



Through a two-leg workshop to be held at Northwestern University in 2017 and at the University of Victoria in 2018, this collective will explore the links between recent iterations of global history and explorations of world and global literature. Those who traffic in concepts of “world literature” are frequently conducting their analysis with limited, or distant readings of historians who scale and debate the “global,” as a method, or as a point of empirical analysis within the historical discipline. Furthermore, many historians writing “global history” today frequently conduct their research without a detailed reading of the stakes offered by scholars of “world literature” and associated debates about terms such as “world,” “global,” and “comparative” within literary and cultural studies.

This workshop enables a broad conversation about the relationship between the concepts of globalization, global, and world in history as well as in literary and cultural criticism. What sort of world is understood when recent global history is placed in conversation with recent critical revisions of world literature? To what degree are these trajectories in history and literary criticism parallel, and to what degree do they converge? Finally, which methodological approaches may best invigorate a history and literary criticism for the present moment in which humanist scholarship of topics outside of Euro-American canonical texts, places, and cultures, is in deep crisis?

KEYNOTE

AAMIR MUFTI
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, UCLA

PRESENTATIONS

JOHNATHAN ARAC (ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH)
NEILESH BOSE (HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA)
TAMARA CHIN (COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, BROWN UNIVERSITY)
BRIAN EDWARDS (ENGLISH, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, & MENA NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY)
HARRIS FEINSOD (ENGLISH, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY)
MARK FROST (HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX)
DILIP GAONKAR (RHETORIC AND PUBLIC CULTURE, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY)
REBECCA JOHNSON (ENGLISH, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY)
RAMA MANTENA (HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO)
EMILY MARKER (HISTORY, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY—CAMDEN)
JOHN PINCINCE (HISTORY, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY)

CO-SPONSORS

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR
IN GLOBAL AND COMPARATIVE HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA GLOBAL SOUTH COLLOQUIUM
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA CENTRE FOR GLOBAL STUDIES

GLOBALIZATIONS, GLOBAL, AND WORLD: HISTORY, LITERARY CRITICISM, AND SPACES OF THE PRESENT

OCTOBER 19-20, 2017
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY



Center for Global Culture
and Communication

An Interdisciplinary Initiative of Northwestern University
School of Communication



SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2017
HAGSTUM ROOM (UNIVERSITY HALL 201)

12:00pm Lunch

1:00pm SESSION I: OCEANIC HISTORIES AND LITERARY GLOBAL HISTORY

MARK FROST, "Epic Migrations in Late-Colonial Sri Lanka: The Domestication and Appropriation of World Literature"

Through a close reading of literary production and reading tastes in a South Asian British colony, this paper seeks to expand our understanding of the historical processes that have produced 'world' literature, and in turn produced local 'small' literatures. The debates about world literature, following Goethe's original meditation on the subject, and more recently the arguments made by Pascale Casanova, have centred on the conversation and competition (sometimes for survival) between pre-existing national literatures. The focus has been on the factors which permit some national literatures to go global, while others do not. To some extent, such analyses still depend on the notion that literatures are in the first instance nationally produced, and only then presented to a wider republic of letters, where translation enables their textual lives to continue. What is typically missing from such analyses is a fuller sense of the global cultural traffic that has helped produce small, local or national literatures in the first place. In this case of late-colonial Sri Lanka, literature did not merely travel in printed form but through performance. The worlds of world theatre and world literature were intimately entwined: travelling theatre troupes which visited the port-cities of the British Empire were the key transmitters of new and exotic texts. In addition, this paper will reveal that local Sinhala literature had long been exposed to international influences, and that it had long included versions of exotic foreign tales as one of its staples. Indeed, such was the cosmopolitanism of vernacular Sinhala literature by the beginning of the twentieth century that it prompted a reaction from patriotic Sinhalese writers keen to purify the reading public of its foreign and exotic preferences. The birth of a self-consciously national literature was, in this case, evidently a response to the domestic appropriation of literatures from abroad.

HARRIS FEINSOD, "Into Steam: Maritime Modernism between World Literature and Global History"

The modernist era in literature and the arts (roughly 1890-1945) coincided with a more intensive period of transoceanic steamship passage by workers, migrants, and travelers than at any other time in history. This paper conceptualizes a comparative account of these mobile cultures, suggesting a way of reading the surprising variety of novels, stories, poems and chronicles of life at sea and in port from the world literature of the Americas, Western Europe, Africa, and East Asia. Charting the cultural forms and representational logics that defined transoceanic experience across divisions of nation, language, race, and social class, I argue that most writers and artists did not vindicate the common frameworks employed by some recent global historians, such as the story of accelerating connections in the age of a shrinking world. Drawing from and transfiguring the existing transoceanic frameworks of the Black Atlantic, the Communist Internationals, and the dynamics of queer mobility, I call for a reimagining of modern world literature as a system of disjunctures viewed from its industrialized seaways.

2:45-4:15pm SESSION II: COMPARABILITY AND CULTURE

BRIAN EDWARDS, "Grounds of the Post-American"

What does it mean to work at the interstices of circulation? Where does the critic stand when tracking the transnational flow of literary texts and cultural forms? The intellectual project is at odds with the institutional one, particularly for the 'post-Americanist' literary critic: the colonial legacies of the discipline of English; the persistent tensions within U.S. English departments; the recalcitrance of comparative literature with respect to Americanist work; and the resistance of the American Studies apparatus, or what Dilip Gaonkar and I have called the centrifugal pull of the vernacular (2010). And yet, much important work in transnational American studies has taught us otherwise, proposing the hemispheric, the planetary, global networks of nodes, or the oceanic as alternative modes of geospatial organization. Bringing a sensitivity toward the digital age together with these spatializing approaches further challenges the ground upon which the critic stands: when texts "jump publics" it means that they are circulating outside the public to which they were originally addressed. The critic can bring the form or text in circulation back into dialogue with its original context, but on what grounds? After all, "jumping publics" (Edwards, 2014) was inspired as much by the digital jump cut as it was by the logic of parkour. Rather than propose a new spatial model for the critic to stand on, I propose a stance based on the jump, requiring of the critic the agility of parkour, and working within the professional/institutional context of unstable or temporary ground.

TAMARA CHIN, "Homo Geoeconomic and the Silk Road Spirit"

This paper addresses globalization from the perspective of a history of discourses about globalization's "before" or prehistory. It focuses on transnationalist visions of premodern, precolonial, or precapitalist pasts that were animated by the logic of geoeconomic man. I use a brief conceptual history of the Silk Road (1877-present) as a case study that spotlights a broader question concerning the rhetoric of geoeconomic history. Using which rhetorical tropes have academics, politicians, and artists tended to configure transnational premodernity? Within which spatiotemporal structures has premodern exchange become a constitutive element—as well as an effect—of notions of globalization?

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2017

HAGSTUM ROOM (UNIVERSITY HALL 201)

5:00-6:30pm PUBLIC LECTURE

AAMIR MUFTI, "The Nomos of World Literature"

This paper attempts to chart a number of influential contemporary approaches to conceiving of "the world," such as world history and world literature, and the mutual interrelations between them. Despite their many divergences, it argues, they seem to be implicated in one way or another in the question of Europe as normative structure and principle of structuring of the world, a question they address or suppress to varying degrees.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2017

HAGSTUM ROOM (UNIVERSITY HALL 201)

9:00-10:30am SESSION III: COMPARATIVE HISTORY WRITING

JOHN PINCINCE, "Nationalist Representations of Home and the World Histories: Jawaharlal Nehru's Glimpses of the World and V.D. Savarkar's Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History"

Nearly 30 years separate the writing and publication of Nehru's Glimpses of the World and Savarkar's Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History. Nehru's H.G. Wells-inspired sweep of the history of humankind from antiquity to Nehru's present in the 1930s represents the quintessential aspects of so-called world history and one of its most critical perspectives to decenter Eurocentric historiographical narratives. Savarkar's occupies the other side of the Janus icon of world historical and literary developments: nationalist histories and the centrality of the nation-state. This paper seeks to develop a critical dialogue between the two works and then considers the ways in which Glimpses and Epochs can be understood in light of late twentieth-century trends in globalization analysis that posit the coming of a "borderless" world, a claim which in many ways is toothless. The paper engages in historical analysis of colonial and post-colonial [inter-]nationalist identities reflected in world history literature by two key figures in imagining India and the world.

RAMA MANTENA, "Globalism and Vernacularization at the End of Empire"

What did globalism enable in colonial India? My current project, Political Futures and the Ends of Empire, aims to rethink the period between empire and nation in South Asia when there was an expansion of vernacular publics, of cultures of democratic participation in defining and negotiating not only multifarious cultural identities, but also their relationship to the past, the confrontation of societal inequities, and challenging traditional orthodoxies. This expansion of vernacular publics brought forth a heightened era of liberalism and the increased use of the language of political rights and self-determination. My research engages with emergent discourses of citizenship and political modernity that also gave rise to the politics of "region" in the colonial and nationalist periods to its postcolonial afterlives. Thus, for this workshop, I hope to examine the rise of the region in the broader political history of South Asia alongside the dynamics of vernacularization and its global dimensions.

10:45am-12:15pm SESSION IV: SOUTH-SOUTH HISTORY

NEILESH BOSE, "Religion and Translation: Global Intellectual Histories of Reform"

Are the terms by which religion is understood in modern history comprehensible through available histories of globalization? Is the enterprise of religious studies a viable endeavor, after the various turns in critical religion and secularism studies (Masuzawa 2005, Asad 1993) and to what degree is the career of religion (via "World Religion" discourses) comparable to the careers of "world literature"? As a portion of a larger investigation into religious reform in colonial India, this paper addresses these questions through an in-depth history of the interest in Islam by the Brahma Samaj, often considered the first modern reformist institution begun in Kolkata in the early nineteenth century. I will analyze the life and writings of one particular Brahma, Girish Chandra Sen (1835 - 1910), deputed by the organization to study and consider Islam in the recreation of religion for India. After nearly a decade of research and study in Persian and Arabic, Sen producing the first vernacular Bengali translation of the Quran, which in the 1880s. I will explore his intellectual entry point into the broader mission of the Brahma Samaj's reform, through a textual reading of his Qur'an, his broader interest in saints and figures from Islamic history, and his own relationship to Indian religion. Challenging the notion that reform movements merely mirrored Protestant insistence on belief, doctrine, and the elimination of accretions (de Roover 2016, Yelle 2012, Salmond 2006), I explore how Sen displays the seeds of a universal religion based on research in Indic sources, which include Islam. The larger conceptual purchase of Sen's life and work lie in charting a global history of religion that relies not only on the rise of Christian agents and institutions, but on Islam as a resource for modern world-making.

EMILY MARKER, "Postwar Empire and Globalization: 'Late Colonialism' and the Global Turn in Contemporary Historical Studies"

While consensus on what exactly is meant by the term "globalization" remains elusive, it has become a relatively stable and legible gloss for an interconnected, if still poorly understood, set of processes and transformations that have to do with a fundamental reordering of time and space. Interestingly, as these temporal and spatial shifts have become a central object of historical inquiry, traditional historical fields and methods seem to have experienced their own kind of "space-time compression" with the rise to prominence of the twinned subfields of global and contemporary history. Despite being ostensibly organized around logics of time and space, the where of the global and the when of the contemporary inspire fierce debate among historians of all stripes. But in the past two decades, many historians of empire, of Europe, of the Global South, and of "US in the World" have converged on the postwar conjuncture as a critical world historical opening that either unleashed, accelerated, or consolidated the "forces" and structural changes that laid the foundations for our contemporary world. This paper will explore why consideration of postwar empires in particular have occupied such pride of place in efforts to illuminate the contours of both "the global" and "the contemporary" across these diverse sub-fields. Based on my own research on postwar cultural and educational exchanges between francophone African Muslims and the wider Islamic world, I suggest that focusing on south-south connections in between and beyond late colonial configurations may point to historical processes and geographies that help us better understand the origins and dynamics of our global present.

12:15-1:30pm Lunch

1:30-3:00pm SESSION V: THE NOVEL AND GLOBAL HISTORY

JONATHAN ARAC, "Relations of World Literature and World History, Triangulated by Postcolonial Studies"

The renewed emergence of world literature discourse in the 21st century has been much criticized for complicity with neoliberal globalization. To understand the conditions for this re-emergence, I turn to the role of postcolonial studies, which, it seems to me, arose and deflected an earlier attempt at constructing an argument on world literature based on Marxist world history. As a case study for this speculation, I examine Fredric Jameson's 1986 essay "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (*Social Text* #15, 65-88) and the severely critical response by Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'" (*Social Text*, #17, 1987, 3-25).

REBECCA JOHNSON, "Fictions of Connectivity: Arabic, Translation, and 'The World'"

This paper is grounded in my research in nineteenth century Arabic literary translation, but looks outward to the larger place of Arabic in the fields of world literature, translation studies, and "the new comparative literature." In recent important works in these fields, Arabic literature has played a central but often unacknowledged role, representing a limit case to models of translatability and comparability as scholars aim to grapple with the realities of globalization in its various expressions. This position paper will outline some of the ways that scholars have attempted to use Arabic as a "challenge" to traditional disciplinary formations and understandings of translation, as well as some of the critical and political outcomes of these discussions. Posed as critiques of celebratory visions of global connectivity, they nonetheless risk positing Arabic as European languages' untranslatable Other. To work through this issue, I suggest taking the translation practices of Arabophone authors and artists as a theoretical model as they too think globally, acknowledging their worldmaking practices as posing new modes of connectivity while at the same time acknowledging the way that European imperialism and US neoliberalism are themselves world-scale technologies.

3:15-5:00pm Publication, Broader Insights, Victoria Details
Roundtable with DILIP GAONKAR & NEILESH BOSE