

TRANS | LATION MISSION GRESSION

reconfiguring the boundaries of world literature and translation studies

Centre for Languages and Literature
September 2022

Drawing on recent developments in gender, queer and trans theory, the Komplitt symposium TRANSLATION/TRANSMISSION/TRANSGRESSION will address complex forms of difference that are inevitably actualized when literature is translated and circulated beyond its origins. It aims to open new routes for vibrant interdisciplinary exchange and reconfigure the boundaries of world literature and translation studies.

The fields of world literature and translation studies have always been closely engaged with materials that do not fit a single category. Both Goethe's idea of *Weltliteratur* as a dialogue between national literatures and Schleiermacher's arguments on the values of foreignization in translated literature hinge on juxtaposition and contrast; on *difference* as the aesthetic and epistemological precondition for translation and world literature. Similarly, since the turn of the millennium great strides have been made towards understanding the asymmetrical power structures of the world literary sphere, the complex dynamics between source and target cultures in acts of translation, and the transformative force of literary migration. And while what Appandurai calls the Eurochronology problem still persists, attempts to move beyond it are increasingly prevalent – ranging from Diaz Fouces' claim of translation as “an instrument to maintain diversity,” to Helgesson's description of the cosmopolitan and the vernacular as “thoroughly *relational* terms,” and Apter's argument that translated literature is essentially “de-owned” and exists beyond the strictures of national literary histories.

Despite these backgrounds and developments, however, examinations of difference and variability are less than frequent in world literature and translation studies. Stemming partly from the dividing line to more politically attuned postcolonialism – a divide that surely must be bridged! – the resulting situation is one where questions of gender, sexuality, identity and race are rarely posed in connection to translation and world literature. Reminiscent of what Derrida calls Heidegger's “stubborn mutism” on matters of sex, this silence triggers a host of

queries: How does gender and sexuality impact translation? What shifts of identity are implied in cross-cultural transmissions of texts? What forms of identitarian transgression are inscribed in the political and aesthetic hierarchies of the world literary sphere? And conversely, how might the displaced or uncategorizable be used to reconfigure the hegemonic structures of the international book market, either through openings to revolt or in previously unexplored modes of agency and being?

Taking the notion of “trans-functions” as its fulcrum – and emphasizing the link between *translation*, *transmission*, and *transgression* – the symposium invites papers exploring how translation and world literature is tied to matters of difference, dispersion and dissidence; how translated and world literatures are between, beyond or beside categories in ways that affect displacements of identities in both texts, persons, and readerships. It must be underscored that this encompasses concrete figurations of sexuality in the world literary sphere: *trans* first and foremost names sexual identities that refute binary heterosexual structures. But as Halberstam argues, the notion of *trans* also points to “uncertain modes of being” in a more general sense, and to attempts at highlighting that which is not predicated on separation but rather intersect and mix; that which is moving, unfixed, and without established designation.

The symposium thus invites papers on topics such as

- world literary phenomena that reconfigure binary categorizations like center/periphery, author/translator, or target/source culture
- gender and gendered identities in translation
- untranslatability and designations of the untranslatable
- sexuality, gender and race in world literature
- the boundaries between postcolonial studies and world literary studies
- minor modes of agency in the world literary sphere
- figurations of politics and poetics in world literature and translation
- patterns and effects of transgression in translational acts
- trans-functions in theories of translation
- case studies on LGBTQ authors, translators and critics from world literary, cross-cultural or postcolonial perspectives
- sexuality and gender in sociologies of translation

Abstracts of 300 words (plus short bio) should be sent to oscar.jansson@lit.lu.se by March 31st, 2022. Notification of acceptance will follow in late April.

The symposium will be held at the Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, on 22–23 September 2022.