

Borges grew progressively disenchanted with democracy—a position reflected in “La fiesta del monstruo” (“The Feast of the Monster”) co-written in 1947 with his friend Adolfo Bioy Casares, and, perhaps, in the canonical story “The Lottery in Babylon” (1941)—and, on occasion, even celebrated imperialism, as in his sonnet “Texas” (1961). Another weakness of the study is that in addition to privileging Anglo-American studies of Borges, the majority of Latin American critics studied are ensconced in US and European academia. With exceptions, such as that of Beatriz Sarlo, Latin American critics living in the region are generally excluded from Fiddian’s consideration.

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Recoding World Literature: Libraries, Print Culture, and Germany's Pact with Books

By B. VENKAT MANI

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“Bibliomigration” and the Defense of World Literature

Venkat Mani’s ambitious new volume leads through the early nineteenth-century birthing of *Weltliteratur*, to our own time, addressing issues concerning the intertwining of nation and literature across the past two centuries of that country’s tumultuous history. Its challenges, too, have much to do with Mani’s breadth of interest, not least his introduction of *bibliomigration*, a practical term designed to outflank theoretical issues concerning the moral and practical scope of world literature as a disciplinary field.

The heart of the book is chronologically organized. The first chapter concerns the canon formation of German eighteenth- and nineteenth-century book culture, including “the creation of a world literary market” (42). To focus formative debates on the rifts between national and world literatures following German unification, chapter 2 addresses Marx and Engels’s comments on global literary production. In the third chapter, Mani discusses the painful era of national socialism, wherein Nazi propaganda fomented “censorship, cultural politics of intimidation, and the ethnicization of German national literature” (43). Citing Erich Auerbach’s 1952 essay, “*Philologie der Weltliteratur*” on “how ideological forces shaped the construction of the idea of the world, and in turn, world literature in the two German states” (181), chapter 4 investigates the national rifts of the postwar schism. The last chapter contemplates the cosmopolitan turn in German literary and bibliographic cultures following the reunification of 1989, along with the denationalizing effects of the European Digital Library.

Despite its national specificity, the introduction to *Recoding World Literature* reads like a defense of the discipline, sidestepping critics for whom “the term world literature was considered to be a manifestation of current economic globalization” or “a neoliberal venture” (5). Countering these concerns as “too lodged in presentist concerns of globalization and the purported cultural homogeneity that comes of it,” Mani reflects upon the “actual materiality” of the literary market and its collections (5). He prefers to ask, “How do books travel? How do they become vessels of stories and migrate from one geographical area to another?” (1). Such passages read like a continuation of “For World Literature” (2014), written by Mani’s one-time colleague at Wisconsin-Madison, Caroline Levine. Levine is dismissive of views wherein “scholars who try to collect all of the literatures of the world into a single, graspable totality appear the ready instruments of a greedy global hegemon,” hence she champions Mani as one who will “steer clear of world-systems theory but still train our attention on the material routes literature has followed.” For all his focus on the German case, Mani’s volume indeed sheds insight on the empirical means by which literature continues to travel the world. Yet, although he defines *bibliomigration* as “the physical and virtual migration of books” including the “movement of literary narratives in original languages or translation” (33), the term also means *virtual* migration: “the transliteration from an oral into a written language, through the translation into a new language [or] from one medium into another” (35). Translation continues to be a key notion in Mani’s scheme, and he remains alert both to the disruptive aspect of works entering a new linguistic sphere and to the flattening that can come of such movements.

Mani’s focus is somewhat bifurcated. His opening and closing commentaries are made in the service of a world literature built around transnational *bibliomigrancy*, while the intervening chapters remain solely focused upon the German case as “a way of understanding the historical valence, cultural ambition, and political charge of books and libraries” (35). Mani appears aware of this asymmetry, hence he is quick to show how the “materiality of literary circulation sheds new light on the conceptual and ideological creation and proliferation of world literature”; more crucially, still, such circulations never “happen in a historical, socio-cultural, or political vacuum” (12). Nonetheless, if the more universal claims of the introduction and the excellent short epilogue could be more directly tied to the lives and cultural ideals of German literary luminaries including Heinrich Heine, Hermann Hesse, Walter Benjamin, and William Henry Heinemann, it is in his discussion of the debates among these figures that Mani’s book comes into its own. He is equally good, too, where he compares nineteenth-century Goethean idealism to the English cultural jingoism; on Nazi attempts to promulgate its views through the literary magazine *Weltliteratur*; and on the dueling “national” libraries of the two Germanies.

Mani hopes to “understand the uneven force field of literary production and circulation” (47), but he remains a humanist, quoting Susan Sontag’s claim that world literature allows one “to escape the prison of national vanity” (45). Although *Recoding World Literature* is primarily about what such freedom might mean to Germany, and how its book culture reflects that nation’s self-positionings, Mani should be

commended for introducing the notion of *bibliomigrancy* as a way to map the itineraries of literature without losing the specificities of national culture.

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The Global South and Literature

By RUSSELL WEST-PAVLOV, ED.

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The Global South and Literature is a wide-ranging and often fascinating collection of twenty-two essays that interrogate the meaning and utility of the concept of the global south. Featuring a diverse group of contributors, this volume takes a truly interdisciplinary approach to its central question: What are the promises and the limitations of the paradigm of the global south? The essays approach this question from a variety of perspectives, maintaining a useful critical gaze on the central term of the collection; as Russell West-Pavlov notes in his Introduction, “‘Global South’ is a shifty, shifting term that one is well advised to treat with caution, while remaining open to the potential meaning-making it may nevertheless have the power to release” (7). Although much has been written about the global south and its cultural and literary forms, this volume takes the valuable step of digging into the distinctions among concepts that are too often loosely treated as coterminous, carefully defining the global south in and through its differences from the third world, the postcolonial, and the anti- and decolonial.

The volume is divided into three sections: the first, “Origins,” explores the history of the global south and its conceptual, spatial, and temporal dimensions; the second, “Developments,” continues this exploration, while deepening the critical gaze on the central concept; the third, and longest, section, “Applications,” gives contributors a freer rein and includes essays that reflect on the idea of the global south in and through a multiplicity of contexts, texts (literary and otherwise), and examples.

Perhaps because of the intense focus on the first part of the volume’s title, the second—“*and Literature*”—gets somewhat less attention throughout the essays. Exceptions include essays by Bao, Murthy, and Mishra, which offer readings of literary texts that point toward the development of a global south literary theory. There are also particularly engaging essays on visual and graphic art from Menon and Nayar. Several of the essays, most notably those by Gernalzick and Durão, are characterized by a refreshing self-reflexivity about their position in such a volume, which originates, of course, from the publication and academic apparatuses of the global north; as Durão writes, the “Global South . . . makes one forcefully aware of the dimensions of the *place* one is speaking from” (84). The essays as a whole avoid the temptation to