

## Harvard Summer School of the Institute for World Literature 2nd to 26th of July

A report by Désirée Mangard (German Studies) and Mario Casale (Romance Studies)

Since 2011, Harvard University's *Institute for World Literature* (IWL) has been organizing a four-week Summer School on *world literature*. By 2018, 55 universities worldwide are affiliate members, including the Leopold-Franzens-University Innsbruck. The Summer School is held every three years at Harvard, in the two years in between it takes place at other prestigious universities in major cities.

This year, the IWL Summer School came to Tokyo, Japan, from July 2nd to 26th and was co-organized by the *Department of Contemporary Literary Studies, Faculty of Letters* (現代文芸論研究室). Here, a total of 128 participants from more than 30 different nations came together, who engaged with *world literature* from different perspectives. The participants presented a mix of Master's students, postdocs, assistant professors and mostly doctoral students, some of whom have repeatedly participated in this summer school. As an *affiliate member*, the Leopold-Franzens-University Innsbruck has the opportunity to nominate two participants. This year Désirée Mangard, doctoral student at the Institute of German Studies, and Mario Casale, doctoral student at the Institute of Romance Studies, were given the chance to take part in the IWL Summer School. Their participation in the Summer School and the long stay in Tokyo was to a large extent made possible and funded by the generous support of the Deanery and the International Relations Office of the Leopold-Franzens-University Innsbruck, who took over a large part of the costs for travel and accommodation as well as the participation fees.



### **IWL – Exciting seminars and worldwide networking**

At the heart of the four-week summer school are the diverse and wide-ranging seminars offered by a number of renowned professors from all over the world, which are characterized by their remarkable thematic variety and breadth. Over the entire duration of the Summer School, ten two-week seminars were offered, two of which the participants could choose. The common feature of all seminars was the keyword *world literature*, whereby this topic was examined in the individual seminars from different perspectives and with a different focus. Sometimes entire genres were brought into focus, or national literatures placed in a larger context, sometimes a look beyond the box of literature was possible, for example, on films, philosophical currents and different views of the world.



In the first two weeks, a total of five seminars were available. In his seminar *The Avant-Gardes in the World* Christopher Bush, Assistant Professor at the Institute of French Studies at Northwestern University (USA), focused on the phenomenon of the literary avant-gardes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and read them – as European occurrences – as a kind of world literature. The emergence of

world literature in modern Europe as well as its developments and global ramifications in the modern epoch formed the subject of the seminar *Globalization and Its Discontents*, which was offered by Prof. David Damrosch (Chairman of the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University and Director of the Institute for World Literature). In his seminar, Prof. Damrosch examined fundamental concepts of the discipline as well as the different conditions (formation of capitalist markets, shifting of centers, peripheries and semi peripheries, interplay of empires and other global structures), which allowed the emergence and dissemination of world literature. Jing Tsu, Professor of modern Chinese literature at Yale University's Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, raised methodological and theoretical questions in her seminar on multi-scale literary studies, which were inspired by the development of world literature. She proposed an interdisciplinary multi-scale approach to world literature research, which focuses primarily on the integration of multiregional area studies and other methods of comparative literature, and made use of such seminal terms as *literary governance*, *linguistic nativity*, *place and affect*, *technologies of writing* etc. Mario Casale chose the seminar of Pheng Cheah (Professor of rhetoric and geography and Chair of the Center for Southeast Studies at the University of California at Berkeley). In this seminar titled *World Literature and Cosmopolitanism in Postcolonial Globalization*, Prof. Cheah attempted to philosophically illuminate the notion of the world and, using normative worldviews, to examine the relationships between world literatures on the one hand and to show cosmopolitanism in the context of post-colonial globalization on the other hand. Some of the theoretically challenging but at the same time very fruitful main questions of the seminar were: Is world literature a new form of cosmopolitanism? What are the relationships between worldliness and temporality? How can one associate such worldliness with the narrative forms of the modern world and what similarities and tensions exist between world literature and postcolonial literature? Désirée Mangard attended the seminar of Mitsuyoshi Numano (Professor at the Department of Contemporary Literary Studies and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Tokyo University). This seminar entitled *Somewhere in Between: Boundaries, Resonances, and Interactions in Time and Space*, gave attention to outstanding literary examples from Japan, Russia, and other Eastern European countries. Its focus was on the exploration of literary phenomena typically found in the contact zones of world literature, which arise in the interstices between the various national literatures. The seminar also attempted to outline a redefinition of the dichotomy between center and periphery.

In the second half of the program, the previously mentioned seminar of Prof. David Damrosch, *Globalization and its Discontents*, was offered a second time and thus formed the thematic guide of the entire program. In her seminar *Rethinking World Literature through Cartography and the Spatial turn* Katharina N. Piechocki (Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University) successfully highlighted the interconnections between - and the impact of – space, geography, and mapping on the study of world literature, taking as reference a very wide corpus of primary and secondary literature works stretching from the Antiquity to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Piechocki proposed a very challenging “cartographical” reading of works of world literature, showing the interest that such notions as “scale” and “mapping” of world literature can arouse in the general discussion within this field of study. In her seminar *Science Fiction and the Imagination of Planetary Future* Ursula K. Heise (Professor at the Department of English and the Institute of Environment and Sustainability at UCLA) focused on science-fiction as a historically entrenched and geographically differentiated genre, that goes beyond the Anglo-American sphere of influence. Thus, examples from diverse areas of the world (East Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America) and various media (novels, graphic novels, short stories, TV series, feature films, cartoons, video games, etc.) were of interest. Professor Zhang Longxi (Chair Professor of Comparative and Translation Studies at the City University of Hong Kong) offered his seminar entitled *Comparison to World Literature: Readings and Conceptual Issues* and highlighted the fundamental question of the translatability of a world-literary work as well as the problem of Eurocentrism in common approaches to world literature. Finally, the seminar *Localizing Time in World Literature and World Cinema* by Delia Ungureanu (Assistant Professor of literary theory at the Department of Literary Studies of the University of Bucharest and Assistant Director of the Harvard's Institute for World Literature) has to be mentioned. Both students of Innsbruck, Désirée Mangard and Mario Casale, participated in this seminar. Delia Ungureanu highlighted the diverse intersections between world literature and world cinema and tried to define the term world innovatively by considering it more as a category of time rather than a pure topographic category.

In addition to the seminars, the weekly colloquia are an integral part of the IWL Summer School. The participants met once a week in small working groups in which their own research projects were presented and discussed. Mario Casale organized and led one of these groups.

### **Scientific program and insights into Japanese culture**

Apart from the seminars, a program was offered, such as evening lectures by David Damrosch, Jing Tsu and Ursula Heise.

Furthermore, three guest lectures were organized, including a multimedia performance by the Korean duo *Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries* followed by a discussion, as well as a lecture by the well-known and renowned Japanese translator Motoyuki Shibata titled *The Task of the Translator*

*in Japan*. One of the highlights for those in the audience who understood German was Yoko Tawada (多和田 葉子), who created an evening under the motto *A Dream of Multilingual Poetry: A Reading and Discussion with writer Yoko Tawada*.

The supporting program was also supplemented by two panels on the topics of publishing and the job market, for which the target audience were young academics.



During the four-week stay in Tokyo, the focal point was, of course, the study of world literature, but on the weekends, there was still time to explore the city and to immerge a little in the Japanese culture. In this regard, the University of Tokyo as was a perfect host, because on the first two Fridays the participants were invited to visit the typical Japanese Hama Rikyu garden followed by a river cruise and a walk through the beautiful and centrally located Ueno Park as well as to visit the impressive National Museum. Furthermore, the IWL assistants offered assistance in organizing individual excursions or booking tickets etc.

### **Personal conclusion**

During the four-week session of the Summer School, it was not only possible to deal intensively with a subject area that might have been new to some of the participants, but there was also the opportunity to immerge oneself in a foreign culture. Moreover, the literary expansion of horizons and socializing with budding literary scholars from all over the world proved to be an enriching experience, which also resulted in many friendships. Even if one does not explicitly deal with world literature in one's own research projects, one can nevertheless pick up many suggestions and incentives for a change of perspective for one's own research work and integrate these ideas into the own work.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the extremely dedicated seminar leaders, the active organizational team and all other participants for stimulating discussions and new impulses. Last but not least, our special thanks go to the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Philology and Cultural Relations and the International Relations Office as well as to all those responsible for the extremely generous

financial and organizational support of the University of Innsbruck, without which participation would hardly have been possible.

### **Future Prospects**

After having made a stopover in Europe and Asia at the Universities of Copenhagen and Tokyo in the last two years, the IWL Summer School will take place again at its home, the University of Harvard, in 2019. Further reports on past as well as up-to-date information on the forthcoming IWL Summer School, which will take place from July 1<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> 2019, can be found on the website of the Institute of World Literature: <https://iwl.fas.harvard.edu/>.