

From National Literatures to World Literature

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World Literature

- We all know that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) coined, or at least popularized, the term '*Weltliteratur*' (world literature) to welcome the impossibility of restricting oneself to the insularities of a 'national literature' in view of the ever-increasing availability of texts from other cultures, when he told his disciple Johann Peter Eckermann in January 1827:

I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of them. [...] I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach. [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, statement to Johann Peter Eckermann in January 1827 (as reported in Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, 1835), quoted in David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 1.]
- This (though reportedly said by Goethe in Jan 1827, it was published only in 1835) is, however, not the first published instance of Goethe having used the word *Weltliteratur*, which was when, also in January 1827, Goethe wrote an essay in the journal *Über Kunst und Altertum* on two French reviews of a new play, *Le Tasse: Drame historique en cinq actes*, by the playwright Alexander Duval, a work closely based on Goethe's own play *Torquato Tasso* (1790).

World Literature (contd.)

- This first published use of the term World Literature by Goethe however betrays a rather individual and ‘nationalist’ pride:

[...] there is being formed a universal world literature, in which an honorable role is reserved for us Germans. All the nations review our work; they praise, censure, accept, and reject, imitate and misrepresent us, open or close their hearts to us. All this we must accept with equanimity, since this attitude, taken as a whole, is of great value to us. [Goethe, “Some Passages Pertaining to the Concept of World Literature”, in Hans-Joachim Schulz and Phillip H. Rhein (eds.), *Comparative Literature: The Early Years: An Anthology of Essays*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), pp. 1–11; p. 5.]
- Also, elsewhere, in an essay on a German translation of Carlyle’s life of Schiller, Goethe writes: “The wide world, extensive as it is, is only an expanded fatherland, and will, if looked at aright, be able to give us no more than what our home soil can endow us with also”. [“Some Passages”, p. 10]
- How Goethe’s notion of World Literature continuously strives between nationalism and cosmopolitanism has been analysed in detail in John Pizer, “The Emergence of *Weltliteratur*: Goethe and the Romantic School” (from *The Idea of World Literature*, 2006), Chapter 2, in David Damrosch ed. *World Literature in Theory*, Malden MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

World Literature (contd.)

- Another early use of the term happens when Marx and Engels talk of *Weltliteratur* in their *Communist Manifesto* (1848) :

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. [...] The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country [...] And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature. [Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848, English edn. 1888), in Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968; 7th printing 1986, pp. 38-39.]
- This quote, while it shows how ‘world literature’ potentially takes people beyond ‘narrow-mindedness’, also shows the problematic relationship between bourgeois world capitalism and ‘world literature’, showing that ‘worlding’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ may not be altogether unproblematic.

Comparative Literature

- As early as 1598, Francis Meres titled an essay of his “A Comparative Discourse of Our English Poets with the Greek, Latin and Italian Poets”
- In the Preface to the first volume of his *History of English Poetry* (1774), Thomas Warton states that he would present “a comparative survey of the poetry of other nations”
- George Ellis, in his *Specimens of Early English Poets* (1790), talks about a “comparative criticism”
- In French ‘*littérature comparée*’ (‘literature compared’) was used in 1816, when two compilers, F.J.M. Noël and Guisbain F.M.J. de Laplace, published a series of anthologies from French, classical, and English literature with the title *Cours de littérature comparée: les leçons françaises de littérature et de morale*
- An early use of the phrase has also been traced to Charles Pougens, who, in his *Lettres philosophiques à Madame XXX sur divers sujets de morale et littérature* (1826), recommended ‘comparative literature’ as the preferred mode of studying literature: “un cours de littérature comme je l’entends, c’est-à-dire, un cours de littérature comparée.”

Comparative Literature (contd.)

- The first use of the exact term ‘comparative literature’ in English was by Matthew Arnold, who wrote in an 1848 letter to his sister (not published till 1895), “how plain it is now, though an attention to the comparative literatures for the last fifty years might have instructed anyone of it, that England is in a certain sense far behind the Continent” (Matthew Arnold, “Letter to His Sister” (May 1848), in Arnold, *Letters*, 2 vols., (ed.) G.W.E. Russell, London: Macmillan, 1895, Vol. I, p. 8).
- Arnold also said, “no single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures.” (Matthew Arnold, “On the Modern Element in Literature” (inaugural lecture at Oxford, November 1857), in Arnold, *Complete Prose Works*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960; 1977, Vol. 1, pp. 20-21.)
- The term took a further academic turn when Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, who held the Chair of Classics and English Literature at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, 1885 to 1890, wrote in 1886 a book *Comparative Literature*, the first book by that name.
- Posnett cites in this book “the gradual expansion of social life, from clan to city, from city to nation, from both of these to cosmopolitan humanity, as the proper order of our studies in comparative literature.” (Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, *Comparative Literature*, International Scientific Series, Vol. LV, London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886, p. 86.)

Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism - 1: Kant

- Contemporary attempts to understand cosmopolitanism often trace their roots to Kant's 1795 essay "Perpetual Peace".
- In "Perpetual Peace" Kant argues that with increasing trade and commercial relationships among Nation-states, soon war will become a thing of the past because the need for economic growth will require Nations to be hospitable to each other, leading to a certain kind of mutual tolerance and cosmopolitanism.
- Hospitality becomes a key term for Kant in this regard, which he defines as:

Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction; but so long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility. It is not the right to be a permanent visitor that one may demand. A special contract of beneficence would be needed in order to give an outsider a right to become a fellow inhabitant for a certain length of time. It is only the right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate, which all men have. They have it by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where, as a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must finally tolerate the presence of each other. [Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace" in Hans Reiss ed., and H B Nisbet trans., *Kant: Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, 2003, pp. 105-6.]

Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism - 2: Derrida and Benhabib

- But Kant's notion of Cosmopolitanism is conditional, based on the Nation-State, and constitutes a break from the old Hellenic and Hebraic notions of the same. Derrida says in a 1997 interview:

There is a tradition of cosmopolitanism [...] which comes to us from, on the one hand, Greek thought with the Stoics, who have a concept of the 'citizen of the world'. You also have St. Paul in the Christian tradition, also a certain call for a citizen of the world as, precisely, a brother. St. Paul says that we are all brothers, that is, sons of God, so we are not foreigners, we belong to the world as citizens of the world; and it is this tradition that we could follow up until Kant for instance, in whose concept of cosmopolitanism we find the conditions for hospitality. [...] in Kant there are a number of conditions: first of all you should of course welcome the stranger, the foreigner, to the extent that he is a citizen of another country, that you grant him the right to visit and not to stay, and there are a number of other conditions [...] this concept of the cosmopolitical which is very novel [...] is a very limited concept. [Geoffrey Bennington, "Politics and Friendship. A Discussion with Jacques Derrida", Centre for Modern French Thought, University of Sussex, Dec 1, 1997.

<http://www.livingphilosophy.org/Derrida-politics-friendship.htm>]

- These points made by Derrida, in problematizing a Nation driven cosmopolitanism, get further highlighted by Seyla Benhabib in her 2006 book *Another Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Oxford University Press) where she shows that in the Kantian kind of state-sponsored cosmopolitanism, the mechanism of its implementation still depends on the rulers themselves, and the onus of according refuge or asylum still lies with the sovereign, and argues for 'another' cosmopolitanism, where the Nation-State does not play the determining role.

Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism - 3: Tagore

- Rabindranath Tagore's *Nationalism* (1917)

[collection of three essays, written originally in English, Available at: <https://tagoreweb.in/Essays/nationalism-216>]:

- Neither the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship is the goal of human history.
- The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the nation.
- Nationalism is a great menace. It is the particular thing which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles.
- And the idea of the Nation is one of the most powerful anaesthetics that man has invented. Under the influence of its fumes the whole people can carry out its systematic programme of the most virulent self-seeking without being in the least aware of its moral perversion, – in fact feeling dangerously resentful if it is pointed out.

Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism - 3: Tagore (contd.)

- The Nation has thriven long upon mutilated humanity. Men, the fairest creations of God, came out of the National manufactory in huge numbers as war-making and money-making puppets, ludicrously vain of their pitiful perfection of mechanism. Human society grew more and more into a marionette show of politicians, soldiers, manufacturers and bureaucrats, pulled by wire arrangements of wonderful efficiency.
- You say, these machines will come into an agreement, for their mutual protection, based upon a conspiracy of fear. But will this federation of steam-boilers supply you with a soul, a soul which has her conscience and her God? What is to happen to that larger part of the world, where fear will have no hand in restraining you? Whatever safety they now enjoy, those countries of no nation, from the unbridled license of forge and hammer and turn-screw, results from the mutual jealousy of the powers. But when, instead of being numerous separate machines, they become riveted into one organized gregariousness of gluttony, commercial and political, what remotest chance of hope will remain for those others, who have lived and suffered, have loved and worshipped, have thought deeply and worked with meekness, but whose only crime has been that they have not organized?
- India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I had been taught that the idolatry of Nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will gain truly their India by fighting against that education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.

Tagore on 'World Literature'

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was asked to deliver a lecture on Comparative Literature by the Jātīya Śikṣā Pariṣad (National Council for Education), Calcutta, in February 1907
- The lecture, delivered in Bengali, got published as “Viśva-Sāhitya” (World Literature) in 1907 itself
- English translation available as Rabindranath Tagore, “World Literature (1907)”, Chapter 4, in David Damrosch ed. *World Literature in Theory*. Malden MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.
- [I am however using my own translation of passages from the original Bengali article: Rabindranath Tagore, “Viśva-Sāhitya”, Māgha 1313 BS (Feb 1907 CE), Available at: <https://www.tagoreweb.in/Essays/sahityo-51/bishwasahityo-1942>]
- In this lecture, Tagore simply says, “What you have named as ‘Comparative Literature’ in English, I will call World Literature (*viśva-sāhitya*) in Bengali.”

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907): 1. Work and Literature

- There are two major streams in which human beings express themselves in this world. One stream comprises the ‘work’ that humans do, the other stream is that of literature. These two streams flow right next to each other. Human beings have dedicated themselves to both of these – compositions through labour, and compositions through imagination. We have to try to know the history and literature of humankind through these two flows, respectively.
- In the sphere of work, human beings expend all their energy and experience to build homes, societies, states, and religious communities. It is through these buildings that all that human beings know, all that they have achieved, and all that they still desire get expression. [...] And, gradually it has come to such a pass that no sovereign individual can express himself or herself clearly and wholly any more, but through the prisms of home, society, state, and religion, built by many people over many years.
- [...] that which is great in human beings, that which is eternal, that which cannot be exhausted in everyday work, is what gets captured in literature, and automatically builds up the great form of the human race.

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907): 2. Wasteful Expenditure

- A mother cannot help taking care of her little child. But, she expresses her love not only through routine ‘work’ for the child, but also through spontaneous gestures which have no purpose. They express themselves through so many games she plays with the child, so many cuddles of affection that she showers on it, so many meaningless babbles that she utters to it. She dresses up the child in many colours, decks it with many ornaments, and without any need or purpose, cannot but expand her love and duty for the child to meaningless, but beautiful, excessive expenditure.
- The domestic mistress of our hearts feels her home-management skills to have been affronted if she cannot match the gifts she receives from her relatives’ households. She picks up all kinds of materials: language, tune, brush and stone to create her gift hamper to express her reciprocal relationship with the other. If this ends up serving any purpose of hers, good, but many a times, she gets eager to express herself even at the cost of destroying her own expedient needs. She wants to express herself even at the cost of getting bankrupt. This is the chief faculty of human expression – the faculty of wasteful expenditure; and to this the accountants of prudence and expediency can only express regret.
- The prudent and the expedient worship in one manner, the ecstatic in another manner. The prudent and the expedient worship God with the objective of getting well-being in return [...] their worship is like lending money on interest; the ecstatic’s worship is nothing but wasteful expenditure. When the heart wants to express itself, it does not give any attention to losses. [...] This uncalculating wasteful expenditure is what leads to the aesthetic.

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907): 3. Literature as Excess

- We find the power of self-preservation within ‘work’, we find the power of self-expression in aesthetic ecstasy (*rasa*). Self-preservation is what we need, self-expression is what is in excess of our needs. [...] Self-interest does not want to indulge in wasteful expenditure, and yet ecstatic joy (*ānanda*) reveals itself only in wasteful expenditure.
- That is why there is no hindrance to self-expression in literature. It is far from self-interest. [...] There is no duty there, there is only happiness. There are no guards and minions there, there is only the sovereign king himself.
- What do we get to come face-to-face with in literature? That which human beings have in abundance, that which is their wealth, that which exceeds all their needs and expediencies. That which has not been exhausted within their worldly lives.

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907): 4. Literature as Trans-Contextual

- One cannot do justice to literature if one were to belittle it to a specific place, time, and people. If we understand that the world-being (*viśva-mānava*) itself is expressing itself through literature, then only will we be able to see what is to be seen in literature. Wherever, in literary writing, the author has not been but a mere symptom, the writing has got spoilt. Wherever the author has perceived the feelings of the whole of humanity in his/her feelings, has expressed the pains of all humans in his/her writings, there the writing has found a place in literature. Literature has to be seen like this: the world-being is constructing this temple as the master mason; authors arrive from different places and times to work for him as labourers. The exact plan of the entire building is not in front of any of them, but wherever there is an error, that part breaks off; every labourer, in exercising his natural strengths, has to try to match his composition to the whole, to that invisible master-plan. It is in this that his powers get expressed, and if this happens, then one does not receive the petty salary of an ordinary labourer, but the respect that is due to great masters.

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907): 5. Literature as Trans-Historical

- To look exclusively at Akbar’s empire, or the history of Gujarat, or the character of Queen Elizabeth only satiates one’s curiosity for information – to know the news, as it were. The one who knows that Akbar or Elizabeth are but symptoms, the one who knows that the human being is just trying to bring into fruition his deepest objectives through history – through many attempts, many errors, many rectifications, the one who knows that the human being is trying to liberate himself by getting connected in larger modes with everyone from every direction, the one who knows that it is sovereignty, which in its attempts to justify itself, is continuously battling between monarchy and democracy – the human being is continuously making and unmaking itself to express itself within the world-being, to realize its particularities within collectivities – that person does not see particular personages in human history, but attempts to find the ever-attempting desires of the ever-man (*nitya-mānuṣa*). Such a person does not go on a pilgrimage and return after seeing the pilgrims alone, he returns after having a glimpse of the divine to see whom the pilgrims had assembled from diverse directions.

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907) 6: Literature as Second World

- While walking down the street of a town you see that people have no free time – the grocer is running his shop, the blacksmith is beating his iron, the porter is carrying his load, the accountant is keeping his book – but there is another thing which you may not literally see, but see it in your hearts: on both sides of the street, through every household, through the shops and markets, through the lanes and by-lanes, the flow of ecstatic joy (*rasa*) is spreading itself in so many branches, in so many ways, over so much squalor and narrowness. [...] One has to be able to see the whole of literature around the whole of humankind in this manner. One has to be able to see how the human being is able to expand its real being all around itself to great distances through its imaginative being. [...] This is how the human being continuously exudes a radiance all around itself, which makes him continuously exceed itself, expand itself. This expansion that the human being, in spite of the restrictions of his condition, attempts through imaginative creation, which builds a second world around this world, that is literature.

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907):

7. Beyond Provincial Narrow-Mindedness: Reaching the Other

- The bond that we have with truth in this world is of three types: the bond of prudence, the bond of expedience, and the bond of ecstatic joy (*ānanda*). [...] What is this bond of ecstatic joy? It is to know the other as your own, and to know your own self for the other.
- The world is not my farm (*kṣeta*) and your farm and his farm – to know the world like that is to know it very provincially – similarly literature is not my writings, your writings, and his writings. We usually look at literature in this provincial manner. We have to set our goal at liberating ourselves from this provincial narrow-mindedness and seeing the world-being in world literature, at accepting a wholeness in every author’s works, and seeing in that wholeness the attempt of all human beings at expression. The time has come to take that pledge.
- What you have named as ‘Comparative Literature’ in English, I will call it World Literature (*viśva-sāhitya*) in Bengali.

Tagore, “World Literature” (1907) – Summing Up

- Tagore’s view of World Literature is thus as an ethical project of establishing literature as the very foundation of being human, worldwide, beyond insularisms, beyond sectarianisms:
 1. The difference between useful ‘work’ and joyful ‘literature’
 2. Literature as ‘wasteful expenditure’
 3. Literature as ‘excess’, through which humans exceed their limitations
 4. Literature, thus, as ‘trans-contextual’
 5. Literature, thus, as ‘trans-historical’
 6. Literature, thus, as what is capable of creating a ‘second world’
 7. A world that is beyond ‘provincialism’, ‘narrow-mindedness’, sectarianism
 - This is the mandate for ‘World Literature’
- World Literature is thus an inutile excessive gesture of joy that promises to take one beyond narrow presentisms unto a ‘to-come’ – beyond both nationalisms and first-world cosmopolitanism

Crisis in Comparative Literature

- As early as in 1963, René Etiemble had pointed out a crisis caused by the Eurocentric nature of the discipline [*The Crisis in Comparative Literature (Comparaison n'est pas raison: La crise de la littérature comparée*, Paris: Gallimard, 1963), trans. George Joyaux and Herbert Weisinger, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966.]
- In 1993, Susan Bassnett says “Today, comparative literature in one sense is dead” [*Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 47]
- Yet, in a 2006 article, the same Susan Bassnett says:

I have been struggling with Comparative Literature all my academic life. I use the word ‘struggle’ advisedly; engaging with the idea of comparative literature has not been easy nor, as we move forward in this new century, is it at all clear where the discipline will move next. [...] Recently, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has published a collection of essays entitled *Death of a Discipline*, in which she argues that the way forward for a discipline that she perceives to be in decline is to move beyond its Eurocentric origins, and ‘to acknowledge a definitive future anteriority, a “to-come-ness”, a “will have happened” quality’.

A new comparative literature will need to ‘undermine and undo’ the tendency of dominant cultures to appropriate emergent ones (Spivak, *Death*, p. 100), in other words it will need to move beyond the parameters of Western literatures and societies and reposition itself within a planetary context. [Susan Bassnett, “Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century”, *Comparative Critical Studies*, Vol. 3, Nos. 1-2, 2006, pp. 3-11; p. 3.]

Crisis in Comparative Literature (contd.)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* [three lectures “Crossing Borders”, “Collectivities”, and “Planetary”, delivered at the Critical Theory Institute, University of California, Irvine], New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

- Showing how ‘planetary’ is different from ‘globalization’, not in a frontal opposition but in its subversive alterity, Spivak says:

The globe is on our computers. No one lives there. It allows us to think that we can aim to control it. The planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan. [...] To be human is to be intended toward the other [...] If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away. (pp. 72-73)
- The ‘paranational’ plural rustic Earth rather than the ‘international’ cosmopolitan/metropolitan globe becomes Spivak’s model for realizing this ‘planetary’ – “The Earth is a paranational image that can substitute for international and can perhaps provide, today, a displaced site for the imagination of planetary” (p. 95) – and this possible foregrounding of the ‘rustic’ can lead to a revitalization of the ‘dead’ discipline and “to make for a robust Comparative Literature” (p. 85).

Globalectics and World Literature

Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*, [Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory, 2010], New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

- This is how Ngũgĩ defines 'Globalectics':

Globalectics is derived from the shape of the globe. On its surface, there is no one center; any point is equally a center. As for the internal center of the globe, all points on the surface are equidistant to it—like the spokes of a bicycle wheel that meet at the hub.

Globalectics combines the global and the dialectical to describe a mutually affecting dialogue, or multi-logue, in the phenomena of nature and nurture in a global space that's rapidly transcending that of the artificially bounded, as nation and region. [...] Globalectics embraces wholeness, interconnectedness, equality of potentiality of parts, tension, and motion. It is a way of thinking and relating to the world, particularly in the era of globalism and globalization. (E-pub)

- It is in Chapter 3 of the book, "Globalectical Imagination: The World in the Postcolonial", that Ngũgĩ discusses World Literature in Relation to Globalectics, and what follow are quotations from this chapter.

Globalectics and World Literature (contd.)

- At present, the postcolonial is the closest to that Goethian and Marxian conception of world literature because it is a product of different streams and influences from different points of the globe, a diversity of sources, which it reflects in turn. The postcolonial is inherently outward looking, inherently international in its very constitution in terms of themes, language, and the intellectual formation of the writers. It would be quite productive to look at world literature, though not exclusively, through postcoloniality.
- In reality the postcolonial is not simply located in the third world. Literally rooted in the intertextuality of products from all the corners of the globe, its universalist tendency is inherent in its very relationship to historical colonialism and its globe for a theater. [...] The postcolonial is at the heart of the constitution of Goethe's world literature, and even in theory, it indeed constitutes the nonimperial heart of the modern and postmodern.
- In such a world of shared intellectual property, organizing the teaching of literature on the principle of national boundaries is outmoded, and even more so the export of national literatures as a superior knowledge.

Globalectics and World Literature (contd.)

- [...] the vastness of the sea and the ocean. Confronted with the possibility of that reality, and, quite frankly, its vastness, it is easy for organizers of literary knowledge to stop in fright and stay within a national boundary, taking comfort in the certainty of the structures already tried and passed on as tradition. The traditional organization of literature along national boundaries is like bathing in a river instead of sailing in the ocean, or trying to contain a river's flow within a specific territory.
- Works of imagination are amazingly antinational even where the author may think she or he is espousing national themes. People identify with a good tale and the characters irrespective of the tale's region of origins. Like a mirror or a camera, a work of art may reveal more than consciously intended. Works of imagination refuse to be bound within national geographies; they leap out of nationalist prisons and find welcoming fans outside the geographic walls. But they can also encounter others who want to put them back within the walls, as if they were criminals on the loose. [/] Equally important, if not more so, are approaches to the text, how we read it. Do we want to welcome it or do we want to put it back into prison—or even a new prison?
- The question arises: do we want to free and be freed by the text? It depends on how we read it, and what baggage we bring to it. [...] To release the wordliness in all its multifaceted character, it's perhaps better to read literature, any literature, through a globalectic vision.

Globalectics and World Literature (contd.)

- One of the obstacles to a globalectic reading is the tendency to look at literature and the languages of its birth in terms of hierarchy, the notion that some languages and cultures are inherently of a higher order than others. [...] Literature and culture tend to be valued according to what position their language of composition occupies in the hierarchy. [...] I have argued for a collapsing of this hierarchy so as to view the relationship between languages, cultures, and literatures in terms of a network, akin but not identical to Deleuze and Guattari's "rhizome." In a network there is no one center, all are points balanced and related to one another by the principle of giving and receiving. The pedagogical organization of literature should reflect that sense of a common heritage of simultaneously taking and giving assumed by a network. [/] Central to the pedagogical enterprise is the practice of translation. Translation is the language of languages. It opens the gates of national and linguistic prisons. It is thus one of the most important allies of world literature and global consciousness.
- Globalectics becomes the way of reading world literature. Globalectical reading means breaking open the prison house of imagination built by theories and outlooks that would seem to signify the content within is classified, open to only a few.
- World literature, of which the postcolonial is an integral part, is our common heritage as much as the air we breathe.

In Conclusion

- In these troubled times, where all around us sectarian identity assertions of different forms are raising their ugly heads and challenging the very foundations of humanity, and the promise of vague first-world cosmopolitanism merely skirts real issues in a make-believe bubble of affluence of the few, World Literature thus becomes an ethical means of leading one beyond the cesspool of both the insular identitarian and the dilettante metropolitan / cosmopolitan 'here and now', to the promise of a truly cosmopolitical democracy to come.
- The relevance of Tagore's vision of 'World Literature' lies in it forming a blueprint for this non-instrumental, non-identitarian, non-nationalistic and non-cosmopolitan, and yet cosmopolitical pursuit of literature and culture, which can attempt to show us the way out of the sectarianism and identitarianism as well as the indifference and cynicism that plague our society today.
- And Spivak's idea of connecting Comparative Literature to 'Planetary', and Ngũgĩ's idea of connecting World Literature to 'Globalectics' allow us to do so by connecting to literatures of those other Worlds – ones that are otherwise than centralizing.

THANK YOU

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