theories and methodologies

Introduction: Reframing Postcolonial and Global Studies in the Longer *Durée*

SAHAR AMER AND LAURA DOYLE

A PARADIGM SHIFT IS OCCURRING AMONG POSTCOLONIAL AND WORLD HISTORIANS—TOWARD WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED LONGER-*DURÉE* global studies—but many literary critics have yet to absorb its data and implications. The essays in this Theories and Methodologies cluster engage with this historical scholarship to develop fresh analytic models for global and postcolonial studies. Focused on histories of literary-cultural production, the geopolitically attuned analyses included here counter the depoliticization of literary studies potentially fostered by the category "world literature." More broadly, the authors invite us to look beyond the historical and geographic coordinates of "Western modernity" that have become conventional in some humanities and social science scholarship.

In the last few decades, historians working in diverse languages and archives around the globe have begun to rewrite long-standing histories of modernity, empires, and capitalism.[1] Implicitly or explicitly, they are changing the narratives and the analytic models. Many scholars now argue, for instance, that modern economic world systems built directly on the foundations of earlier world systems and that later empires expanded the technologies, translation projects, and uneven core-periphery formations of ancient and, especially, medieval states and empires. Many have also explored what the historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam calls the "connected histories" of Afro-Eurasian and (as Mary Louise Pratt points out here) American states, cultures, and economies, before and after 1492. These studies implicitly challenge periodizing divisions between premodern and modern, and they reframe historical and geographic dynamics among the southern, eastern, northern, and western hemispheres. Among historians, economists, anthropologists, and archaeologists, there is a virtual tidal wave of new collaborations and conferences inspired by these studies, such as the recent University of California, Berkeley, conference Connected Worlds: New Approaches across Premodern Studies; the conferences hosted at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, by the World Studies

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Interdisciplinary Project (wsipworldstudies.wordpress.com/); and the 2013 NEH summer institute Empires and Interactions across the Early Modern Worlds, 1400–1800.

Building on this momentum as well as on the 2014 MLA convention forum ("Reframing Postcolonial and Global Studies in the Longer *Durée*") from which this cluster developed, we address several key questions. How do emerging transhemispheric histories extend and modify the insights of postcolonial studies? What do new historical data reveal about the making and unmaking of empires and about the roles of women, laborers, and racial and sexual minorities in imperial economies? How might we rethink literary-cultural history in the light of these longer genealogies? And what methods might allow us to analyze literature and culture within this broader scope, without depoliticizing their stakes or misconstruing local histories?

While the contributors offer a range of answers to these questions, they all encourage wider reading across periods and hemispheres. The editors and authors are aware of the daunting nature of this effort to broaden our critical paradigm. Yet we hope that our experiments in theories and methods show that it is possible to do so and that many subfields might benefit from developing field-specific connections between local formations and longer geopolitical histories. Having taken on this challenge in a collaborative spirit, as an interdisciplinary work in progress, we invite readers (especially scholars of more-recent periods) to stray beyond typical period boundaries and join our collective effort.

The Interacting Essays

Each essay focuses on the role of cultural production in or against the political economies of empires in specific periods and hemispheres. That is, each combines paradigmatic rethinking of postcolonial, transnational, and global models with close study of texts, materials, and locales in different historical moments. Several thematic threads weave through these analyses:

- the accretion of infrastructures, imperial economies, and material-cultural forms
- the foundational role of pre-1500 structures and practices for post-1500 structures and practices, reaching to the global present
- the geopolitical centrality of translation, script, and language projects in this accrued history
- the close interweaving of cultural formations and geopolitical economies, especially through cross-border interactions and dialectical processes
- the conceptual implications of these long histories for our analysis of postcolonial and other recent literary-cultural productions

Addressing these themes, the cluster aims to advance the critical theorization of longer-*durée* geocultural formations.

Laura Doyle's opening essay provides a broad overview of the historical studies of Afro-Eurasia and introduces the concept of "inter-imperiality" as a way to analyze the dialectics of culture, state, and economy in this longer-*durée* history. Her model is implicitly influenced by other contributors' work (including Pratt's notion of "contact zones," Barbara Fuchs's study of "imperial mimesis," and Hayrettin Yücesoy's analysis of "premodern" translation projects), and in turn her model informs other contributions to the cluster. The second essay, by Mary Louise Pratt, extends the inter-imperial approach across the Atlantic to the Americas, countering the elision of this region in emerging Afro-Eurasian paradigms. Pratt foregrounds the ways that imperial choices about the language of administration serve to control and reorganize plurilingual terrains, and in the long run those choices reconfigure the subjectivities of both colonized and colonizer.

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She tracks successive eras of this linguistic remaking in the Americas (initiated before European arrivals), demonstrating that contemporary English-Spanish language politics carry traces of the Incan Empire's Quechua-language politics. Geraldine Heng's essay continues this broadening of critical historical paradigms. Heng elaborates a fresh conceptualization of a global Middle Ages that recovers early literatures of colonization and reveals the applicability of race theory to them, thereby encouraging us to see modernities in so-called "premodernity." Her essay richly demonstrates the extent to which macrohistorical perspectives on ideologies allow us to correct and sharpen critical theories of race, colonization, and modernity.

The next several essays focus more tightly on cultural, linguistic, and material productions in specific geopolitical economies and challenge us to adjust our interpretive methods. Sahar Amer's and Lydia H. Liu's essays rethink reigning norms of language study in literary-historical traditions, opening the way to enriched inter-linguistic and political readings of culture. Amer breaks down the walls between language traditions—specifically, Arabic and European literatures—by fine-grained historicization of political, commercial, and cultural interactions, which enables clearer understanding of the European borrowing of Arabic-language tropes and genres in the medieval Mediterranean world. Her reconceptualization of the categories of transmission, translation, and textuality urges a more situational history of intersections and imperial imbrications, which would trace the piecemeal (rather than whole-text) mobility of textual elements, as well as of material cultures, songs, and sociocultural traditions. Continuing this effort to broaden interlinguistic models, Liu foregrounds the understudied history of scripts—alphabetical, ideogrammatic, and mathematical. Laying ground for Annette Damayanti Lienau's essay on African *ʿajami* languages, Liu shows how script changes are often political, reflecting a history of imperially coercive policies. For instance, in Vietnam the imposition of the Roman script under French colonialism substituted one foreign script for another, insofar as the *hanzi* script it replaced (*chữ nôm*) had entered fifteenth-century Vietnam under the influence of the Chinese Empire. Liu further suggests that today's computer and other math-based scripts carry forward this long, empire-serving history of scripts.

The next two essays, by the medieval Middle East historian Hayrettin Yücesoy and the historian of Islamic art Glaire D. Anderson, similarly highlight the need for approaches that are more nuanced, global, and interdisciplinary: they analyze, respectively, language projects and art projects in Afro-Eurasia in the ninth and tenth centuries, a period of imperial fragmentation, especially for Muslim states. Developing an approach that might well be applied to other empires and eras, Yücesoy juxtaposes the Abbasid Empire's cultivation of Arabic as an imperial language with the tributary Samanid state's subsequent counterproject of resuscitating Persian, to show how each was politically motivated by two interacting dynamics: inter-imperial competition and the intra-imperial interests of the intelligentsia and other elites. Working in the same period of state fragmentation, Anderson unearths a possible early instance of the political vocabulary of sovereignty—the Arabic word *al-mulk* ("sovereignty") inscribed on bowls that circulated from the Middle East to Spain and China. While speculating about their political valence in different locales, Anderson points to the need to consider such artifacts together with textual productions if we are to discern their cultural, geopolitical meanings.

The essays by Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Barbara Fuchs turn to sixteenth-century Europe—the place and time often considered the origin of "modernity." Instead of signs of "origin," however, both essays uncover the

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connected imaginaries of an already well-established transhemispheric world system, characterized by tropes of capital wealth and rival or successive empires. Degenhardt and Fuchs suggest that in Europe these imaginaries evince Anglo-European aspirations and must be read against the backdrop of earlier modernities. Taking Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1590) as her central example, Degenhardt resituates the ambitious desires of Reformation-era literary figures like Faustus in a world of global commerce, which the play embeds in a long history of imperial rises and falls. Degenhardt argues that the play implicitly invites audiences to interpret Catholic-Protestant schisms and surging imperial ambitions in relation to a broader inter-imperial economy. Fuchs directly addresses the question of methods, highlighting the need to supplement transnational approaches with what she calls "imperium studies." This imperial angle, she proposes, allows us to remain more firmly attuned to the specificity of the early modern period and to highlight the mimetic rivalries among Spanish, Roman, Ottoman, and northern European states that are registered in literary tropes and discourses. Fuchs's analysis of Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* (c. 1579) and Francisco Delicado's *Retrato de la Lozana Andaluza* (1528) captures the projection of imperial stature and the intense geopolitical competition shaping these works.

The closing essays, by Annette Damayanti Lienau and Shu-mei Shih, draw on this broadened geohistorical paradigm to develop new comparative readings of literatures written since the nineteenth century. Like Liu, Lienau argues that our analysis of language politics and poetics might more carefully consider the inter-imperial histories in which diverse languages have come to be written in foreign or imperially imposed scripts, including many African and Asian languages written in Arabic script. As illustration, she considers Senegal at the turn of the twentieth century, when France began to impose the use of French (with its Roman script) and to displace *ʿajami* writing (African languages written in Arabic script). Her case study tracks the ways that three influential writers—Léopold Sédar Senghor, Amadu Bamba, and Ousmane Sembene—negotiated this layered, imperial linguistic terrain and made politically charged choices to privilege French, *ʿajami*, or Wolof. Echoing Pratt's analysis of language politics in the Americas, Lienau's fine-grained study clarifies how attention to scripts further unearths the complex layering of the historically accrued geopolitics of language. Closing the cluster, Shih articulates a capacious syncretic method that she calls "relational comparison," applicable to any period, region, or language. Bringing together Édouard Glissant's notion of "Relation" with Subrahmanyam's and Joseph Fletcher's models of "connected" history, Shih proposes that literatures can be studied together along "relational arcs" through their (implicit or explicit) registering of world events, such as the Vietnam War, or world formations, such as the rise of the global "coolie" trade. She highlights the relational arc of a literature's political history and suggests, for instance, that Vietnamese literature may be read in relation to sinophone, francophone, and anglophone literary networks.

Thus does this cluster of essays model a collective project to interpret literary and material cultures in a reconfigured global framework. The authors beckon us to investigate how artistic forms have been made and unmade in a field of multiple, interacting states and accumulated histories, and they offer many possibilities for tracking the ways that linguistic and aesthetic interventions have emerged within this geopolitical field.

Our transdisciplinary collaborative learning in developing these possibilities has been edifying and humbling. We wish to thank our contributors for embarking with us on such an enriching experiment in theories and methods, for engaging so carefully with

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each others' work, and for helping to expand and reframe postcolonial and global studies.

Note

1. The essays in this cluster offer rich bibliographies of world history and transhemispheric literary-cultural studies, so here we highlight only some seminal or wide-ranging works that focus on political economy and empires. For studies of global political economy before the rise of Europe, see Bentley; Abu-Lughod; Mann; Beaujard; Chaudhuri; Curtin et al.; Gills and Thompson; Frank; Hansen; and Sen. For transhemispheric studies of empires in global history, see Burbank and Cooper; Stoler, McGranahan, and Perdue; Morris and Scheidel; Adas; Burke; Subrahmanyam, *Mughals* and *From the Tagus*; and Hodgson. The books by Bentley and by Burbank and Cooper offer transhemispheric overviews. We also recommend searching for related material in the *Journal of World History* and the *Journal of Global History*.

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