



Beyond Borders: Redefining Comparative Literature in an Age of Multiculturalism

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Abstract

Bathed in the vibrant hues of multiculturalism, "world literature" explodes beyond its Eurocentric past. Comparative literature, once a quest for universality, now stumbles at the crossroads. Aristotle's mimesis, a grand mirror reflecting Western echoes, still whispers, yet a kaleidoscope of diverse voices clamor for attention. Can comparative literature fashion a lens that captures not just familiar notes but the symphony of every tongue? This essay wrestles with this dissonance, seeking a harmony where each cultural narrative finds its rightful place. It delves into the challenges of embracing difference, daring to imagine a chorus where every voice sings not in unison, but in vibrant counterpoint, composing a richer, truer melody of human experience.

Keywords: Comparative Literature; Age of Multiculturalism; Challenges

Introduction

Our world, a vibrant tapestry woven from diverse influences, shapes every literary genre. Within this intricate pattern, we find subsections and subunits branching from broader disciplines. This inherent "nuclear pattern" reflects the interplay of difference and unity that defines human understanding. Literature itself exemplifies this, a singular subject encompassing a multitude of subfields. Similarly, each academic discipline holds unique characteristics and approaches, though united by a common pursuit of knowledge. It is within this complex landscape that we encounter Comparative Literature (CL), a field dedicated to bridging the gaps between.

In the whirlwind of multiculturalism, Comparative Literature finds itself caught in a thrilling tango. Once waltzing to the Eurocentric tune, it now faces a kaleidoscope of partners, each demanding a unique step. This paper dips its toes into the challenges and concepts swirling around Comparative Literature in this age of vibrant diversity. Prepare to be surprised, as familiar canons are questioned, borders blurred, and voices long unheard rise to sing their own melodies. Get ready to witness a transformation from echo chamber to global chorus, where understanding the "other" becomes not just an intellectual pursuit, but a vibrant dance of empathy and connection.

Age of multiculturalism influence the discipline of comparative literature and basic Issues in this age.

Basic questions

- How has the age of multiculturalism influence the discipline of comparative literature?
- What are the most important issues in these ages?

In this paper we intended to briefly describe the influences of the age of multiculturalism in the discipline of comparative literature in one hand and the major issues mainly covered or addressed by multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism, as a descriptive term it refers to cultural diversity where two or more groups with distinctive beliefs/cultures exist in a society. It can also refer to a government policy that formally acknowledges a group's cultural identity and suggests support for cultural diversity. The concept of multiculturalism has recently gained prominence and sparked debate in a number of social and cultural contexts. It has had a significant impact on Eurocentric fields like comparative literature. A wide range of subjects and identities are covered by multicultural concerns, including race, religion, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and/or disability. The practices, ideologies, and creations of numerous institutions or individuals at any given moment, known as culture, can have a significant good or bad impact on how people interact and perceive one another.

The age of multiculturalism has much influence in comparative literature which is reported as Bernheimer. An extraordinary amount of attention was generated by the 1993 report "Comparative Literature at the Turn of the Century," which supports a multicultural approach for the field. The definitions of a discipline as well as the overall cultural significance of literary research are in question. The essays, which address the future of comparative literature, look at topics like the discipline's traditional Eurocentrism in an era of expanded multiculturalism, the contribution that learning foreign languages and translating texts can make to enlarging the field of critical analysis and the blurring and remapping of boundaries between potentially comparable fields of professional expertise.

The Bernheimer report, offers a response to the challenge posed by multiculturalism and cultural studies. It suggests that comparative literature give up its Eurocentrism and broaden its scope to encompass additional cultures. Comparative literature should broaden in the direction of cultural studies and include discursive practices, objects, and other kinds of cultural creation in addition to literature. In light of current cultural conditions, this course of action seems justified. However, the implementation of the plan outlined in the Bernheimer Report poses a number of issues that the authors of this volume thoughtfully and passionately address. A solution to the problem presented by multiculturalism and cultural studies is provided in the Bernheimer study. The paper suggests that comparative literature give up its Eurocentrism and embrace more diverse viewpoints. Comparative literature should broaden in the direction of cultural studies and include discursive practices, objects, and other kinds of cultural creation in addition to literature. In light of current cultural conditions, this course of action seems justified. However, the execution of the Bernheimer Report-developed program poses a number of issues that the passionate and thoughtful authors of this volume address.

Comparative literature, according to Bernheimer, is "anxiogenic." Because it seems to thrive under pressure, anxiety may very well be the guiding principle of the field of comparative literature. The greatest challenges to comparative literature at this time are clearly the emergence of cultural studies as a field of study and the acceptance of diversity. The comparative uneasiness has, in the words of Bernheimer, "discovered a theme that can address the concerns that led to it in the age of multiculturalism". In any event, this thought-provoking work is a "must read" for anybody interested in humanities studies in general as well as comparative literature, so a considerable contribution has already been made to assuaging the fears of the comparatists.

Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism provides realistic documentation of numerous challenges. In addition to emphasizing connective linkages, multiculturalism also invokes a culturalist model that has a propensity to view cultural behav-

iors in dazzling isolation. Comparative techniques that construct and isolate entities for further comparison suffer from the same issue. On the other hand, the culturalist viewpoint resurrects age-old debates about how literature and culture interact that are well-known from the descriptions of national literatures. Therefore, multicultural literature uses literature to examine diversity. Prejudices have diminished as a result of reading outstanding ethnic works. Books describing people and their unique and shared cultural experiences, especially those of mainstream cultures, are crucial because they help readers avoid bias and conflict, appreciate other cultures, and develop a basic awareness of pluralism. The foundation for recognizing, embracing, valuing, and enjoying difference is pluralism. Forster's understanding of several cultures is verified by his insider writing in the literature.

Therefore, multiculturalism does not actually support a new definition of comparative literature that is more accurate, superior, or true. The "franker labeling" of "literatures of Western Civilization" that Appiah (1995) thought the discipline should have adopted in the past is not remedied by broadening the field and incorporating a few texts produced in non-European languages into a global literature course. Instead, the comparatist conducts her research in this potentially hazardous in-between, confident in the knowledge that fiction, historiography, and frequently combine philosophy. The comparatist is interested in the links that (literary) texts and stories that continue to circulate in that domestic space, a space that has always bordered on that of other civilizations and cultures, make available to her in particular locales. The comparatist views herself as an expert in two fields: "theory" and "communicability" (by having received training in the "discipline" of reading, preferably in two languages or literatures, as well as another field of knowledge). Regarding this, the fundamental mandate of comparative literature to link and so cross borders, be they linguistic, discursive, material (as in the case of the visual arts, film, and music), or "disciplinary" means to information.

Another issue that can be debated within the discipline of Comparative Literature is how to place multiculturalism in Comparative Literature. To give a brief definition, multiculturalism can be defined as the mixture of different cultures and ethnicities in countries. However, many comparatists cannot decide where to place multiculturalism within the discipline of Comparative Literature. Charles Bernheimer, in his book, a collection of essays, comments on the connection between multiculturalism and comparative literature with these sentences; Comparison, I come back to that word and to the anxieties it raises in our contemporary age of multiculturalism. On the face of things, it would appear that multiculturalism, inherently pluralistic, would have a natural propensity toward comparison. The new discipline which is going under renovation should not stick to the dominant Euro centric canon or discipline. Since the communities host many different ethnic groups and cultures, the new comparative literature should be open to this. This

new discipline should leave out being only a discipline but it has to transform into an interdisciplinary by embracing majorities and minorities together, briefly both Western and non-Western cultures together.

The politics of multiculturalism have not facilitated the task. Advocates of multicultural canon revision wish to extend the ethical demand for recognition of marginalized cultural groups and expressive traditions, which began with the civil rights and women's movements, to include both minority ethnic cultures in this country and non-Western cultures globally. Fundamental to this demand is a liberal notion of representation, which operates on two levels. The recognition of non-Western cultures will bring a new perspective to Comparative Literature, and there two things which should be done to bring this liberation to Comparative Literature. Bernheimer proposes two steps for this;

- First, the canon should be representative not just of European high culture but also of the diversity of literary productions throughout the world. The new Comparative Literature is expected to host various literary products to enhance its content and efficiency. Rather than just caring for European cultures, Indian, Caribbean or any kind of culture labelled as other should take place in comparative studies.
- Second, the works chosen to be included in a revised canon should be representative of the cultures in which they were created (Levin Report) [1]. After including non-Western cultures within the study.

Comparative Literature, these literary products should stand for their own cultures and history, they should be the representatives of their own communities in the field of Comparative Literature. For some comparatists, history is also an inseparable part of Comparative Literature, that is to say, rather than ignoring or declining the histories, customs or traditions of multi-cultural communities, it is better to overwrite them.

According to the Levin Report in 1965; Since there has been some talk about an American school of Comparative Literature, we should like to reaffirm our belief in the internationalism of our field < In attempting to extend its scope and to utilize newer methods of interpretations, there is no reason why we should neglect what has been validly established by our predecessors and colleagues across the sea.

There is no reason to disregard the past which was established some time ago, the better thing is or the thing which is supposed to be done is to write them or improve them again by adding newer things to them. This will be the only way which will enable Comparative Literature to broaden its field and content. As it is mentioned below, it is better to focus on the opportunities to expand and enhance the efficiency of Comparative Literature to make it much better than past. In her essay Comparative Literature and

Global Citizenship, Mary Louise Pratt expresses her opinion about this issue; Instead of producing students who, know foreign languages, maybe we should start talking about producing bilingual, bicultural people (or multilingual, multicultural people). Maybe we should link our endeavours to the need for deeply informed, culturally competent individuals in a globalizing world.

Besides the influence of comparative literature the second issue that I tried to explain here is the issue of which are addressed by the age of multiculturalism. Multicultural concerns cover a broad range of topics and identities including race, religion, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and/or disability, culture, or customs, beliefs, nationality, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, family status, geographic difference, linguistic variation, and any other possible differences from the mainstream culture. and products of various institutions or people at any particular time, can greatly influence how people interact and how we see one another—both positively and negatively. And most of the issues of comparative literature are post-colonialism, identity, minority right, diversity, gender. Multicultural literature is broadly defined in this study as literature that.

The first point is, post-colonialism, it sought to challenge the cultural dimensions of imperial rule by establishing the legitimacy of non-western political ideas and traditions. It is a counter to Eurocentrism, which is the extrapolation of European cultural ideals and concepts to non-European groups. Orientalism as a result emerged. Through the use of stereotypes that denigrate non-Western cultures, this undermines western cultural and political supremacy over the Orient. Additionally, it enables non-Western ideas to be regarded as being equally valid as Western concepts.

The second issues raised by the age of multiculturalism is identity (religious, language, cultural, ethnic, national identity and others). Multiculturalism is a form of identity politics that seeks to advance the interests of particular communities in the face of perceived or actual injustice. It tries to raise awareness by concentrating on a shared identity and experience. Because people can only be understood within the social settings to which they belong and because they are shaped by the social and cultural environments to which they belong, it is communitarian. Multiculturalists contend that culture shapes the beliefs, norms, and values that make up an individual's identity, hence fostering a sense of rootedness. There is a focus on ethnicity. Ethnic communities are extended kinship groups since their members are thought to have ancestors in common. It makes people feel special and that they belong to a group.

Minority rights is the third issue. This holds true in areas with territorially concentrated populations, such as among Native Americans. It involves the handing off of power granting immigrants polytechnic benefits, like as legal exemptions or halal or kosher butchers, in the context of immigration Minority or multi-

cultural rights are unique from the liberal view of rights since they belong to the group rather than the individual. Multiculturalism is therefore primarily social and communal in nature. Even as it works to treat all cultural groups equally in their claim to recognition, multiculturalism is willing to grant favored rights to some in order to correct historical wrongs through positive discrimination.

Diversity is another issue of multiculturalism; multiculturalists contend that political unity and cultural diversity may coexist. People have many different identities and allegiances. Because they have a strong and stable identity founded in their own culture, people may engage in society. Denying one's culture leads to impotence and isolation, which foster extremism. It promotes tolerance and comprehension across cultural boundaries.

Multiculturalism is compatible with liberalism. It supports liberals' dedication to acceptance and the defense of individual liberty. Liberalism has little impact on people's moral or cultural judgments. Because everyone should be viewed as a morally independent individual, liberal ideology disregards cultural distinctions. Liberals distinguish the private sphere from the public one as a setting where individuals are free to express their linguistic, cultural, and religious identities. Limitations to liberal multiculturalism they impose: Only beliefs and actions that encourage individual liberty and autonomy are tolerated. Since it guarantees that all choices are made with the consent of the governed, liberals think that liberal democracy is the only system of government that is truly legitimate.

Another big issues brought up by the age of diversity is feminists (gender in general term) and multiculturalism. When minority rights and recognition politics are used to uphold and legitimate patriarchal and traditional views that disadvantage women, feminists are concerned. Feminists are concerned with cultural norms that support structural gender prejudices, such as dress codes and family arrangements. Feminists worry that cultural pressure will cause women to settle divorce matters through religious courts rather than speak out for their rights or enhance those rights.

Another multiculturalism-related issue is the topic of social reformers. Class disparity, a lack of economic clout, and low social standing are concerns that multiculturalism ignores since it encourages cultural or ethnic assertiveness above the pursuit of social justice. Those who have a shared economic interest in eradicating poverty and achieving social transformation are also weakened and divided by it. A greater understanding of cultural variety may cause support for welfare and redistributive programs to decline.

Basic Issues in Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism: A Symphony of Challenges and Possibilities.

The rise of multiculturalism has profoundly reshaped the field of comparative literature, presenting both exciting opportunities

and daunting challenges. Here are some of the key issues that contemporary comparative literature grapples with.

Decentering eurocentrism and embracing diversity

- Traditionally, comparative literature focused on European canons and perspectives, leading to critiques of Eurocentrism and a limited understanding of global literary landscapes (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988).
- The growing demand for inclusivity necessitates incorporating marginalized voices and literatures from previously ignored regions and cultures [2].
- This raises questions about how to create methodologies that acknowledge diverse cultural contexts and avoid homogenizing or essentializing non-Western traditions [3].

Redefining "World Literature"

- The term "world literature" itself becomes problematic under multiculturalism, often reflecting Western biases and homogenizing diverse literatures [4,5].
- The need for alternative frameworks emerges, focusing on polyphonic dialogues, interconnectivity, and the deconstruction of singular canons [6,7].
- Questions arise about translation, power dynamics, and the ethical implications of representing non-Western literatures on a global stage [8].

Negotiating universality and specificity

- Comparative literature historically sought universal themes and shared human experiences across cultures (Aristotle, Poetics; Steiner, 1984).
- In the age of multiculturalism, the emphasis shifts towards acknowledging historical and cultural specificities, challenging universalisms that erase differences [9,10].
- This raises questions about how to balance respect for local contexts with the possibility of finding common ground and identifying shared concerns across diverse literatures [11].

Decolonizing methodologies and building equitable partnerships

- The legacy of colonialism continues to influence academic fields, including comparative literature (Said, 1978; Chakrabarty, 2000).
- The need for decolonized methodologies and epistemologies emerges, emphasizing marginalized voices and disrupting hierarchical power relations [12].
- This involves actively seeking partnerships and collaborations with scholars from diverse backgrounds, ensuring equitable representation and knowledge production (Mignolo, 2011; Mohanty, 2003).

These are just some of the key issues that comparative literature faces in the age of multiculturalism. Addressing these challenges will require an ongoing process of critical self-reflection,

methodological innovation, and collaborative engagement with diverse voices and perspectives. This journey offers the potential to rewrite the narratives of “world literature,” foster deeper understanding and empathy across cultures, and ultimately, create a more inclusive and equitable field of literary scholarship [13,14].

Conclusion

Generally, it is evident that the field needs renovation; as Spivak asserts, the only option to save comparative literature is to implement some fresh modifications. The discipline is not dead at all because it is open to any sort of improvements. First of all, it should be acknowledged that Comparative Literature programs need to improve; they shouldn't just focus on European-centric literature; rather, their students should also become familiar with various non-Western cultures and their literary output. Second, multiculturalism is significant in many countries, and this should not be overlooked. In Western communities, there are some other minor cultures included as well. Therefore, Comparative Literature should not generalize all these as Western cultures or literary works. Comparative Literature, since it is regarded as a global study, is expected to embrace all types of literary genres, works from different cultures and communities as well.

In the vibrant tapestry of the present, where threads of diverse cultures intertwine with dazzling intricacy, Comparative Literature has embarked on a bold artistic revolution. No longer content with the monochrome canvas of Eurocentrism, it embraces the riotous symphony of multicultural voices. To answer the call of this age, the discipline has grappled with fundamental questions: How do we capture the essence of “world literature” without succumbing to homogenization? How do we move beyond the echo chamber of established canons to hear the whispers of marginalized narratives? These, we find, are the cornerstones of Comparative Literature's current struggle: the need for inclusive frameworks that embrace difference, the urgent call for decolonized methodologies, and the constant negotiation between universalities and specificities. As we navigate this fertile terrain, the most pressing issues lie in forging dialogues that dismantle power imbalances, amplifying silenced voices, and ensuring that comparative studies truly reflect the kaleidoscope of human experience. This is not merely an academic pursuit; it is a transformative dance, a quest to rewrite the story of literature – and by extension, humanity – where every thread finds its rightful place in the intricate fabric of existence.

Data Availability Statement

The data are included within the article.

Ethics Statement

The study does not involve human participants since it is conducted through review of theoretical concepts.

Authorial Contributions

Dawit Dibekulu: is the lead author of this study and writing the content of the study and collecting the data and data analysis and interpretation of the data.

Dr Tesfaye Dagnew: is a principal supervisor of this study who contribute a major advisory role in conducting this study. He was working on editing the work giving different theoretical, methodological and analytical advisory roles in this paper.

N:B. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any theoretical, commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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