Strangers (2)</th>
<th>Fiction</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Teju Cole, Open City (London: Faber and Faber, 2011)</td>
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<td>Non-fiction</td>
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<tr>
<th>Translated Lives (3)</th>
<th>Fiction</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Haruki Murakami, Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage, trans. by Philip Gabriel (London: Vintage, 2014)</td>
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<td>Non-fiction</td>
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### Spaces of Migration (4)

**Fiction**

**Non-fiction**

### Brits Abroad (5)

**Fiction**
- Deborah Levy, *Swimming Home* (High Wycombe: And Other Stories, 2011)

### Prizewinners (6)

**Fiction**
- Eimear McBride, *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014)

**Non-Fiction**

### Additional Secondary Texts

Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001)

Perry Anderson, ‘Modernity and Revolution’, *New Left Review* 144 (1984), 96-113


Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso,
2013)
Maurizio Ascari, ‘The Dangers of Distant Reading: Reassessing Moretti’s Approach to Literary Genres’, Genre 47.1 (2014), 1-19
How to Read World Literature (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008)


Laura E. Donaldson, Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender and Empire Building (London: Routledge, 1993)


Monica Fludernik, ed., Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003)

Frances Ferguson, ‘Planetary Literary History: The Place of the Text’, New Literary History 39.3 (2008), 657-84


Simon Gikandi, ‘Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality,’ South Atlantic Quarterly, 100 (2001), 627-58

Heidi Gottfried and Laura Reese, eds., Gender and Work in Comparative Perspective (Lexington Press, 2003)


———, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991)


Djelal Kadir, ‘To World, to Globalize – Comparative Literature’s Crossroads’, *Comparative Literature Studies* 41.1 (2004), 1-9


Justin Rosenberg ‘Globalization Theory: A Post-Mortem,’ *International Politics*, 42 (2005), 2-74


Nirvana Tanoukh, ‘The Scale of World Literature’, *New Literary History* 39 (2008), 599-617
