

Call for Papers

World Literature and the Minor: Figuration, Circulation, Translation

6 – 7 May 2021

University of Leuven, Belgium (online)

Keynote Speakers:

Michael Cronin (Trinity College Dublin)

B. Venkat Mani (UW-Madison)

Francesca Orsini (SOAS)

Lyndsey Stonebridge (Birmingham)

Important update: Due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have decided to hold the conference online. You will find more information on the new format below. Please visit our website for more information: <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/world-literature-and-the-minor-figuration-circulation-translation>

The conference “World Literature and the Minor: Figuration, Circulation, Translation” will explore the multifaceted meanings of the minor from different disciplinary perspectives—as it is represented in literary texts (figuration), as it inflects patterns of mobility and reception (circulation), and as it marks processes of linguistic and cultural transfer (translation). In doing so, the conference works towards a critical, more inclusive understanding of the minor, both conceptually and methodologically.

The notion of the minor occupies an increasingly important (but insufficiently theorised) place in debates on world literature. First developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (1975), the concept of minor literature brings into focus the deterritorialised aesthetics and political implications of literatures written by minorities in major languages. Since then, the term has been variously redefined to analyse the literatures from peripheral regions and linguistic minorities that circulate less broadly within the increasingly Anglocentric world literary system. The emphasis on circulation has precluded a deeper engagement with the poetics of minority suggested by Deleuze and Guattari, pushing deterritorialised and multilingual genres such as refugee and migrant writing and alternative imaginings of the world towards the conceptual margins of world literature. Indeed, the minor captures the paradox at the core of the world literature project: while world literature aims to capture the diversity of languages, traditions and practices encapsulated in the terms “world” and “literature”, in practice it is necessarily structured around a limited selection of internationally canonized works and a normative set of literary practices.

This paradox is also present in the domain of translation. Translation aims to connect the local with the global by bridging the distance between source and target culture, native and foreign language. Although translation certainly contributes to the dissemination of minor languages and the making of world literature, it is also a powerful motor of assimilation due to its implicit bias towards major languages and its universalising assumption that everything is translatable. The notion of the minor opens the way to a multi-perspective, critical approach to translation. It enables to combine text-oriented analyses of the effects of translating minorities in literature with

investigations of cultural phenomena, such as the translation strategies used by refugees, migrants and other minorities to recount their experiences.

By placing the minor at the centre of the debate and exploring the interactions between its multiple meanings, scales and dimensions, the conference will recalibrate the divergence between major and minor and investigate the implications of this divide for the representation, circulation and translation of minority. While emphasizing the continued importance of close readings of images and figurations of minority in world literature, the interdisciplinary nature of the conference will also break new methodological ground: it hopes to mobilize text-oriented approaches for the study of circulation; integrate world literature's global comparative perspective into translation studies; and explore new relations between textual and nontextual worlds.

Possible topics

To examine the role of the minor in world literature and translation from varied angles, the conference invites panels and individual papers that include but are not limited to:

- Minor, peripheral and semi-peripheral languages in world literature and translation
- Gender in world literature and translation
- Refugee and migrant writing in world literature and translation
- Censored and marginal identities in world literature and translation
- Minor figures in world literature and translation
- Animals and children as minors in world literature and translation
- Nondominant practices and literary traditions in world literature and translation
- Minor forms and genres (Instagram poetry, short stories, vignettes) in world literature and translation
- Canonization and assimilation processes in world literature and translation
- Alternative networks of circulation in world literature and translation
- Minor institutions and independent publishing in world literature and translation
- The untranslatable in world literature and translation
- Minor geographies, temporalities and histories in world literature and translation
- The minor in multilingual literatures and societies
- Power relations in world literature and translation
- Minor theories, theorization from below and from the Global South in world literature and translation

Online format

We will set up the conference panels as online sessions. In order to stimulate as much interaction as possible, the conference panels will consist of small working groups based on pre-circulated papers of up to 3.000 words. The participants will have 5 minutes to summarize their paper. The presentations will be followed by a short response and a general discussion. Participants will be required to read the other papers in the panel in advance.

We plan to publish a selection of the papers in a thematic special journal issue and a book. The aim of the discussions is to establish common threads between the different topics and to work towards expanded versions of the papers suitable for publication.

Submission guidelines

We welcome the following types of submissions:

- Proposals for individual papers: abstract of no more than 300 words and a short bio.
- Proposals for complete panel sessions: a brief covering statement (max 300 words) outlining the aims of the panel, along with an abstract (maximum 300 words) and a short bio for each speaker.

Proposals should be sent to minorliterature@kuleuven.be. The deadline for submission is 15 December 2020.

Schedule

15 December 2020: deadline for abstract submission

15 January 2021: notification of acceptance

1 March 2021: deadline for online registration

20 April 2021: deadline for paper submission

6-7 May 2021: conference

The conference is organised by the KU Leuven English Literature Research Group in collaboration with the Translation Studies Research Unit.