

INTRODUCTION

LITERARY TEXTS AND CONTEXTS: COMPARING THE WORLD AND THE WORLD OF COMPARISON

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The contributors to this special issue demonstrate innovative ways to explore comparative literature and world literature, which we have examined under the rubric, “Literary Texts and Contexts: Comparing the World and the World of Comparison.” This is not an issue seeking consensus, but one that brings scholars from different parts of the world to discuss the theory and practice of literature, its texts and contexts, from theory to film and television. National, comparative, world, and other designations for the study of literature all come into this debate. This issue, then, is a forum in which diversity and difference express themselves.

Translation has long been part of intellectual, cultural, and literary exchange in Europe and elsewhere. India and China developed literary culture early, so that there is no one centre, no one point of view in the study of culture and literature. The translation of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin from the scriptures was fundamental in Western Europe, and the translation of the holy writings of Buddhism was also vital in China. India, it might be said, influenced the Greeks, the Chinese, and others. India was more populous earlier than even China and certainly than Europe and the Americas. In mathematics and religion, the peoples of India had great influence elsewhere. As far as we know, the Indus valley and Sumeria were the earliest places with literacy (see Chan). So, in taking a historical view of the world after hunter-gatherers and the agricultural revolution, the story would not begin in Xi’an, Athens, Rome, Constantinople, London, Paris, New York, or the like. African cultures helped to

mould Egypt, which helped to mould Greece. Peoples move, and with them goods, stories, and ideas.

If we take a long enough view, then the human is not yet born, at least in cosmological, geological, and biological time. Then we see the Neanderthals and early humans mating in what is present-day Israel, as well as similar groups from central Asia and Siberia with East Asians in the highest settlements in the Himalayas (see, for instance, Rincon and *National Geographic*). Culture, based on settlement of some fixity, is about twelve thousand years, not much in the scheme of things. In such a context, the pride of nations and cultures comes and goes and is a spring snow melting in the heat of the sun. Using the genre of travels, Jonathan Swift shifts point of view in various “worlds” to show the limitations of Gulliver and his pride as an Englishman and European (see Gulliver [Swift]). This ethnological irony turned back on one’s own compatriots is something Tacitus used in *Germania* and Montaigne employed in his essay “Des Coches” (see Tacitus and Montaigne).

364 Perhaps in light of irony and satire against human pretension, including my own, I have proposed and still propose many literatures or a many-sided literature in the field of human culture, literatures or a literature, and the study of it or them, that is varied (see, for instance, Hart, *Comparing Empires*; “Futures of Comparative Literature”; *Literature, Theory, History*). The very variety is shown in the articles that make up this special issue. Individual, cultural, and political hubris often seem misguided and limited in the long run. It is the multiplicity of points of view here that should stimulate readers to consider questions of theory and practice, of how texts and contexts relate, and whether there is or is not an overlap between comparative literature and world literature, whether the authors compare the world in a world of comparison.

In setting out an order to these articles, my co-editors, Wu Shang and Kang Yaru, and I have placed the contributions in ways in which one essay speaks to its neighbours and builds towards a common, though diverse, end. The consideration of national, comparative, world, and other literatures is not something we tried to coordinate, and each author determined how he or she was going to engage the matter at hand. What the articles share is an engagement with theory and practice and a focus on texts, images, and contexts that contribute to dialogue, especially among Asia, the Americas, and Europe. Rather than theorize a framework for the special issue, we have decided to let each article frame itself and work in comparison and contrast with the other contributions. That way there is no method or frame imposed on the issue as a whole. This, then, is a decentring of the collection.

One reason to bring together different articles from accomplished scholars from various places is to allow for a dialogue or a conversation on multiple levels, and not to fit them into one scheme and reproduce some of the very things they are questioning. The articles suggest that there is not one way to look at literary texts and contexts and, for many, there is some benefit in how they present literature, film, television, and their theories. One matter that I assume, in writing this introduction, is that litera-

ture and adjacent arts, including literary adaptations for film and television, deserve close attention and are culturally significant no matter what some institutions may intimate. Markets are not everything, so that culture has many dimensions, popular, academic, and otherwise. Change seems to be intense in our age, the river Heraclitus stood in more rapid, perhaps even more and more with the spectre of climate change.

In what follows, I will discuss each article briefly to provide an overview. The very difference among them is heartening as it suggests debate and contention and sometimes a fugue, a consonant dissonance or a dissonant consonance. It was a great pleasure to work with my co-editors and to watch this issue take shape with the help of the anonymous readers and the editors of this journal, for which thanks to all.¹

To open the special issue, in “Thoughts That Do Lie Too Deep for Tears: Comparative Literature Versus World Literature,” J. Hillis Miller argues that literary study should concentrate on the interpretation of individual literary texts, and advocates for reading a few poems word by word with care and in a questioning way. Miller sees literary theory, comparative literature, and world literature as being ancillary to that. In his article, Miller examines the word “tears” in a passage of Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale” in order to see what can be said about reading “tears” in the contexts of world literature and comparative literature. Furthermore, Miller explores “the difference between reading Keats’s poem, or, rather, that one word in one passage in it, in the context of world-wide passages that mention tears, or, alternatively, in the context of European poems that mention tears.” Miller is interested in finding out what differences occur when he reads Keats’s lines about Ruth’s tears in isolation, not in any contexts, or if he reads these lines in the context of comparative literature (“Eurocentric”) or in the context of world literature. In this comparative milieu, Miller says: “Keats’s poem is my chief example of the difference between comparative literature study and world literature study. It certainly ends with a great passage about Ruth’s tears of homesickness, but the poem as a whole is, I would claim, about the unity of the European tradition.” In the context of world literature, Miller admits his feelings of inadequacy because he does not know non-European languages like Sanskrit and Urdu, and this makes his job in the search for poems with tears world-wide problematic. He has to rely more on translations than he does in a comparative context. Despite these caveats, the instances that Miller provides from the Western tradition of poems with tears go back to the Bible and Greek literature, and a myriad of poems in other traditions that have tears in them. Miller places the text of Keats’s tears in the context of European and Sanskrit poetry, and he finds that this poet and the European poets represent tears differently from the way Sanskrit poets do.

In “The Three Futures of World Literature,” Haun Saussy begins with the premise that to be scooped by Bouvard and Pécuchet, two copyists who are ignorant and literal, is not as happy a thing as to be anticipated by Flaubert, literary artist and practitioner of irony. These two copyists, at the end of Flaubert’s unfinished novel, have witnessed the ruin of their plans for maximizing the benefits of education and cheap printing. According to Saussy, in the last decade or so we have seen prophecies of

wonder and ruin for world literature. Bouvard and Pécuchet are two figures of world literature calculating—“two flies with theories about fly-bottles.” Bouvard expects the best whereas Pécuchet expects the worst. Saussy says that these two figures predict futures for world literature: they are both narratives founded on technology, futures that “leave literature with nothing to say for itself” because what it says is determined by external causes. Furthermore, Saussy says: “Today’s phantasm of ‘world literature’ likewise authorizes Pécuchet-like and Bouvard-like dreams. For some, the circulation of literary works in an expanding cosmopolitan sphere of merit, a literary economy where the works ‘gain in translation,’ allows us to envision a communion of all peoples and cultures.” For Hugo, as Saussy observes, the history of humanity is imaginative, a string of geniuses connected by providential intent. According to Saussy, “Hugo’s spiritualistic *bêtise* (or profundity, as it may be) opposes the twofold technocentric *bêtise* of Bouvard and Pécuchet, but none of these histories aligns with the anticipation of a future readership in Baudelaire’s programmatic ‘Au lecteur’ or
366 Flaubert’s gestures of narrative indifference.” Moreover, Saussy argues that current discussions of world literature are located far from the places of Hugo, Baudelaire, and Flaubert on the spectrum. Saussy views the debate about world literature as recycled from nineteenth-century cultural anxieties, as something that needs more structure.

In “What Is Left of Comparative Literature and World Literature? Notes on International Literature, Its Concrete Universality and Enigmaticity,” Jean Bessière maintains that although world literature and comparative literature are frequently contrasted, they share areas of research. He also sees them both as outdated notions. World literature is associated with Goethe’s *Weltliteratur* and refers to “the ontology of Romantic literature and the expansion of the book trade, which began the universalization of literatures.” Bessière observes that the “comparative” in comparative literature was connected to the beginning of the nineteenth century and its relation to comparative sciences such as comparative linguistics and comparative zoology. He argues that globalization has contributed to the revival of the idea of world literature. Bessière thinks that literary texts in our globalized world should not be conflated with literature as a universal or with the “geographic cohesion of literatures.” Moreover, he recalls Jean-Jacques Ampère’s early studies in comparative literature and Goethe’s *Weltliteratur*. For Ampère, a literature can be distinct from another literature, whatever connects these two literatures; and for Goethe, the other literature, translated and displaced, allies the Same and the Other as a condition for the growth of *Weltliteratur*. Bessière reads the subtext of one canonical work of comparative literature, Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, and of David Damrosch’s *What Is World Literature?* Comparative literature and world literature assume the cohesiveness and diversity of literatures. Bessière points out that many comparative literature handbooks place world literature as a subfield of comparative literature, while world literature handbooks refer to comparative literature as within world literature. Finally, Bessière sees a literary work as presentation, text, representation, and

structure, while being “a set of analogies between it and any genre, model, or object to which it belongs.” Literary texts and contexts are intricate and hard to define in one way.

Dorothy Figueira’s “Comparative Literature: Can This Marriage Be Saved?” explores how comparative literature “has strayed and why.” Figueira says that in the final part of the twentieth century, partly owing to a radical movement in theory, there was a shift in literary studies from the aesthetic to the political. In the late 1970s, according to Figueira, many scholars considered literature “an outmoded form of cultural capital belonging to the bourgeoisie,” which became part of a model of cultural studies. This establishment of a new authority that identified and marketed marginalized peoples occurred under the rubrics of identity studies, multiculturalism, postcolonial literatures, and world literature. For Figueira, by encouraging minorities to study themselves, multiculturalism might well have contributed to “the further balkanization of minorities in American universities, a process that, since the inception of Affirmative Action in the 1970s, was well under way.” These theories from the 1970s enabled people who were cut off from effective social action, but secure as academics, to claim solidarity with the disenfranchised and action in the actual world, an apparent and pretended intellectual engagement with the notion that academic criticism functions as a political act. Figueira avers that these new theories and pedagogies also contribute to American isolationism, that world literature levels literatures of the Other, and that cultural studies does something similar with cultural production. For her, neither of these fields has the linguistic and theoretical particularity of comparative literature. In Figueira’s view, departments of English co-opted theory, read selections in translated anthologies, and then tried to be like “scientists, the only people valued in the corporate university.” Figueira states that in the twenty-first century, students should experience and interrogate all of the world’s literatures and not in the packaged ways Figueira has criticized.

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For Theo D’haen, in “Worlding Comparative Literature: Beyond Postcolonialism,” Edward Said is an exemplary scholar of comparative literature who almost single-handedly invented “postcolonialism as a critical method” and someone whose “method consisted of re-reading and commenting upon colonial classics.” Said engaged with novelists, historians, and geographers; D’haen is interested in Said’s use of the work of the British geographer Halford Mackinder. Said mentions this geographer three times in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), by way of references to Neil Smith’s *Uneven Development* (1984). In 1904, in D’haen’s view, Mackinder “labelled all of European and Asian Russia and much of Central Asia, then also under Russian rule, as ‘The Geographical Pivot of History.’” Mackinder’s ideas represented what, following Heidegger, Said, and Gayatri Spivak, we would call a “worlding” of the world in light of colonialism and imperialism that were prevalent then. For D’haen, Said’s reading of Mackinder is a particular worlding for a specific moment, and he suggests that, just as Said argues for reading Conrad and Kipling contrapuntally, so too might we do with Said. For Said, Mackinder’s ideas are of a certain period

and serve given interests; for D'haen, Said's notions are of a given worldview and period. Said intervened in comparative literature to "re-orient" it from "orientalism" and Eurocentrism to a worldview more compatible with the legacy of decolonization: D'haen argues for "a comparative literature 'beyond' postcolonialism and more 'globally' worlded." Said becomes a springboard for the very changes for which D'haen advocates.

In "Aesthetic Imaginary: Rethinking the 'Comparative,'" Ranjan Ghosh coins the term "aesthetic imaginary," and teases out the nature and philosophy of his proposition and the intricacies of aesthetic imaginary and the comparative. He maintains that the aesthetic imaginary starts with negativity, which implies the opposite: "If what one has coexists with what one does not, it is also about not simply being-with but being-with(out)." In an observation on comparison, he adds: "Literary texts across culture and tradition can surely come with comparative procedures of understanding, the notions of congruence and competence, viability and legitimacy."

368 Ghosh provides a wide-ranging theoretical consideration of text and context. He examines the intricacies of aesthetic imaginary to understand better T.S. Eliot's idea of tradition, thus refiguring dynamically the notion of the comparative. Tradition is sacred: a zealously guarded truth in its exfoliation and trajectory is pinned down to an immovable wholeness. The sacred of tradition can lead to a "communitarian unity." Ghosh has much to say about tradition, as Eliot did, and sees it as "an ambiguity that tries to reform the violence of representation, resisting the distinction like the kind Arnold's touchstone method brings and the juridical premises of interpretive law." According to Ghosh, the aesthetic imaginary involves *both, and, neither, nor, and or*. The aesthetic imaginary is Ghosh's "negativistic 'way'—not always a method—of thinking, of thinking knowledge, of not thinking about thought, producing the reenchantment of thinking." Ghosh presets a suggestive manner in which to rethink the comparative and thus casts light on comparative literature and related fields.

Galina Tihanov's "The Location of World Literature" brings conceptual rigour to the "prevalent Anglo-Saxon discourse of world literature" since David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* (2003). Tihanov asks, "where is 'world literature' ontologically?" Some see a network of texts that enters many relations that reveal or conceal the "facts of canon formation, cultural propaganda, ideological indoctrination, the book trade, etc." Others, in Tihanov's view, see world literature as a prism through which to examine literature, that is, a way of reading. Another option is to practise "'world literature' as an intellectual discourse with clear ideological subtexts, frequently liberal and cosmopolitan." How we actually understand world literature, as texts or as a prism, a way of reading, has, for Tihanov, implications for the ways with which to approach questions and to narrate the history of world literature. Tihanov stresses the significance of time, space, language, and self-reflexivity and elaborates on them as points of reference. He examines the nature of texts in the contexts of globalization and transnationalism. Moreover, Tihanov discusses circulation in world literature and sees the question of language, including translation—as a benefit or

something impossible (untranslatability)—as fundamentally important to literature. He also calls attention to the work of the Russian Formalists, as a context in earlier literary theory for the English-speaking discourse of world literature. In other words, Tihanov is seeking a previous paradigm of literature as “a specific and unique discourse, whose distinctiveness crystallizes around the abstract quality of ‘literariness’” from the First World War to the 1980s. One of the traces of this is the centrality of language in how we understand literature. Tihanov sees the current debate on world literature as part of this context, the “debate on whether one should think of literature within the horizon of language or beyond that horizon.” He wants to bring into relief or coax into the light the assumptions behind this naturalized discourse in the liberal milieu of the English-speaking discourse of world literature. Tihanov also discusses self-reflexivity, including intertextuality from Bakhtin’s dialogism to Kristeva’s “more neutral apparatus.” Tihanov provides a case study that involves Chinese culture and its appropriations in the West: a novel by Elias Canetti. Moreover, Tihanov regards world literature “as a historically shifting constellation of discourses that is chronotopically constructed, with social and ideological energies bubbling underneath and shaping this construct” and envisions “the first step towards denaturalizing it and opening up a space that would allow the possibility of questioning it.” Literature is self-reflexive, as Canetti’s novel shows, so that it allows for scepticism and inspecting the unspoken premises of liberalism.

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In “Texts and Images in a National, Comparative, and World Context,” I discuss how literary studies can be expressed through national literatures, comparative literature, and world literature. Nations came to need national literatures at the heart of empire while producing conditions for comparison within and between empires and of world institutions and literatures. There are tensions, frictions, and divisions, but also a complementarity of the three. For instance, Chinese literature is itself, but China had changing boundaries and developed a far-reaching diaspora in Asia. The fictional worlds of Ha Jin and Yan Geling illustrate difference within a national literature. In English, there are also changes and shifting boundaries, and intertextuality occurs as English literature also becomes literature in English. Cultures, languages, and literatures are mobile and mixed. The figures I have chosen to discuss in this context are Columbus, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Shakespeare, and Father Matteo Ricci. They provide a comparative network in which there is no one centre. There are many national, comparative, and world literatures, mobile and multiple, which can suggest various ways forward at once.

As Ming Xie notes, in “World Poetry, without Baedeker: The Very Idea,” poetry is neglected in world literature because it is hard to translate. It is also rooted in its language and culture, so that text and context have a particular meaning for poetry. Xie says that Ezra Pound, who was among the first twentieth-century Anglo-American poets to think about a world poetry, sought early to find out what aspect of poetry could not be lost in translation. Moreover, Xie sets three connotations of world poetry: the sum of all national or regional poetry; international poetry and transla-

tion, past and present; and the ways poets and poetry of international reputation are canonized. World poetry usually means poetry of the “rest of the world” apart from Anglo-American or Euro-American poetry. This is to say that world poetry does not merely supply raw untheorized material for a western-dominated poetics. For Xie, world poetry should be viewed as an active means of rethinking and expanding poetics defined by a literary tradition. Pound is an example of this active world poetry. The challenge is “to see things in qualitative rather than simply in quantitative terms.” Xie provides an example, seeing that a recognition of Chinese poetry as Chinese as unique and different is at once “a recognition as universal and shareable (precisely transcending mere ‘Chineseness’), but to make this dual recognition possible, one has to regard it simultaneously as *both* different and common.” According to Xie, a model of world poetry could be a poetry that is “continuously emerging, both in historical and political terms.” Poetics exists in various traditions as opposed to a unifying poetics comprehending all poetic traditions. World poetics, in Xie’s

370 view, is about how many versions of what poetry has been or is, can engender new visions of the possibilities of world poetry, which draws on particular contexts but leaps over one’s own language and nation “to participate directly in the transcultural and transnational universality of poetic making and unmaking.” This is, for Xie, the paradox of world poetry.

In “Personal Geographies and Liminal Identities in Three Early Modern Women’s Life Writing About Wars,” I-Chun Wang discusses war as a persistent concern of life writing. She examines life writing in England and France as a significant element of comparative literature or world literature, concentrating on the experiences of geography and identity in the writings of three early modern women: Marguerite of Valois (1553-1615), Queen Henrietta Maria of England (1609-69), and Lady Brilliana Harley (1598-1643), all of whom employed their writing in the public realm. Wang uses liminal space as a means to examine the possibility of a new status, “the possibility of repositioning.” These texts, as Wang notes, show the tensions, anxieties, and sufferings that migration, displacement, and refuge brought to these women, but also their courage in redefining their roles and territory. War forced these women to engage with their contexts, to face the liminal, to go between private and public spaces. Wang summarizes one interesting aspect of this comparison of the life writings of these three women: “With the contextualized pictures of the author’s environment and the mapping of personal geography, wartime life writings involve feelings and physical migration or exile, and further project dimensions and relationships between private and public spaces.” In their life writings about their wartime experiences, the three female figures “disclose possible liminal spaces that symbolize their decision-making and transformation of identities, while also developing their inner strengths and capacities.” The comparison of these three early modern female writers in England and France, which Wang sets out here, can enrich comparative literature and world literature and can relate to autobiographical texts by women in other cultures and the work of women in other cultures in Asia, the Americas, and

elsewhere.

For Q.S. Tong, in “Love for the World: Shakespeare, National Literature, and *Weltliteratur*,” the implications of Goethe’s idea of the global practice of translation and Karl Marx’s reading of literature in the context of global capitalism have yet to be fully observed, although neither figure had anything particular to say about world literature. Tong’s article revisits Erich Auerbach’s “Philology and *Weltliteratur*” (1952), and reconsiders the idea and practice of world literature historically in relation to cross-cultural appropriations of Shakespeare, which facilitated the development of national literatures in Germany during the late eighteenth century and in China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In both countries, Shakespeare allowed for a cosmopolitan outlook. Despite vast differences in the cultural conditions of Germany in the late eighteenth century and China in the late nineteenth century, both seem to have shared the desire for an expression of what Auerbach calls “man unified in his multiplicity.” Tong asserts that Auerbach’s essay was written when the development of a new idea of *Weltliteratur* to respond to the post-war global order was urgently needed. Herder saw Homer, the poets of the Old Testament, and Shakespeare as keys to a new tradition. Shakespeare’s “universality—the collection of qualities that allow him to be valued, admired, and appreciated in any language—justifies and legitimates his translation and localization.” The first translation of Shakespeare in China occurred in the early twentieth century, and Shakespeare was an active force in the emergence of modern Chinese literature. Tong asserts that the delay in translating Shakespeare in China may be partly because China did not have a Herder to recognize the value of Shakespeare. According to Tong, world literature is a counterbalance against cultural nationalism, whereas comparative literature involves an urge to compare that could become a tool in a contest between national literatures.

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In “Shakespeare’s Global *Weirding*: *Macbeth*’s Posting of ‘Anthropos,’ Cinematization, and the Era of Extinction,” Tom Cohen begins with a Chinese audience for Shakespeare, imagining as though Shakespeare were Chinese, allowing Cohen to approach “the fate, destiny, or uncanniness of some ‘complex words’ with a sense that, perhaps, they are not ‘words’ at all in the assumed sense”—*matter*, for instance in *Hamlet*. Cohen calls this a *weird* reading, and that is one of the words of which he wants to give “a Chinese reading,” a term “rescued from extinction by Shakespeare.” Climate change puts us on the brink of extinction, and “this word, once all but extinct, would boomerang, through Shakespeare, to virally infect the world or globe itself, as what has become known as *global weirding*.” Cohen says that in naming “*Macbeth*, Shakespeare was tracking ‘Anthropos’ already after the fact,” and Cohen follows “a detour through digital *cinema*, through Derrida’s *spectrology*,” and asks “why the era of climate chaos calls for an (im)materialist reading of the term *weird*.” This article contributes to Cohen’s concentration on how poetics and language are related to climate change and, past a certain point, mass extinction and ecocide. Cohen is part of a rereading in this context, including one of Shakespeare and, more

particularly, of reading Shakespeare's play through Justin Kurzel's film *Macbeth* (2015) and vice versa. In a lifeless landscape, the pivot that connects Macbeth to climate change appears to be Lady Macbeth's recurrent phrase 'what's done cannot be undone,' just as a tipping point in the climate. The smoke, heat, and "zombie-scape" are there to the end of the film. *Weird*, dug up from extinction as a term, circulates and haunts the play, the film, the world. Cohen shows how Shakespeare helps us to read climate change not just in film, but in life, and as a warning that may well go unheeded in the delusions and hallucinations of denial. World literature is in danger of losing the world and the world of losing literature: reading is vital to life, and suicidal denial is the death of the reader.

372 Wu Shang's "Articulations in Translation at the Intersection of World Literature and Popular Culture: Film and TV Adaptations of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*" also discusses film and media, going from world literature to popular culture. With globalization and new media, there has been, according to Wu, a more open global literary space for voices from and about the periphery, something scholars of world literature have attempted to understand. Production, circulation, and translation all come into further focus. Wu says that television and film adaptations are "forms of cross-medium translation" and that "film has played an increasingly greater role in the local and global circulation of literature." In popular culture, Wu is interested in adaptation and circulation in terms of exchange and negotiation at the intersection of world literature and popular culture, in which film and TV adaptations act as means for the travel of literature. Wu discusses the British film adaptation and the Japanese TV adaptation of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, *Never Let Me Go*, asking about changes made in various adaptations, how these changes relate to the ideas of resistance and incorporation, and what "factors influence these changes." Scholars concentrating on translations and adaptations from a cultural perspective mainly focus on comparisons between the literary systems and ideologies of the source and target texts. They also adopt this kind of analytical framework for the discussion of film and TV adaptations, but in doing so, according to Wu, they risk overlooking the commercial appeal and global context of these adaptations. Wu draws on Stuart Hall's and Ernesto Laclau's concept of articulation, through which, she states, "we see how the powers of incorporation from various contexts can influence the process of translation between different media, languages, and cultures." In particular, she focuses on "aesthetic attitudes, sociocultural circumstances, commercial requirements, and political agendas." In a global context, Wu argues, translations happen among many cultures, forms, and media, and she stresses cultural translation.

For Hao Li, in "Vision and Self-Consciousness in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*," it is important to consider Oscar Wilde's metaphysical interests as well as his concern with science, so that Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Hegel, Nietzsche, and others are part of his framework of ideas. In comparative literature, literature and science, and literature and the other arts, contribute to the field. Li avers that Wilde's "reading of the Greek notion of *theoria* (contemplating, looking

at) reveals that *theoria* contains the meaning of thinking and viewing.” She takes an approach that helps us to consider subjectivity and self-consciousness in this novel. Dorian sees himself, and his self, in the mirror and the portrait, a perception that “complicates the Cartesian dichotomy.” Wilde’s representation of the “internalizing of sensory feelings also resembles what T.H. Huxley evokes when he isolates humans from animals in his discussion of the impact of evolutionary theories.” According to Li, Wilde sees that viewing one’s self may be more disturbing than to be a participant in life. Moreover, in Li’s view, concerning Wilde, only this enthralled self “could transform vision to envisioning through reconceptualizing and reconfiguring one’s own conditions.” Wilde came to understand that words are limiting because mind and body feel or see through a medium of articulation other than the verbal. Sensory awareness forces a person to admit humility and humanity: in this, Wilde engages in a dialogue with philosophers and scientists.

In “*Time Has Begun: Hu Feng’s Poesis in Socialist China, 1937-50*,” Ruth Hung discusses “the poetry of the Marxist poet and critic Hu Feng 胡风 (1902-85) within the context of the modernizing transformations that took place in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), with a particular focus on Hu’s claims of the political effects of the Chinese Revolution (1927-50) on creative practices during the 1940s and early 1950s, specifically, the phenomena presented by his poesis.” Poetry can still be at the heart of literature, and Hung provides readings of poems important for Chinese and international audiences. She regards the literary and political career of Hu as an instructive case in the negotiation between creative freedom and political commitment. She sees Hu’s poesis as extending beyond poetry to pedagogical and editorial work, something that helped the *July* writers. Describing the arc of a career, Hung observes: “Throughout his poetry and editorial work, Hu tried to sing the songs of youth.” In a more general context, Hung says: “Indeed, in the history of Chinese literature and literary thinking, the transition from traditional to modern was so abrupt that it was a paradigm shift, linguistically, formally, stylistically, and, above all, historically and nationally.” *Weltliteratur* contains multiplicities, as Hung suggests, as well as including “the power of sympathetic imagination and synthesis.”

According to Guo Rong, in “Literature, History, and Narrative: A New Historicist Reading of Yan Geling’s ‘Celestial Bath,’” Marxism, old historicism, and new historicism connect text to context. Moreover, Guo maintains that comparative literature has emphasized textual analysis and literary history. Guo’s article examines Yan Geling’s short story “Celestial Bath” by “combining text and context and taking a historical approach to textual analysis.” For Guo, Yan Geling deserves attention because she is an overseas Chinese writer who inhabits a double or comparative context. Narrative connects history and literature. In *Poetics*, as Guo says, Aristotle discusses literature and history, what should be and what has happened. Guo aptly notes that “Chinese literary scholars have said of the paradox of literature and history that except for names, everything in history is faked; whereas in literature, all is true except names.” Salman Rushdie, in Guo’s view, sees the novel as denying official,

political versions of truth. Guo reads Yan Geling's "Celestial Bath" historically, and as an instance of the type of fiction that lends itself well to comparative and world literature: it is "a counter-narrative to official historical discourse" that helps us to read history as history but also as an account of "the tragic consequences of politics and human behaviour." Guo's analysis has implications for Chinese, diasporic, and other cultures, as well as for comparative and world literature.

In the final article of this special issue on literary texts and contexts, "Self-Critique Prompted by Immersion in (An)Other Culture: Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Xu Zhimo, and Pearl Buck," King-Kok Cheung discusses three authors who provided a critique of their native countries. Dickinson (1862-1932) idealized China while being disillusioned with the British empire, particularly with its imperial policies in China. With Dickinson's help, Cheung says, Xu 徐志摩 (1897-1931) enrolled at King's College, Cambridge in 1925 and was taken by British Romantic poetry, which "turned him against the Chinese 'Golden Mean' and Confucian mores." Xu made an impression on Buck, who advocated on behalf of Chinese and Chinese Americans. Cheung notes that Dickinson and Xu contributed to international modernism and that Dickinson was connected to the Bloomsbury circle; she states that, owing to the Communist Revolution (1949), the Cultural Revolution (1965-75), and the Cold War (1970s-1980s), works by these three writers were banned in China. Dickinson kindled a passion for China in Arthur Waley, I.A. Richards, William Empson, and others. Cheung claims that literature "had far-reaching effects on both Xu and Buck." Suggestive comparisons occur in Cheung's article. For instance, she says: "All three writers were nonconformists in their own countries who identified acutely with the people and places across oceans. Dickinson was gay at a time when homosexuality was outlawed in England. Xu launched the first modern divorce in China; and Buck was subject to a witch hunt in 1933." Comparing these writers further, Cheung says that Dickinson, Xu, and Buck were the forerunners of migrant scholars and writers.

The movement of these articles is one way to look at literary texts and contexts and the world of comparison and the comparison of the world, that is comparative literature and world literature. Here, I have not set out a usual framework for the issue, but have tried to let the articles speak for themselves both in this introduction and in the body of this collection. To sum up, J. Hillis Miller considers tears in the context of comparative literature (inter-European literatures) and world literature (all the literatures in world languages from which he has selected poems in translation from Sanskrit and Urdu). Translation is a key to the theme of our special issue. Haun Saussy discusses the futures of world literature through three canonical French writers—Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Hugo—and raises some suggestive questions from the past. World literature, for Saussy, allows for inter-European comparison in the original languages. Jean Bessière speaks about international literature and concrete universals and sees comparative literature and world literature as outdated terms, although they share research interests. Bessière sees a literary work as text, structure, presentation, representation, a set of analogies. Dorothy Figueira examines a shift

in literary studies from the aesthetic to the political. She favours the linguistic and theoretical particularity of comparative literature (as opposed to world literature and cultural studies) and thinks that students should experience all of the world's literatures in that fashion.

According to Theo D'haen, Edward Said intervened in comparative literature to re-orient it. Taking Said as an example, he moves beyond him: D'haen argues for a comparative literature beyond postcolonialism and one that is more global. Ranjan Ghosh talks about the aesthetic imaginary and discusses it in terms of the comparative. Among other things, and in a wide-ranging theoretical debate, he examines tradition, including T.S. Eliot's notion of it. For Galin Tihanov, in world literature time, space, language, and self-reflexivity are key points of reference. He analyzes texts in the contexts of globalization and transnationalism. My article uses Columbus, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Shakespeare, and Father Matteo Ricci as part of a decentred network in which there are many national, comparative, and world literatures that move and are varied.

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In Ming Xie's view, which includes a discussion of Ezra Pound and Chinese poetry, world poetics is about new visions of the possibilities of world poetry, which draws on particular contexts but reaches for transcultural and transnational universality. In world literature there is, for Xie, this paradox of world poetry. I-Chun Wang discusses war because it is a key aspect of life writing, and focuses on three early modern women writers who explore this theme. For her, the elements of geography and identity in life writing in France and England of this period are important aspects of comparative literature or world literature. According to Q.S. Tong, Erich Auerbach is a key to examining world literature. Tong analyzes the practice of world literature historically in relation to cross-cultural appropriations of Shakespeare in Germany and in China. In comparative literature and world literature, Tom Cohen's work concentrates on how poetics and language are related to climate change and possible mass extinction and ecocide. He rereads in this context, including reinterpreting Shakespeare's *Macbeth* through Justin Kurzel's film adaptation and vice versa.

Wu Shang examines translation in world literature and popular culture, especially in film and television adaptations of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. Emphasizing cultural translation, she says that translations occur among many forms, media, and cultures. Hao Li talks about vision and self-consciousness in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in terms of science and metaphysics, subjects important to comparative literature. Li is interested in Wilde's reading of the Greek idea of *theoria*. Hu Feng's poesis in China between 1937 and 1950 is the focus of Ruth Hung's article. For the purposes of comparative literature and world literature, text and context, Hung sees that poetry is at the heart of literature and society, providing readings for a Chinese and global audience. Guo Rong analyzes Yan Geling's short story "Celestial Bath" in relation to text and context and is being historical in performing textual analysis. Guo sees Yan as worthy of attention as an overseas Chinese writer in a comparative milieu. In a discussion of comparative and world literary texts and

contexts, King-Kok Cheung examines Dickinson, Xu, and Buck, three authors who criticized their own countries. She sees these figures as proleptic of migrant scholars and writers.

This special issue suggests that there are many ways to look at text and context and that national, comparative, and world literatures and cultures may or may not be adequate terms. It may be that these terms are too abstract in a changing world. The main thing is the dynamic nature of the writing and reading, production and reception of literature and the other adjacent arts: for example, Cohen and Wu discuss film. The theory and practice of literature and art are key human endeavours. It turns out that poetry, whether dramatic or non-dramatic, is also at the heart of literature and culture. The discussions here of theory and practice are suggestive, and my co-editors and I have tried to arrange the articles in a logical order.

376 There is one final twist to this special issue. All the contributors, whether of Western or Eastern backgrounds, have a connection with Asia, either as specialists, or as scholars born there or those who have lived or worked there over time during visits or for long stretches (on East-West, see, for example, Kingston and Chauduri). One reason not to frame this special issue that way until now is that it is just one aspect among many of the contributions we hope to make with this collection. The main thing is that the contributors are accomplished scholars who write with individual views that will provoke thought and open our minds, and not close them to literary texts and contexts, theory and practice, reading and seeing, and much else.

NOTE

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