

Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies

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Call for Papers

Current Comparative Literary Studies in East Asia

Guest Editors

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Deadline for Submissions: December 30, 2023

This special issue seeks articles that address issues related to current comparative literary studies in East Asia, including its establishment as a discipline, institutionalization, historical development, methodological models, critical paradigms, etc., and more importantly, the tendencies within the discipline in the face of the drastic changes in current culture and society. The discipline of comparative literature in East Asia, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and others, was established largely after World War II, although some would argue that it germinated during much earlier historical stages. In other words, the institutionalization of comparative literature in East Asia was greatly influenced by the Cold War geopolitical framework over which the US had the prevailing dominance. This fact also explains why the entire “interpretative community” of comparative literary studies in East Asia has been closely associated with that in North America and followed closely its critical paradigms. As a result, East Asian literatures often become literary examples to attest to “Western theories,” and sometimes are viewed as an integral part of Area Studies from the American perspective.

However, the common background and tendency in the development of the comparative literature discipline in East Asia by no means suggests that this region should be considered as having a literary and cultural unity and can be treated uniformly. Instead, different countries and areas in East Asia have developed various ramifications of comparative literature with distinct characteristics based on their own linguistic environments, historical experiences, political conditions, national objectives, etc. Some countries regard comparative literature as an extension of a

national literature, whereas others recognize it as a branch of foreign literatures. In a similar fashion, some institutes lay stress on native language and local issues, whereas others emphasize the use of English as a necessary channel to connect to the outside world and to gain better visibility for their local affairs. These diverse and discrete concerns demonstrate precisely one prominent feature of comparative literature in East Asia—i.e., existing in an interspace between East and West, native and foreign, local and global, etc.

Like in other regions, comparative literature in East Asia has always faced challenges that were caused either by the changes in geopolitics or precipitated by paradigm shifts within the discipline. The last decade has witnessed a reform of the discipline in confronting various obstacles, especially the urgency of reconsidering the idea of East Asia. In brief, the idea of “Asia as method” proposed by the Japanese scholar Takeuchi Yoshimi more than half a century ago has been raised once again as a useful reference for reviewing contemporary humanities studies in the region. However, it places an emphasis less on overcoming the so-called Western modernity than on a return to the East Asian context. This quest provides a chance to examine the divergence and diversity of East Asian literatures and cultures, which may deviate from the long-standing Western criteria for comparative studies and also create alternative connections between various areas in the region and beyond. Take, for example, the emergence of Sinophone studies. It provokes a time-space reconstruction of the Sinophone articulation with an emphasis on voicing the minority’s conditions. Clearly, the call for reshaping the social and cultural order in the Sinophone world echoes perfectly the discourse on world literature that promotes a “worlding” process rather than a presumed world order.

At present, comparative literature faces even more challenges than before. The breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed our daily lives, means of communication, social relations, and many other aspects of life, not to mention the radical changes in domestic governance and international politics. Literature of our time will focus on and describe these transformations; likewise, comparative literary studies will examine the effect of all these changes on the human condition, e.g., from the perspectives of political economy of affects, mode of bio-politics, and the geopolitical situation, etc. Alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, other important developments like the continuing war in Ukraine, the advancement of science and

technology, the emergence of cyberspace, the surge of populism in politics, racial conflicts and climate change, to name just a few, are having profound impacts on the environment and human lives. Considering all these challenges, comparative literature in East Asia is no doubt approaching a new phase that requires a more wide-ranging and comprehensive vision.

Please send complete papers of 6,000-10,000 words, 5–8 keywords, and a brief biography to concentric.lit@deps.ntnu.edu.tw by December 30, 2023. Manuscripts should follow the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Except for footnotes, which should be single-spaced, manuscripts must be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman. Please consult our style guide at <http://www.concentric-literature.url.tw>.

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