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LITERATURE, GLOBALIZATION AND MEDIA : A FEW COUNTERS AND NUANCES



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ABSTRACT

Less known, Less well-known, less read, less well-read, less explored, less well-explored, less taught, less well-taught, less interpreted, less well-interpreted, less analyzed, less well-analyzed, less evaluated, less well-evaluated, less criticized, less well-criticized, less appreciated, less well-appreciated, less examined, less well-examined and more readily dismissed by political ideological Western critics, this inter-mutual tradition of literature, globalization and media is quite rich, diverse, varied, excellent in both written and oral modes

but unfortunately often neglected and out of the domain of the occidental-centric critical scrutiny. A survey of that tradition will not only testify the greatness of literature, globalization and media but it will also establish a *raisonde'tre* of the present study in respect of the exploration and examination of a few counters & nuances of literature, globalization and media.

KEYWORDS

Literature, Globalization, Media, ideological hegemony, *glocal age*

RESEARCH PAPER

Literature, globalization and media have a subtle inter-mutual relationship as the most dynamic sibling disciplines. Literature is a criticism of life and related things such globalization and media. In a *glocal* age where global thinking and location action is expected the inter-mutual relationship of globalization and media has become more subtle and complex. As Manfred B. Steger states, “since its earliest appearance in the 1960s, the term globalization has been used in both popular and academic literature to describe a process, a condition, a system, a force, and an age.” Undoubtedly such a diverse functionality then makes this term bear varying levels of significance and different meanings and inevitably its definition includes a number of related features as well. Hereafter we may have a quick look at some definitions of the term which are, of course, from different perspectives as, “globalization is usually recognized as being driven by a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural, political and biological factors.” Sheila L. Croucher argues that “globalization can be described as a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together. This process is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces.” The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in 2002 reports that: Globalization is a widely-used term that can be defined in a number of different ways. When used in an economic context, it refers to the reduction and removal of barriers between national borders in order to facilitate the flow of goods, capital, services and labor. Globalization is not a new phenomenon. It began in the late nineteenth century, but its spread slowed during the period from the start of the First World War until the third quarter of the twentieth century. This slowdown can be attributed to the inward-looking policies pursued by a number of countries in order to protect their respective industries [...] however, the pace of globalization picked up rapidly during the fourth quarter of the twentieth century.... Marjorie Mayo reminds us that a number of key features that are typically considered characteristic of globalization in the twenty-first century are found in a much-quoted passage from the Marx and Engels “Communist Manifesto”, in 1848: Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way,” they argued (Marx and Engels 1985:81), going on to point to the constant processes of change inherent in capitalism, the everlasting uncertainty and agitation“ that distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones (ibid:83).” All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated

before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air“ (ibid), a phrase that has been regularly quoted in the context of globalization and the increasing rate of economic, political, social and cultural change. Saskia Sassen writes that “a good part of globalization consists of an enormous variety of micro-processes that begin to denationalize what had been constructed as national – whether policies, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains.”

Noam Chomsky argues that the term globalization is also used, in a doctrinal sense, to describe the neoliberal form of economic globalization:

The strongest proponents of globalization have always been the left and the labor movements[...]The strongest advocates of globalization are the remarkable and unprecedented global justice movements, which get together annually in the World Social Forum, and by now in regional and local social forums. In the rigid Western doctrinal system, the strongest advocates of globalization are called “anti-globalization.”

The mechanism for this absurdity is to give a technical meaning to the term “globalization”: it is used within the doctrinal system to refer to a very specific form of international economic integration designed in meticulous detail by a network of closely interconnected concentrations of power: multinational corporations, financial institutions, the few powerful states with which they are closely linked, and their international economic institutions (IMF, World Bank, WTO, etc.). Not surprisingly, this form of “globalization” is designed to serve the interests of the designers. The interests of people are largely irrelevant.¹⁰ In *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas L. Friedman tries to describe the forces that are globalizing the world at the end of the twentieth century and their effects on environment, economics, politics, geopolitics, and culture: I define globalization this way: it is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before – in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations, and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before, and in a way that is enabling the world to reach into individuals, corporations, and nation-states farther, faster, deeper than ever before. Friedman also asserts that: The driving idea behind globalization is free-market capitalism – the more you let market forces rule and the more you open your economy to free trade and competition, the more efficient and flourishing your

economy will be. Globalization means the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world. Globalization also has its own set of economic rules – rules that revolve around opening, deregulating and privatizing your economy.¹² In his next book *The World is Flat*, Thomas L. Friedman refers to “the ten forces that flattened the world.”¹³ He dedicates one whole chapter of his book to these forces and the multiple new forms and tools for collaboration that this flattening has created. He argues that globalized trade, outsourcing, supply-chaining, and political forces have changed the world permanently, for both better and worse. He also argues that the pace of globalization is quickening and will continue to have a growing impact on business organization and practice. Through his essay “Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue,” Fredric Jameson presents his explicit account on globalization: Four positions on our topic seem logically available. The first affirms the option that there is no such thing as globalization (there are still the nation-states and the national situations; nothing is new under the sun). The second also affirms that globalization is nothing new; there has always been globalization and it suffices to leaf through a book like Eric Woolf’s *Europe and the People without History* to see that as far back as the Neolithic, trade routes have been global in their scope, with Polynesian artifacts deposited in Africa and Asian potsherds as far afield as the New World. Then I suppose one should add two more: one that affirms the relationship between globalization and that world market which is the ultimate horizon of capitalism, only to add that the current world networks are only different in degree and not in kind; while a fourth affirmation (which I have found more interesting than the other three) posits some new or third, multinational stage of capitalism, of which globalization is an intrinsic feature and which we now largely tend, whether we like it or not, to associate with that thing called postmodernity.

The literary aspect of globalization or the connection between globalization and literature is dealt with in this part. As two seemingly separate areas of study, both globalization and literature share some meeting points in their institutional and structural edifices; undoubtedly debates about globalization are relevant to debates in literary studies and certainly existing ideas of interest in literature and literary studies fit with notions of globalization. As a matter of fact this is a reciprocal course through which literature and globalization affect each other interactively. And quite plausibly there are greater causes for the attachment of literature and globalization. As Paul Jay claims “our awareness of the complex ways in which English and American identities have been constructed historically through migration, displacement,

colonialism, exile, gender relations, and cultural hybridity has radically restructured our sense of what Paul Gilroy has dubbed the “roots/routes” of these identities. With this awareness it has become increasingly difficult to study British or American literature without situating it, and the culture(s) from which it emerged, in transnational histories linked to globalization.” Of course, there are some other reasons to justify the need for such affiliation between the two principles as Paul Jay further asserts the importance of English language and literature appearing in the wider scope: At the same time the remarkable explosion of English literature produced outside Britain and the United States has made it clear that this literature is becoming defined less by a nation than by a language, in which authors from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds write. The globalization of English from this point of view is not a theoretical formulation or a political agenda developed by radicals in the humanities to displace the canon. It is a simple fact of contemporary history. English literature is increasingly postnational, whether written by cosmopolitan writers like Derek Walcott, Arundhati Roy, and Nadine Gordimer or by a host of lesser-known writers working in their home countries or in diasporic communities around the world, from Europe and Africa to the Caribbean and North America. I want to argue that we can more effectively reorganize our approach to the study of what we have heretofore treated as national literatures (in our curricula and programs) by emphasizing literature’s relation to the historical processes of globalization. Through his methodology then Paul Jay rejects the idea that globalization is a fundamentally contemporary event. Accordingly, he recognizes that it has a long - 56 - history and tries to review the development of globalization theories with an eye toward underscoring some of the differences between globalization conceived of as a postmodern phenomenon and globalization conceived of as a long historical process. However, while approaching literature and globalization within literary studies several broad areas become visible. After explorations on the core of this connection and as far as the objectives of the present study are concerned here three correlative levels of attachment or association become further highlighted. At one conceptual level, this relationship mainly engages with literary theory, discipline and criticism. Many studies have tried and succeeded to fit discussions of globalization with certain established fields of literary studies. Here we trace some links between globalization debates and literary postmodernism and postcolonialism since these terms have been on the highest point of agenda during the same post-1970s period in which the term globalization has extended itself to its current prominence. Susie O’Brien and Imre Szeman also

posit that “a cursory survey of contemporary literary critical discourses suggests that some of the tools to address these issues [like seeking literatures outside national framework] are ready-to-hand: the (messy, unwieldy, heterogeneous) critical discourses of postcolonialism and postmodernism each address, more or less explicitly, the relationship between literature and globalization.” Also at this level notions such as world literature and comparative literature and their bonds with globalization are considered of great value which will be discussed briefly. The second level could be called one of tools or mediums with certain key terms. The Media and specially its new forms is one of the key terms here. Indeed, modern technologies such as satellite communications and World Wide Web have made drastic changes in dissemination of various forms of literature and quite relevantly information explosion has played a central role in distribution of social and cultural packages all around the globe. Also we may have a short look here at the globalization of publishing and literary institutions. English language status in the world – and its popularity with different forms of socio-cultural exchanges or with literary productions – is the second key figure. The reasons for such a grand position sound straightforward and uncomplicated as “English [is] the language of globalization,” 99 and at the same time a great part of literary production is created or at least transmitted via global English as it is the lingua franca. The third important medium is undoubtedly translation practice. From one angle and closely related to the dominant position of instrumental global English, translation practice plays a very dynamic role in the connection between globalization and literature. This in part goes back to the grand role of translation in practices of world literature and comparative literature; as a matter of fact without translation the existence of these two principles of literature would seem unimaginable, as Bassnett and Lefevere emphasize that “[...] with the development of Translation Studies as a discipline in its own right, with a methodology that draws on comparatistics and cultural history. Translation has been a major shaping force in the development of world culture and no study of comparative literature can take place without regard to translation.” From another perspective, the rise of English as the international lingua franca and the simultaneous increase in the global demand for translations in various fields again asserts the importance of such a medium. On the surface, translation conveys or transmits texts across boundaries and communicates across languages, but indeed, building a part of social, cultural, political and economic existence is the profound work it does. In either surface or deep perspectives the grand role of translation in the global patterns of communication is quite

outstanding. Translation has become a more and more important tool to enhance understanding between cultures; translation brings cultures closer. Hence, it is quite reasonable if we claim that culture is one of the meeting points in translation/globalization relationship; globalization has always been an important aspect of translation. The third level in itself includes broad disciplines and methods through which literary studies has evoked globalization. This is partly about the reflection of different themes of globalization in literature, and to another degree about the way “literary texts and the interpretation thereof have been recruited to support or elucidate conceptual positions taken by political and social [or cultural] theorists about globalization.” One aim here is reading or analyzing literary works in order to verify the realities of globalization and at a greater level another aim focuses on the improvement of our understanding of globalization’s discourses and narratives within literature realm. In this regard, Suman Gupta asserts that “[...] acts of literary reading will both register globalization’s appearances as literary theme and seek to develop or extend narratives of globalization. Debates about globalization and literature, thus, are not held apart with merely the possibility of the latter being able to present something of the former, but are meshed together so that they merge in a conjoined field that processes globalization in literature and the literariness of globalization.” The third level also bears a rather problematic issue within its sphere. The uncertainty that if, in practical terms, there are certain passwords to the world of literary globality; in other words, some questions are raised about any definite formulations for a literary text in qualifying to get the etiquette of global.

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