

Digital Perspectives and Networks: New Paradigms in World Literatures, Humanities and New Media

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Abstract

With a growing literature on the effect of digital platforms, this paper focuses on digital consciousness and the paradigm shift in the making of world literature. The paper frames itself within the boundaries of how texts become connected which in turn interconnect the literature and cultural network. I situate my argument in the new methods of reading process and analysing the availability of the text enabling transmediality and translations. The paper also analyses the changes we see in the traditional model of literary communication compared to the new possibilities provided by the internet and the World Wide Web. The paper considers the changes that have resulted in new possibilities and the requirements that authors, distributors, and readers of literature must deal with today. The paper thus examines discourse and the role of technology and media in the creation of world literature.

Keywords: World Literature, digital media, digital literatures, translation, new media

In the digital world, the voyage of the discipline of literature and its field of world literature, comparative, and cultural studies are at brisk and dynamic. In the digital age, the study of literature and cultures has been impacted by new media and technology that facilitate access to information. Aspects of communication and scholarship in humanities in the context of social process and its impact on new media suggest that the process of communication, creativity, and the study of literature, as well as the changes in these areas, should be approached from a systemic and empirical standpoint. Digital media directly impacts the study of literature across different national and linguistic frameworks to propagate literary work and navigate transnational space, creating closeness between the reader and the text read, thus creating possibilities for a network of literary texts in the digital platform. The reading of the text performed in one cultural context with the influenced background of the writer and reader contributes to a diversified cultural dialogue where the literary event is not any more isolated and is participated in by a global means.

The various linguistics framework enables participants to engage with literary texts from a variety of literary contexts from around the world. As Steven Totosy writes, “Hardware platforms, software applications, and social media not only facilitate the dissemination of ideas, but also stimulate immediate and delayed responses that can create enriching dialogues, endless possibilities of communicating across different national and linguistic frameworks,”¹ Writers can now produce their work digitally in unlimited languages

and scripts and reach an unlimited number of linguistically diverse global readers and uses illustrations and examples to help their readers identify with the work. The availability of the original and translated text in digital form allows the reader to examine the text from various perspectives. This opportunity broadens one's understanding of the text by allowing for multiple venues, interpretations, and the use of multiple languages. The absence or limited availability of some languages prompts readers and writers to work on translating the text into different languages as per demand. Incorporating these texts into national literary fields enriches them and encourages readers and writers to continue the dialogue that the original text initiated. The new comparative scenario allows the text to incorporate images, sound or visual effects, this multimedia presentation enhances the pedagogy and reinforces the text's comparative nature. The digital platform provides more options for the writer and reader who share a global perspective, resulting in new levels of text manipulation by all means, formats and meaning. The key factor in the digital versus the printed impact could be 'time' or the perception of time in shaping the text into different formats. Texts migrating to digital formats respond to a larger audience most efficiently and expediently possible. Literature serves as both a means of communication and a means of artistic expression where there is a complete cycle of knowledge exchange in a digital mode. Moreover, digital creates a network of activities that foster connectivity to other electronic sources and promote the exchange of ideas and information, allowing us to navigate cultures and kinds of literature all over the world.

This exploration of cultures and works of literature from around the world demonstrates that world literature is never static. The current state of world literature and field of humanities should be discussed in light of the media's impact. Literature is more than just the printed word, and there are parts of the world where oral literature has a much longer tradition and social and cultural significance. The issue of the technical and content development of electronic media in their global and regional settings makes us realise that literature is not only bound up with print as its traditional medium but perceived and functions as an oral form. Therefore, an examination of the content of the media under consideration must include an examination of the ways and manners in which literature is dealt with in its various manifestations.

While discussing the impact of new media on the notion of world literatures, we need to analyse the effects of some global social interrelations. Censorship of the content, control and copyright, methods of reading literatures, monopoly of media, consequences of cyberspace, challenged identities of author, reader, distributor and publishers are some of the areas that undergoes paradigm shift in the field of humanities due to new media interference. When we consider the problem of literary control and censorship, we see that it occurs in all forms of media irrespective of the boundaries leaving the issue of censorship and the internet in widespread debate. Censorship of the digital space is hardly comparable to censorship of print because it is virtually impossible to monitor the vast amount of information and material on the internet. Instead, digital space defines the technical and content-related aspects of new media and realises the concept of a global network that facilitates communication,

information retrieval, and artistic representation free of national, linguistic, or cultural constraints and value judgments. In accordance with contemporary literary scholarship, the presence and impact of new media have never been considered significant for the concept of world literature in any of its dimensions. According to Walter Benjamin, world literature, or any kind of literature, should be discussed in terms of its medium. And in recent years, there has been much debate about the demise of reading or print literature and the various connections between the end of books and events of new media and the electronic revolution. There is a need to concentrate on how the value of literature has shifted in the context of globalisation, world literature, and the acceptability of literature. The concepts of author and reader are evolving so that the author is no longer just a writer of “texts” in the traditional sense but also has the option to contribute or include audio-visual or pictorial elements to the text. In contrast to the book, the web is an open medium, in that case, the author may lose clear and unequivocal ownership of his or her “text” in certain circumstances. The web provides the possibility and, indeed, the opportunity to change, complete, and modify a text, making the participants in the process become its co-authors. The replacement of a single author with collective authorship affects the form and content of creative texts. The web text itself is undergoing formal and content-related reshaping. The use of hypertext, a text whose elements refer to elements of other texts linked electronically, results in a dense network of texts, and the texts stored on the internet also represent a network that is permeable to changes and deviates from linearity. In addition, many factors are influenced by the impact of digital media, such as the fact that traditional distributors of literary and scholarly products, like publishers, are becoming increasingly obsolete, impacting the economics of production and distribution.

In addition to knowing how to navigate digital spheres to find a “text,” the medial variety of a text necessitates a higher level of activity upon the reader by the medium on the visual faculty and other sensory organs. Thus, the internet and the World Wide Web and other digital media necessitate the reader’s new abilities and skills, which results in the reading process. In addition, readers of digital texts bear more responsibility for themselves and their information because they must decide which information is relevant to them on the screen. According to Ernst Grabovszki, there are two types of reading: linear reading (books and printed texts) and structural reading (texts that are electronically linked to other “texts”). Reading hypertext will require a different method than reading books in the traditional tactile mode. A reader is compelled to examine the network structure of hypertexts, their construction, and references to recognise these structures in their entirety.

By utilising the digital sphere, new media allows literature to gain an additional public and individual dimension. As a result, there has been a democratisation of literary production in various processes, not only in production and economics but also in terms of the creative process of text production and criticism. Also, due to this consequence, more texts are published, or the amount of text published on the internet is enormous or would most likely never have been published in traditional printed form because of the challenging production processes. As a result, the democratisation of literary production and distribution means an

increase in the quantity but not necessarily in the quality of literature. In general, the areas of new media in their entirety have an impact on the concept of world literature. The concept of world literature today finds its most relevant expression in infinite digital space. Goethe argued that “national literatures depict different forms of human existence and that these fictional representations should be adopted for mutual returns, resulting in an interplay that would determine a new world” (Albrow, 428). In our age of new media and digital space, the concept of world literature has evolved to the point where: “In the global society, globality shapes the frame for all social relations” (Albrow, 432).

Despite the factors of interference, hovering over the contemporary literary market, transcultural literature now belongs to the larger spectrum of world literatures which consecutively comprises the commercial, ideological cultures. J. Hills Miller speaks of this transcultural nature of world literature as “to understand and to live productively in the new uncomfortable world of global intercommunication and global wandering that Nietzsche calls ‘nomadism’” (264). Adapting Miller’s point of view, these networks of literatures is similar to “new world literature” and the realm of worlds literature encompasses all those literary works that “circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language” (2003, 4). It encompasses all the works actively present offscreen/ onscreen literary system beyond its original culture. World literature according to Damrosch is constantly shifting with both a mode of circulation and a mode of reading, “just as there never has been a single set canon of world literature, so too no single way of reading can be appropriate to all texts, or even to any text at all times” (2003, 5). The integral part of World Literature with effects of transculturality, mobility and virtuality offers their intensity in national, ethnic and in cultural boundaries. The internet media and accessibility in writing negotiates the boundaries and widens or re-imagine the world at large.

The concept of digital space also leads to the democratisation and decentralisation of the literary system. There is no cultural or social centre in the digital space and as a result, determinable locations in world literatures are lost. More than the decentralisation of literature, the decentralisation of the text’s producer or author occurs due to their navigation in digital space. Since this networking of author and reader is decentralised from national boundaries, they exist as individuals who do not belong to any “nation” or even imagined community. A person or netizen in a digital space, a replica of the real, has the same consciousness and rights as a citizen. A netizen of digital space can be anywhere, and the text itself, also digital literature, does not appear to point from any national or cultural setting; instead, it comprises the world as a net, offering a new inclusive notion for the term ‘world literature’.

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ⁱ De Zepetnek, Steven Tötösy, & Boruszko, Graciela (Eds.). (2015, January). *Paradigm shift in comparative humanities: Digital humanities, pedagogy with new media technology, and publishing scholarship online*. ACLA. <https://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/paradigm-shift-comparative-humanities-digital-humanities-pedagogy-new-media-technology-and>