

The Locations of (World) Literature

Perspectives from Africa and South Asia



JUNE 19TH-20TH 2017

ENS, 45 RUE D'ULM, 75005

SALLE DUSSANE

ORGANIZATION

Francesca Orsini (SOAS, University of London) and Laetitia Zecchini (CNRS/THALIM, Paris), with the support of the labex TransferS and as part of the ERC funded project "Multilingual Locals and Significant Geographies : For a New Approach to World Literature"

CONTACT

laetitia.zecchini@cnrs.fr



MONDAY JUNE 19TH

9H30 Introduction by **Francesca Orsini** and **Laetitia Zecchini**

► **Chair Claire Joubert (Paris 8)**

9H45 – 10H45 WORLD VISIONS

Xavier Garnier (Sorbonne Nouvelle / THALIM)
“World Visions in Swahili Literature”

Francesca Orsini (SOAS, University of London)
“World Literature, Indian views”

11H – 12H TRAVELLING LITERATURES

Soofia Siddique (Freie Universität Berlin)
“Worlds of Advice: Going Places with Nazir Ahmad”

Fatima Burney (SOAS, University of London)
“Oriental Bards and the Figuration of Wandering in ‘World Literature’ :
Receptions of Hafez and Persianate Poetics”

► **Chair Claire Gallien** (Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3)

14H – 15H REFRACTIONS, CONNECTIONS

Karin Barber (University of Birmingham)
“Print Culture and the Representation of India in early twentieth-century
Lagos”

Sara Marzagora (SOAS, University of London)
“Amharic Literature, Ethiopian History and the global; Kābbādä Mikael’s
worldscapes (1950s-1960s)”

15H30 – 17H WORLDING: DEBATES, WRITING, TRANSLATION

Mourad Yelles (INALCO-LACNAD)
“Littérature-Monde: Alger contre-enquête”

Tristan Leperlier (EHESS)
“Nationalisation and Worldisation of Algerian Literature: *Timimoum* of
Rachid Boudjedra”

Amatoritsero Ede (MISR, Makerere University, Uganda)
“The Untranslatibility of African Language Literature”

TUESDAY JUNE 20TH

► **Chair Xavier Garnier** (Sorbonne Nouvelle/THALIM)

9H30 – 10H30 RESHAPING CARTOGRAPHIES THROUGH LITERATURE

Karima Laachir (SOAS, University of London)

“Whose Significant Geography? History from Below in A Lahbib’s *The Journeys of ‘Abdi* (2013)

Elara Bertho (Sorbonne Nouvelle)

“Cartography of Eroticism: Reshaping geographic categories”

11H – 12H COMMUNITIES: BEYOND GEOGRAPHICAL ASSIGNATIONS?

Peter D. McDonald (Oxford University)

“Thinking the Unthinkable: Everintermutuomergent Communities of Letters”

Laetitia Zecchini (CNRS/THALIM)

“Practices, constructions and deconstructions of *world literature* and
“*Indian literature*: Two Illustrations”

► **Chair Catherine Servan-Schreiber** (CEIAS-EHESS)

14H – 15H NETWORKS: VERY LOCAL AND/OR VERY TRANSNATIONAL

Clarissa Vierke (University of Bayreuth)

“Utterly Local? On the Position of Swahili Popular Poetry in Dar es Salaam”

Mélanie Bourlet (INALCO) “Transnational Literary Networks and Local Dynamics: The Case of Pulaar Literature”

15H30 – 16H30 General discussion

XAVIER GARNIER

(Sorbonne Nouvelle/thalim)

World Visions in Swahili Literature

Probably because of its relationship with a coastal culture, Swahili literature seems extremely aware of its situation in the world. Through a close reading of several poems and novels, I propose to study the way in which Swahili writers configure the world in its entirety. This will also pave the way to identify the specificities of a Swahili cosmopolitanism.

Peut-être en raison de sa relation avec une culture côtière, la littérature swahilie semble très consciente de sa situation dans le monde. A travers la lecture de quelques poèmes et romans je propose d'étudier la façon dont les écrivains swahilis configurent le monde dans son entier. Il s'agira ainsi d'ouvrir des pistes pour identifier les spécificités d'un cosmopolitisme Swahili.

FRANCESCA ORSINI

(SOAS, University of London)

World literature, Indian views, 1920s-1940s

In the early half of the twentieth century, different views and understandings of world literature emerged and overlapped in the Indian literary field, as publishers and writers undertook more translations of foreign authors and works. Several of these enterprises were, unsurprisingly, aimed at de-provincialising Indian readers and writers, who needed to read more and more widely. P.P. Bakhshi, the editor of the prestigious Hindi journal *Sarasvatī* in the 1920s, argued in his systematic and historical account of world literature, *Viśva-sāhitya* (1928). But while some, like J.L. Nehru, saw translations as a quick fix for upda-

ting a whole literary culture, other intellectuals saw writing on world literature and translation as helpfully disenchanting Indian readers about the excellence of English literature. It was in this spirit that the Malayalam critic A. Balakrishna Pillai translated Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Mérimée's *Carmen*, stories by Maupassant, Chekhov, Daudet, and wrote on Proust, Gogol, Tokutomi, Freud, Futurism and Vorticism, Mayakovsky, Cubism, and so on. In his view, "Malayalam literature had unfortunately chosen to look towards English literature unlike Japan where French and Russian literatures were the benchmarks..." (Dilip Menon).

Translating and writing about world literature was also a way for Indian writers and intellectuals to work through ideas of "Eastern" and "Western" literature or poetry and elaborate a non-colonial presence on the world stage. Thus in 'Aesthetics: western and eastern' (*sundarkalā paschatyavum paurastyavum*), Pillai wrote about the need to transcend the debilitating and futile distinctions between East and West which instituted hierarchy rather than mere difference. And in his extraordinarily wide-ranging translations and dense historical-critical essays in the 1930s and '40s, the Urdu poet *Mirājī* engaged with everything from the Minnesänger to Walt Whitman, from Pushkin to François Villon, Charles Baudelaire to Li Po, Saffo and Catullus to Korean, Laotian, and Japanese poets. This was also a way for the Urdu poet to engage and assimilate Sanskrit, Hindi, and Bengali poetry and enlarge his own sense of an Indian literature. Both historical and transcending history in literary contemporaneity, Mirājī's undertaking prefigured the free-ranging reading of other Indian modernists like Arun Kolatkar and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. This imbalance in translational inflows and outflows, which theorists like Itamar Even-Zohar would probably read as indexing a subordinate position, can be read

differently, this paper argues, as enabling the re-subjectivation of colonized readers and writers: “It is only when the people of Kerala come to believe that the western world needs their support in continuing what it has done to create this new world that they can be of any real assistance”, wrote Pillai.

SOOFIA SIDDIQUE

(Freie Universität Berlin)

Worlds of Advice: Going Places with Nazir Ahmad

My paper focuses on the famous Urdu reformist writer, Nazir Ahmad’s advice book for boys *Chand Pand* (early 1870s). Initially addressed to his son, the book went on to become a set text book for school boys in later nineteenth and early twentieth century North India. Hence the text is significant as a reflection of colonial modernity in Urdu, as well as arguably generative of related outlooks. In my paper I will explore three major themes, with specific reference to a section titled “Duniya ka Mukhtasar Haal” (“A Brief Account of the World”):

1. First I will seek to locate Nazir Ahmad in a context of cross-linguistic and cross-literary consumption and production--of Arabic scholarship and familiarity with that literary tradition; of the consumption of didactic English novels on which he modelled some of his own bestsellers; of practices of translation, as he was the celebrated translator of the Indian Penal Code into Urdu.
2. Then I will engage with the discourse of world geography in this piece, and the conceptualization of travel as an emergent ideal for young Indian Muslim men.
3. Finally, I will explore the dichotomous depiction of the local (especially in the figure of towns) and the global (especially in the figure of nations) in this piece.

In sum, these reflections may be useful in mapping not simply Nazir Ahmad as an individual writer, but as a standard-bearer of a significant emergent Urdu ‘worldview’.

FATIMA BURNEY

(SOAS, University of London)

Oriental Bards and the Figuration of Wandering in ‘World Literature’: Receptions of Hafez and Persianate Poetics

Discussions of ‘World Literature’ often imagine literary presence, movement, and exchange in terms of *location* and prioritize those literary traditions that can be *mapped*. This trend in literary criticism was particularly perceptible in late nineteenth and early twentieth century discussions of ‘genius’, a concept which held particular currency in the circulation of World Literature and which connoted not simple individual virtuosity but, more importantly, the ability of a writer to reflect the ‘local spirit’ of his origins. As Katie Trumpner has argued in her book *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, bardic figures were often read as the ambassadors of their respective national genius. Emerson’s reception of Hafiz as one such ‘Bard’ is particularly fascinating for how it reconstructs the language of alienation, exile, and dislocation that was conventional to classical Persian (and Persianate) poetry as evidence of ‘genius’. This paper highlights the construction of Hafez as ‘Bard’ as one amongst many modern reconfigurations of ghazal poetics in which the tropes of wandering that were abundant in Persian and Urdu poetry came to inflect the writings of key figures of World Poetics, including Emerson and Goethe. While the elaboration of wandering often entailed an exilic and alienated tenor in the classical Persianate poetic traditions, in modernist recapitulations, the versification of *ghur-*

bat (alienation) often takes on more nationalistic and cosmopolitan purpose.

KARIN BARBER

(University of Birmingham)

Print culture and the representation of India in early twentieth-century Lagos

The “creole” elites who owned and wrote for the early twentieth-century Lagos press were internationally networked and well travelled, with family connections, professional affiliations and business interests all along the British West African coast and across the UK. Their writings showed that virtual travel was, if anything, even more important to their sense of their place in the world. They spoke of print and modern communications (the telegraph, railway, steamships, postal service) as mechanisms by which they participated as performers and audiences on an imperial or even global stage. While intensely preoccupied with local politics, they also read and frequently quoted periodicals imported not only from Britain and the Anglophone West African colonies, but also from the USA, the Caribbean, and South Asia. In the years surrounding the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, they were especially attentive to India. Their commentaries alternated between – or even combined – fellow-feeling, emulation, rivalry, and hostility. Through this print culture there emerged a sense, among the Lagos elite, of all of the British possessions as parallel units, rendered equivalent not only to each other but also to metropolitan white British insofar as all were subjects of the Crown. The very act of writing for the press was to self-situate in political and cultural space at multiple scalar levels.

SARA MARZAGORA

(SOAS, University of London)

Amharic literature, Ethiopian history and the global: Käbbädä Mikael's worldsapes (1950s-1960s)

Poet, translator, playwright, and historian, Käbbädä Mikael (1916-1998) rose to prominence in Ethiopia in the 1950s, a period described by Bahru Zewde as “drab”, in contrast with the “intellectual vibrancy” of the 1930s. An analysis of Käbbädä Mikael's Amharic oeuvre, though, contradicts Bahru's assessment. In his works, Käbbädä repeatedly interrogated Ethiopia's cultural positionality, rethinking ideas of belonging and historical trajectories. While 1930s writers were overall confident in their claim that Ethiopia was by virtue of its historical glories one of the world's “big nations”, Käbbädä writes in a period when, after the Italian occupation (1936-1941), Ethiopia's position in the world was dubious and uncertain. His intellectual search is, therefore, more tentative and open-ended than his predecessors. Yet, it retains an assuredness and optimism that will disappear in the disillusioned works of the 1960s. Even when measuring himself with the flagship genre of 20th century Amharic historiography, the “history of the world” (*YäAläm Tarik*, 1955) Käbbädä does not offer a solution to the problem of the “global”; he rather suggests various, and sometimes discrepant, avenues of exploration. His works inhabit different literary and intellectual geographies, in an attempt to tease out connections between Ethiopia and East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the broader Horn of Africa.

One of the most multilingual Amharic writers, Käbbädä was fluent in Geez, Italian, French and English and familiar with the literary traditions in these languages. His Amharic rendition of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* departed so much from the original that Anglophone critics were uncomfortable even defining it as an “adap-

tation". He was the last of the "Japanisers", Ethiopian intellectuals that looked at Japan as a model for development (1953/54, *Japan Əndəmən Sälättänäčč*, 'How Japan modernised'). At the same time, his Ethiopia sits comfortably among references to ancient Greece and Rome, and plays like *Kaleb*, on the eponymous Aksumite king, reference Constantinople while seamlessly introducing Yemen as part of Ethiopia's classical geography. Some of his works embrace modernisation theory, and pay homage to the greatness of Western civilisation. Only European males are included in his biographies *Tallaləč Säwöčč* ('Great Men', 1962/63), since, as he had previously stated in *Ityopyanna Məəhrabawi Səltane* ('Ethiopia and Western civilisation' 1948/49), "Ethiopia [...] has not yet reached that evolutionary stage which produces men of genius". He started his career as a radio broadcaster for the Italian occupiers, but later composed some of the first Amharic anticolonial poems for his collection *YäḲəne Azmära* (1962/63, 'Harvest of poetry'). His play *Annibal* (1963/64) reinterprets the history of the wars between Rome and Carthage as a prelude to the European civilisation of Africa. Much of his career was devoted to preserving Ethiopia's manuscript and archaeological heritage and defending Ethiopia's Christian values. As this summary shows, his investigations into the geographies of Ethiopia's cultural belonging were unresolved and inconclusive, pointing at a conception of the "world" not as a given, but as a problem to be faced creatively via successive journeys.

MOURAD YELLES

(INALCO - LACNAD, Paris)

"Littérature Monde : Alger contre-enquête ..."

En me référant à une controverse relativement récente autour du roman de Kamal Daoud *Meursault, Contre-enquête* (Prix Goncourt du premier roman en 2015), cette intervention se

propose de discuter la notion de «littérature Monde» dans le contexte socio-littéraire algérien. En effet, la visée littéraire (à la fois poétique et polémique) de ce roman révèle parfaitement, à mon sens, les virtualités quasi-heuristiques mais surtout les limites du concept de la «littérature-monde» considéré à partir d'un champ littéraire dominé (et non moins «émergent» !) du sud de la Méditerranée.

By discussing a relatively recent controversy around the novel of Kamal Daoud *Meursault, Contre-enquête* (Prix Goncourt 2015), I intend to discuss the notion of « littérature monde » in the Algerian social and literary context. The literary ambition (at once poetic and polemic) of the novel exposes both the heuristic virtualities and the limits of the concept of « littérature-monde » considered from the perspective of a « dominated » (and nonetheless « emergent ») literary field.

TRISTAN LEPELIER (EHSS)

Nationalization and Worldisation of Algerian Literature: *Timimoun* of Rachid Boudjedra

Rachid Boudjedra is a very complex figure. Writing in French and Arabic, recognized in the Arab world but mostly in Paris, he was at the time of the 1990's civil war one of the most important Algerian writers. Nationalist (born in 1941, he participated in the Independence war), he spontaneously speaks of himself, never as a "Francophone", but as an "Algerian", an "Arab", and maybe above all as a "Maghrebi" writer, with the French-Moroccan Tahar Ben Jelloun as major challenger.

The civil war is a period of strong internationalization (a quarter of all Algerian writers went to exile, mostly in France) but also of strong nationalization of Algerian literature. Because of political commitments outside and within the literary works, and because of the international readership's interest in the political situation in

Algeria, Algerian literary works are generally reduced in France to these Algerian political issues.

Written in Arabic and then in French, *Timimoun* (1994) challenges these international representations of Algeria. In the story, the bus driver in the Sahara desert tries to change the orientalist representations of its tourists. Far removed from the terror attacks in Algiers (of what we still hear the terrible echoes), and from the pure Arab-Muslim identity that Islamists try to present to the world, this road trip draws also on the image of an open African-Arab-Mediterranean Algerian identity. The French reception of the book, however, did not see the geographical shift, and nationalized the text in a political way, concentrating on the political commitment against the Islamists in Algiers, not on the attempt to “worldise” Algerian identity.

Nationalisation et Mondialisation de la littérature algérienne : *Timimoun* de Rachid Boujedra

Rachid Boudjedra est une figure très complexe. Écrivain en français et en arabe, reconnu dans le monde arabe, mais surtout à Paris, il était à l'époque de la guerre civile des années 1990 l'un des plus importants auteurs algériens. Nationaliste (né en 1941, il a participé à la guerre d'Indépendance), il se décrit spontanément, jamais comme un écrivain « francophone », mais comme un écrivain « algérien », « arabe » et peut-être surtout comme « maghrébin », l'écrivain franco-marocain Tahar Ben Jelloun faisant figure de concurrent principal. La guerre civile a été une période de forte internationalisation (un quart des écrivains algériens se sont exilés, surtout en France), mais aussi d'une forte nationalisation de la littérature algérienne. En raison des engagements politiques à l'extérieur et à l'intérieur des œuvres littéraires, et en raison de l'intérêt du lectorat international pour la situation politique en Algérie, les œuvres littéraires algériennes sont généralement réduites en France à ces problèmes politiques algériens. Écrit en arabe puis en français, *Timimoun* (1994) conteste ces repré-

sentations internationales de l'Algérie. Le narrateur, guide touristique dans le Sahara, essaie de changer les représentations orientalistes de ses clients. Loin des attaques terroristes d'Alger (dont on perçoit les échos terribles), et de l'identité purement arabo-musulmane que les islamistes tentent de présenter au monde, ce road-trip dessine également les contours d'une identité algérienne tout à la fois africaine, arabe et méditerranéenne. Toutefois la réception française du livre n'a pas perçu le déplacement géographique, et a « nationalisé » le texte en n'en retenant que les enjeux politiques, et non la tentative de « mondialiser » l'identité algérienne.

AMATORITSERO EDE

(MISR, Makerere University, Uganda)

The Untranslatability of African Language Literature

Critics agree that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 1827 vision for a world literature has since been realized – especially two centuries later. What Goethe probably never imagined is that this body of work will be largely monolingual in English – due to historical capitalist processes that he could not have predicted. The contemporary result is that literature written in African languages hardly ever feature in discussions about world literature as a bordering discipline of comparative literature – except perhaps through token translations. In other words, a disciplinary conservatism discourages an active regime of the translations of texts in world languages into Europhone languages. This is partly due to the problematic of translation as emphasized in Emily Apter's controversial but nuanced self-positioning *Against World Literature* (2013). My contention in this paper is that the idea of untranslatability takes its impulse from that conservatism which is rooted in the same historical imperial discourses and capitalist processes that created the literary and linguistic inequalities within world literature, in the first instance. I propose that translation,

linguistic and otherwise, is indeed viable and necessary, towards a larger cultural translation

that should strive to correct historical inequalities and create a truly global modernity.

TUESDAY MAY 20TH

KARIMA LAACHIR

(SOAS, University of London)

Whose Significant Geography? History from below in A Lahbib's *The Journeys of 'Abdi*, (2013)

Most of Morocco's Arabophone and Francophone novelists trace their literary cartographies to France (and sometimes Spain) and to the Mashreq (mainly Egypt) as locations of influence and inspiration as well as centres of literary circulation. This orientation follows in the steps of the postcolonial nation states (in the wider Maghreb) to develop a literary history in line with the modern borders of the state where France is seen as central in influencing literary tastes and practices and where Egypt epitomises the inspiring pan-Arabic Nahda. Abdelrahim Lahbib's novel *The Journey of 'Abdi, known as the Son of Hamriya* (2013) offers another less told significant geography of the country that predates the modern nation state, that of sub-Saharan Africa presented as a fundamental component of the country's culture and history. Lahbib's meta-fictional narrative follows the story of a young scholar who stumbles in a flea market in the 'peripheral' city of Asafi upon an anonymous 19th century manuscript (*makhtut*) or a travelogue of a non-elitist religious scholar in Morocco and his journey to 'seek knowledge' and understand the reasons of the decay of the Islamic *Umma*. This paper explores the literary cartography of this novel and its significant geography which re-imagines sub-Saharan Africa as an important

part of Morocco's wider significant geography; it also indicates the genre of the *makhtut* and travel literature as pre-modern precursors to the Moroccan novel. The paper also dwells on the novel's opening of wider literary affiliations and geographies, particularly in its heavy drawing on classical Arabic poets such as al-Mutanabbi (d 965 AD) and the significance of such literary choices as well as its aesthetic use of 19th century Maghrebi Arabic Fusha and Darija and various other 'local' languages.

ELARA BERTHO (Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Cartography of eroticism : Reshaping geographic categories

Abdoulaye Mamani wrote in the 70's two erotic novels (*Shit* and *Divagations d'un nègre hippy*), the two of them portraying a dialogue between an African American, deserter, former militant of the Black Panthers, and an African student exiled in Europe (Paris, Rome). The two experiment in Europe a liberation of moral and also a liberation of their desires and instincts. These novels remain unpublished. Sami Tchak in *La couleur de l'écrivain* depicts accurately how eroticism and pornography represent for an African writer a way to reshape literary cartographies and categories. By analyzing the work of Mamani and Tchak, I will depict how the writing of the body is a way to escape the «African literature» category. The study will also focus on Joseph Tonda's concept of «éblouissement postcolonial» and of «corps-sexe» (developed in *L'impérialisme post-*

colonial, based on a study of the reification of the black body in Western media), and on a parallel with Claudia Rankine's work, *Citizen* (with the 2012 conflict between Caroline Wozniacki and Serena Williams).

Cartographie de l'érotisme : se jouer des catégories géographiques

Abdoulaye Mamani a écrit dans les années 1970 deux romans érotiques (*Shit* et *Divagations d'un nègre hippy*), qui mettent tous deux en scène un dialogue entre un Africain américain, déserteur, ancien militant des Black Panthers, et un étudiant africain, exilé en Europe (Paris, Rome). Les deux expérimentent en Europe une libération des moeurs et des désirs et instincts. Ces deux romans sont inédits et n'ont pas été publiés du vivant de l'auteur. Sami Tchak, dans *La couleur de l'écrivain*, suggère que l'érotisme serait une voie de sortie pour l'écrivain africain pour échapper aux cartographies littéraires et aux catégories, jugées normatives (voire racistes). En analysant les textes de Mamani et de Tchak je propose comme interprétation que l'exploration littéraire du corps est un moyen d'échapper à la catégorie de «littérature africaine». Je m'appuierai également sur les concepts développés par Joseph Tonda dans *L'impérialisme postcolonial* d'«éblouissement» et de «corps-sexe», qui décrit les imaginaires médiatiques des corps noirs, réifiés et sexualisés. Un parallèle avec *Citizen* de Claudia Rankine viendra compléter cette réflexion sur le corps, notamment lorsqu'elle s'empare du conflit qui opposa les joueuses de tennis Caroline Wozniacki et Serena Williams.

PETER D. MCDONALD (ST HUGHS COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD)

'Thinking the Unthinkable: Everintermutuomergent Communities of Letters'

What happens when we think of literature not as an inert object of study or as an abstract idea ('ideology'?) but as a vitalizing experience of wri-

ting? Drawing on examples from the 1930s to the present day, all written in what we too casually call the English language, I shall consider what bearing this question has not just on the old statist conceptualisations of literature as the property of a national community but on some more recent counter-conceptualizations, whether sub-, trans-, inter-, or supra-national. In the process, I shall also discuss its implications for the old centre-periphery, dominant-dominated models of the 'world' literary system.

LAETITIA ZECCHINI (CNRS/THALIM)

Practices, constructions and deconstructions of "World literature" and "Indian literature": Two illustrations

In this presentation, I would like to explore two different, and seemingly antithetical ways by which ideas of the "world", of "India", of "Indian literature" and of "world literature", but also of cosmopolitanism have been constructed and deconstructed: first by an organization, the PEN All-India Centre at the turn of independence, and second by a contemporary Indian poet and critic, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, from the 60s onwards. The Indian branch of International PEN ("a world association of poets-playwrights-editors" championing the "ideal of *one* humanity living in peace in *one* world") was founded in 1934 in Bombay. It aimed at stressing "the fundamental unity that underlies all Indian literatures" and at promoting unity and understanding across India, and between India and the rest of the world, notably through its translational agenda. *The Indian P.E.N* (a monthly started in 1934) and proceedings from the All-India Writers' conferences that the Centre started to organize in 1945 are fascinating documents where ideas of "Indian literature" and "world literature", appear not only highly crafted and interconnected products, but are also hotly debated.

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra who writes from Allahabad and from Dehradun (two places that figure prominently in his poetry), but who has also considered himself both as a “Bombay poet” and as an “American poet” for whom “the location, whether cultural, historical, geographical or fictive - is everything”, has, like other writers of his generation and the next (Arun Kolatkar or Amit Chaudhuri) challenged the compactness and certainty of belonging, *ideas* of “India”, “Indianness” and “Indian literature”. The context in which they write, their critical interventions and their literary craft seem to bypass generic categories (East/West, Indian / foreign, center / periphery) to write about specific places, streets and names, but also to expose the underground affiliations, non-canonical and often non-Indian lineages and cartographies they created for themselves, and the pluralities their works contain. Through widely different agendas and perspectives, there’s a common thread that seems to run from the All-India PEN Centre to Mehrotra: in both cases “Indian literature” is *born in translation*. I would like to understand the use of English in these constructions and deconstructions, and discuss the relevance of James Clifford’s proposition of location as an “itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations” for the specific places, Bombay and Allahabad, from which literature is here envisaged and invented, and from which a form of “rewording” can also take place.

CLARISSA VIERKE (BAYREUTH)

Utterly local? On the position of Swahili popular poetry in Dar es Salaam

Swahili literary history in Tanzania has recurrently been portrayed as a single, unilinear development from a “traditional” Muslim poetry from the Swahili coast, the historical cradle of Swahili language, to a national, modern literature, promoted by Julius Nyerere, as both a symbol and vehicle

of nation-building, to a postmodern literature, reflecting postcolonial frustrations. There is a dichotomy created between a traditional literature left behind and a (post)modern literature created by intellectual and increasingly cosmopolitan Swahili authors aiming at wider audiences and dealing with topics which reflect their global experiences. – In short, literary history works along one time-line and affects the whole country equally and simultaneously.

To question some of the assumptions linked to this idea of literary history in this paper, I will focus on poetry, which seems to fall in between these categories, namely popular poetry from Dar es Salaam. I will concentrate on a group of popular poets, whom I interviewed last year to find out more about why they write and how they write their poetry. Poets like Bi Jalala struggle to make ends meet, are not respected as intellectuals by their communities, have hardly attended school and have not travelled widely. They mostly publish their poetry in newspapers and social media and organize themselves in local literary networks and activist groups. Their poetry is neither traditional nor avant-garde. Academic poets look down on them as “paltry poets”, who compose their poetry to earn some little money in a form that abides to mechanical rules of versification which suffocate any poetic depth. Thus, the poetry seems to be disconnected from acclaimed (“traditional” and “modern”) literary practice, drawing from a deficient poetic repertoire and is represented by institutions, which are of little relevance clinging to an outdated idea of Tanzanian socialism – thus far from making any literary impact or being situated in a wider world.

In this paper, I will concentrate on one of the poets, Bi Jalala. I will try to situate her work in this literary field of poetic composition, which I will seek to characterize by pointing out its multiple references to other literary fields. I will depict it as a literary network, which is not a disconnected isolate, but a field of practice with its rules, categories and institutions that comes into being

in relation to others. My intention is to contradict the idea of its disconnection and highlight its co-presence questioning the idea of one literary history: I will show that popular poetry comes into being not as a practice with a limited repertoire that is unconscious of intellectual debates about literature. Rather it emerges in opposition but also *in relation to* notions of “traditional literature”, academic literary production as well as to academic meta-categories of literature. Literary history is hence rather a history of practices, which co-constitute each other.

Lastly, stressing the multiple way of literary production, I will show how Bi Jalala situates her own poetry as part of a national or regional or literature. I will argue that her project is one of constructing a nation that can be traced back to Nyerere’s idea of building the nation, but whose implications are different in the context of present-day Tanzania. Comparing it to “academic poetry”, I will argue for a co-presence of various modern literary projects (nation-building) – an argument against a unified idea of the nation underlying a national literary history.

MELANIE BOURLET (Inalco)

“Transnational literary networks and local dynamics: The Case of Pulaar Literature”

According to Paul Jay, “Contemporary globalization is characterized, not by the withering away of the nation-state in the face of homogenizing, westernizing, or cosmopolitan tendencies, but by the simultaneous acceleration of globalization and nationalism” (2010: 118). By studying the case of a transnational literature in an African language (Pulaar/Fulfulde) produced and circulating in Europe and Africa, this paper will explore some of the consequences of a “multisited ethnography” (Appadurai 1996) and cosmopolite approach for the study of literatures in African languages. I argue that in what is generally considered by

literary critics as minor, ethnic or regionalist literatures arise contemporary questions about “glocalization” that also show the limits of an institutional approach of literature and a territorial definition of the “Nation”. Fulfulde language is spoken by roughly 20 million people across the Sahel from western Senegal to eastern Sudan. Nowhere is it an official language. However, a creative writing in Pulaar – one of the major dialects of Fulfulde spoken in Mali, Senegal and Mauritania – emerged since the 60’s because of a transnational associative network. From an institutional point of view, the creative writing in Pulaar is almost invisible. Most books are hard to find. This situation is in clear contrast with a form of “intensity” which characterizes this literature. Hence the importance of the notion of “network” to appreciate this intense connection of readers to books and the social and political function of the literature in Pulaar in a linguistic community disseminated all over the world.

Le réseau littéraire transnational pulaar entre Afrique et Europe : un cas de glocalisation

Cette communication pose la question, à travers un exemple précis, du rapport entre littératures afrophones, mondialisation et nationalisme et des enjeux pour la littérature mondiale d’une approche transnationale et/ou multilocale de ce qui est généralement considéré comme des épiphénomènes littéraires mondiaux. Manifestation évidente d’une « glocalisation » des cultures, ces littératures pointent ainsi les limites d’une approche institutionnelle de la littérature, certes importante pour mettre en lumière certains enjeux de pouvoirs mais insuffisante en tant que schéma explicatif pour rendre compte de ce qu’elles nous révèlent de l’intensité du rapport de l’écriture à la vie. Nous prendrons l’exemple de la littérature pulaar moderne, née en contexte de mobilité et d’une nécessité d’être en adéquation avec un état du monde globalisé. Nous évoquerons ainsi de quelle manière elle constitue par l’intermédiaire de ses œuvres autant d’espaces interstitiels, de mises en réseaux potentiels d’une

communauté poulâr dispersée aux quatre coins de la planète ; invitant ainsi le chercheur à placer au centre de la réflexion les notions de mobilité, de connectivité et de réflexivité et à voir cette littérature comme une forme originale d'extension du lien social en contexte de mondialisation.

The Locations of (World) Literature Perspectives from Africa and South Asia

The aim of the conference is to look at the ways in which modern and contemporary South Asian and African writers who produce their work from specific locales consider their place in the world, in world literature, in the wider geographical regions (Africa, South Asia, etc.) or national literary histories in which their work is often read or identified with. How do these writers work through, use, challenge or re-invent the macro categories (region, nation, sub-continent, continent, world), with which literary histories are written and literary cartographies constituted ? What is the relevance of these geographical categories, and how are they often reallocated or realigned ? What worlds do these literatures simultaneously inhabit and create?

By postulating the plurality of the literary geographies/cartographies to which many South Asian and African writers belong, we postulate that these situated practices are also worldly, and always already connected to wider "significant geographies", whether real or imagined.

We mean to Analyze the ways by which ideas or representations of what it is to be an "Indian", "South Asian" or an "African" writer correspond to or contradict the writers' own practices and representations ; study the unpredictable networks (linguistic, imaginary, literary, etc.) and connections that writers and works of literature invent ; reconsider the doxa on world literature today, with its binaries (centre/periphery, local/global, etc.) and hierarchies ; invite papers on literatures that are generally disconnected from each other (Anglophone vs. Francophone literatures ; the so-called "vernacular" or regional languages of South Asia and Africa vs. literatures in French or in English, etc.)