

CONTEMPORARY *WELTVERKEHR* OR WORLD TRAFFIC OF COMPARATIST SCHOLARS: WORLD CONGRESSES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE LITERATURE ASSOCIATION (ICLA)

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"*On ne s'enrichit que par les échanges* (We only enrich ourselves in exchanges)."
Charles de Gérando

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Summary

This article gives a survey of the worldwide movements of comparatist scholars, ideas and imaginations mainly based on the triennial World Congresses of the International Comparatist Literature Association / Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée

(ICLA / AILC) and its Proceedings over the last fifty years (1955-2005). The activities of this Association can be considered as representative of a global *translatio studii*, i.e. the creative transfer of contemporary scholarship in the literary and cultural field between academic institutions all over the world from a transnational point of view. In the congress locations, programs, idioms and proceedings a significant development can be observed from a more or mere Euro-American conception of Comparative Literature toward a decentered cross-cultural form of dialogical and also digital communication about world literature and world culture. By means of the traditional terms *translatio studii* ('transfer of studies and culture'), *Weltliteratur* ('world literature') and *Weltverkehr* ('world traffic'), the contemporary situation of globalizing literature and literary studies is constantly related to its historical roots.

1. The Notion of Cross-Cultural *Weltverkehr* (World Traffic and Communication) and its Meaning for Comparative Literature

Cross-cultural *Weltverkehr* ('world traffic and communication') is the modern form of traditional *translatio studii* (see *Translatio Studii and Cross-Cultural Movements or Weltverkehr*). It is the transfer and exchange of artistic and intellectual products, comprising not only the worldwide movements of ideas and imagination, but also those of their representatives, in a deliberately decentered way. The German term was launched by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and is linked to the enlightened idea of international communication. Following the term *Weltbürger* ('citizen of the world'), which was already in existence, it fits into the same terminological and ideological framework of compound words such as *Weltliteratur* ('world literature') and *Weltlauf* ('course of the world'), all of them promoted by Goethe as a cluster of transnational terms and ideas that have become quite common in the last two centuries, even on an international scale. *Weltliteratur*, the most famous of these terms, was coined in 1827, and is a key word of Comparative Literature, complemented by its critical counterpart, *Weltliteraturwissenschaft* ('world literature studies'), set up by the Swiss comparatist Fritz Strich. For the Spanish avant-gardist author and comparatist scholar Guillermo de Torre, World Literature Studies and Comparative Literature are synonymous, similar to the view expressed by Fritz Strich, who even preferred the term *Weltliteraturwissenschaft* to that of Comparative Literature, yet without ultimately supplanting it.

By connecting *Weltliteratur* with *Weltverkehr* Goethe conceived world literature not only as a universal corpus of texts, but as a worldwide transfer, an exchange of literary products, mediated by their critical and translatory and editorial agents, and an exchange of ideas between their authors. Through *Weltverkehr* world literature is directly linked with the material world outside the book, just like the scholar Dr. Faust, who entered into contact with the world using these very terms ("mit der Welt verkehren", *Faust II*, 1). In some way, Goethe's idea of cultural *Weltverkehr* and world communication – in part already realized by Madame de Staël's literary salon in Switzerland, by the tricontinental network of Islamic scholars set up by Murtada al-Zabidi, and by the transcontinental French journal *La Revue des Deux Mondes* [Journal of the Two Worlds]– may be considered as prefiguring the emblematic *ScholarShip* of comparatists imagined by the former ICLA vice-president Kurt Wais, transporting scholars, ideas and imaginations from all over the world toward the second World Congress of

Comparative Literature across the Atlantic Ocean at North Carolina in 1958. This striking event of worldwide transportation, of a new kind of *Weltverkehr* of scholars, was still to be remembered by Marcel Bataillon in his "Opening Speech" at the ICLA Congress of Montréal / Ottawa in 1973.

In fact, the triennial World Congresses of the *International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)* or, to use its French name, the *Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée (AILC)*, are the most representative example of today's worldwide movements of *Weltliteratur* and *Weltliteraturwissenschaft*, of world literature and its scholarship. They represent a global network of academic institutions dedicated to the research and teaching of universal literature from a comparative point of view, mostly based on cross-cultural and multipolar principles. The ICLA is the core of the *International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures*, established under its French acronym, FILLM (*Fédération Internationale des Langues et Littératures Modernes*), a global linguistic and philological organization founded in 1928, into which the ICLA was implanted in 1954. The FILLM endeavors to bring together scholars of all nations working in the field of modern languages and literatures via the medium of its triennial Congress held in selected universities around the world. It unites 19 associations with a membership of around 40,000 scholars in more than 90 countries and acts as their representative at UNESCO through its membership of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (Conseil International de Philosophie et Sciences Humaines, CIPSH).

The ICLA was founded in Oxford in 1954 during the 6th triennial congress of the FILLM and at the initiative and through the inspiration of comparatists and writers like Fernand Baldensperger, T. S. Eliot, Jean-Marie Carré, and Carlo Pellegrini. Today, the ICLA is among the largest international associations in the humanities with over 6,000 members throughout the world. Therefore the activities of ICLA can be considered highly significant for the *Weltverkehr* of world literature, and they may serve as a paradigmatic illustration of the international movements of scholars, ideas and imaginations.

2. Basic Principles of the ICLA / AILC Activities

Because cross-cultural *Weltverkehr* is one of the most important principles of Comparative Literature, the organization of international congresses plays a central role. After an initial preparatory meeting held in 1950 at the University of Tübingen and the above mentioned foundation in Oxford the first congress was organized in Venice in 1955. Since then until the present (2007), regular ICLA congresses have been held every three years in different places around the world. A supplementary symposium of international comparatists was celebrated in 2005 at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the ICLA.

The statutes of the ICLA adopted at the General Assembly in Venice (1955) and amended in Fribourg (1964), Bordeaux (1970), Innsbruck (1979), New York (1982), Paris (1985), Edmonton (1994) and Leiden (1997) establish that the main objective of the Association is to foster the study of literature from a transnational and supranational point of view. It tries to support this idea through international cooperation. The

association receives funds for research and publication from FILLM, CIPSH and UNESCO.

Besides the many comparative literature publications and periodicals – such as the *Revue de Littérature Comparée* [Review of Comparative Literature], founded in 1921 by Fernand Baldensperger, *Comparative Literature*, founded in 1949 by Chandler Beall and Werner Paul Friederich, the *Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, founded in 1949 at UP North Carolina, *arcadia*, founded in 1966 by Horst Rüdiger, *neohelicon*, founded in 1973 by Miklós Szabolsci and György M. Vajda), and the *Bibliography of Comparative Literature*, founded in 1950 by Fernand Baldensperger and Werner Paul Friederich – the ICLA congresses, together with the ICLA research committees, primarily present a multifaceted prism of the global diversity of Comparative Literature in their proceedings and various publications. The historical, ideological and methodological evolution of comparative scholarship over the last five decades is reflected in the programs of the seventeen world congresses organized by the ICLA to date. The ICLA Congress Proceedings from 1955 to 2004, including the proceedings of the additional Venetian symposium of 2005 and the program of the forthcoming congress at Rio de Janeiro in 2007, provide a significant corpus for a general view of global communication in the field of Comparative Literature.

From its inception, the Association has been conceived as a major agent in promoting international research in comparative literature. Several standing committees were set up in order to advance the original aim. These are self-renewing and gather regularly at venues around the globe. The Coordinating Committee is engaged in publishing the *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*: to date 22 volumes have appeared, all prepared by international teams of scholars. The Committee of Literary Theory and the Committee of Translation address current issues in literary and cultural studies across a wide spectrum. The committee on Intercultural Studies concentrates on inter- and intra-regional relationship mainly outside of the European and Euro-American areas. There also exists a Research Committee on East Asia, one on Eastern and Southern Europe and one on Latin America (for further ICLA Research Committees see the thematic Section 7).

3. Medial Aspects of *Translatio Studii* and the *Weltverkehr* (World Traffic and Communication) of Books and Scholars: The ICLA / AILC Congress Proceedings

In this context it is interesting to observe the change in the medial presentation of the congresses. Usually, congress papers appear in the classic form of books. Due to the decentralization of the various congress venues, and also to the enlargement of the research fields of this discipline, the editions are not uniform either in their external presentation or in the growing number of volumes, which vary between one (1955, 1967, 1994), two (1958, 1964, 1973), three (1982), four (1979), five (1988), six (1991, 2000), and even ten (1997) or eleven (1985). The congress programs are becoming more and more differentiated because of the enormous variety of themes; yet they attempt to assemble various symposia under a common general topic. The Paris congress of 1985 appears to be an early highpoint of this phenomenon, but even since the second congress in 1958, instead of only one leading theme, several general themes have been presented in order to unify the many and often disparate interests of the participants.

The ICLA proceedings do not appear within a uniform book series, with the result that the publishers and places of publication vary from one publication to the other. It also happens that single volumes based on ICLA congress workshops are published without a special reference in its title or imprint, for example the volume on *Multilinguale Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Manfred Schmeling and Monika Schmitz-Emans (Würzburg 2002), which gathers the papers of a workshop on "Literary Multilingualism and Modernity" at the ICLA Congress held in Pretoria in 2000. Since the Hong Kong congress of 2004, the ICLA has decided to publish the proceedings on CD-ROM, which takes into account not only the media-centered focus of modern technology, but also the costs of publication in view of the conspicuously expanding number of contributions. Another advantage of the data medium consists in noticeably speeding up publication, a factor that has not always been taken into sufficient consideration for the printed proceedings in the past. For example the eleven volumes of the congress held in Paris in 1985, running to about 250 pages each, did not appear at the same time as one would have expected, but their publication dates are spread between 1989 (vol. 1) and 2000 (vol. 11), with the latest volume being published five congresses after the original congress. Today, the time factor has become imperative, as the organizers of the congress in Rio de Janeiro (2007) plan to publish the proceedings of this congress on CD-ROM even before the actual congress has taken place. It seems that Goethe's statement on modern *Weltverkehr* – "alles ist veloziferisch" ("velocity is everywhere") – has been fully assimilated by contemporary scholars of world literature, including its posthuman tendencies (see Section 9).

The following synopsis lists all ICLA congresses and its themes since the foundation of the organization. The bibliographical references of the Proceedings of the ICLA Congresses are listed in the bibliography. For practical reasons, the volumes of the Proceedings referred to in our text are usually accompanied by the year of the congress to which they correspond.

No.	Year	Venue	Themes
1	1955	Venice, Italy	Venezia nelle letterature moderne (Venice in the Modern Literatures); Venice as a historical junction of European writers and literatures, and as a gateway to the Orient
2	1958	Chapel Hill (North Carolina), U. S. A.	I: Scope and Methodology of Comparative Literature II: Special Movements, Themes, Genres III: European-American Relations IV: Literature of Emigration V: Inter-European Relations
3	1961	Utrecht, Netherlands	No general theme, no thematic sections; various subjects of general and comparative literature, for instance on the definition of literary terms, like "literature", "style", "baroque", and "picaresque", on Korean and Japanese literatures, and on the relation between Dutch and European literatures

4	1964	Fribourg, Switzerland	I: Nationalisme et cosmopolitisme en littérature II: Termes et notions littéraires: Imitation, influence, originalité III: Les littératures d'Extrême-Orient et leurs rapports avec les littératures occidentales
5	1967	Belgrade, Yugoslavia	I: Les courants littéraires en tant que phénomènes internationaux II: Littérature orale et littérature écrite III: Les littératures slaves et leurs interprétations dans les autres littératures IV: Projet d'une histoire de la littérature européenne
6	1970	Bordeaux, France	Littérature et société Les littératures du monde méditerranéen: héritage et renouvellement Les relations littéraires Europe – Afrique Les relations littéraires Orient – Occident
7	1973	Montréal and Ottawa, Canada	A) I: Naissance des littératures américaines / The Rise of American Literatures II: Influences européennes sur les littératures américaines / European Influences on American Literatures III: Interdépendances et affinités des littératures américaines / Interactions and Similarities of American Literatures IV: Littératures américaines dans le monde: échos, ressemblances, affinités / American Literatures Abroad: Echoes, Resemblances, Affinities B) I: La périodisation et l'articulation de l'histoire littéraire / The Periodization and Articulation of the History of Literature II: Méthodes d'analyse / Methods of Analysis III: Problèmes d'évaluation / Problems of Evaluation IV: Problèmes spéciaux de littérature comparée / Special Problems in Comparative Literature
8	1976	Budapest, Hungary	I: Trois grandes mutations littéraires: Renaissance – Lumières – Début du vingtième siècle II: Relations entre littératures de diverses cultures au XX ^e siècle : Littératures latino-américaines – Littératures du Proche-Orient – Littératures d'Afrique – Littératures d'Asie III: Littérature comparée et théorie littéraire : Théorie et méthodes de la littérature comparée – Personnages et concepts – Symbole et mythe – Sémiotique et littérature comparée – Langue, style et littérature comparée – Questions de la traduction – Histoire comparée des littératures
9	1979	Innsbruck, Austria	I: Classical Models in Literature II: Literary Communication and Reception

			III: Literature and the Other arts IV: Evolution of the Novel
10	1982	New York, U. S. A.	I: General problems of Literary History II: Comparative Poetics III: Inter-American Literary Relations
11	1985	Paris, France	I: Le rayonnement international de Victor Hugo II: Fiction Narratologie Texte Genre III: Toward a Theory of Comparative Literature IV: Oralité et littérature V: Littérature comparée, littérature mondiale VI: Littérature générale, littérature comparée VII: La traduction dans le développement des littératures VIII : Études de réception IX: Acculturation X : Littératures émergentes XI : Dialogues des cultures – Dialogues of Cultures
12	1988	Munich, Germany	General Theme: Space and boundaries in Literature / Espace et frontières dans la littérature China and the West Medieval Islamic Literature The Feminist Redefinition of Literary Space Space and Boundaries of Literature Space and Boundaries in Literary Theory and Criticism The Formation and Deformation of Concepts in Literary History
13	1991	Tokyo, Japan	General Theme: The Force of Vision I: Dramas of Desire II: Visions of Beauty III: Visions in History IV: Visions of the Other V: Powers of Narration VI: Vision and Re-vision of Literary Theory, Translation and Modernization, New Visions of Creation VII: Inter-Asian Comparative Literature, ...
14	1994	Edmonton, Canada	Thematic Selection: Comparative Literature Now. Theories and Practice / La littérature comparée à l'heure actuelle. Théories et réalisations I: Comparative Literature and Literary History II: Literary History and Histories of Literature III: Genres and Textual Properties IV: The Novel and Other Prose V: Drama and Literature and Other Arts VI: Literature and Film VII: Literature and Technology VIII: Bibliography of Comparative Literature

15	1997	Leiden, Netherlands	General Theme: Literature as Cultural Memory I: Nation Building II: Colonizer and Colonized III: The Conscience of Humankind: Literature and Traumatic Experiences IV: Gendered Memories V: Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory VI: Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory VII: Reconstructing Cultural Memory: Translation, Scripts, Literacy VIII: Intercultural Explorations IX: Travel Writing and Cultural Memory X: Images of Westerners in Chinese and Japanese Literature
16	2000	Pretoria, South Africa	General Theme: Transitions and Transgressions in an Age of Multiculturalism / Transitions et transgressions à l'âge du multiculturalisme
17	2004	Hong Kong, China	General Theme: "At the Edge": Margins, Frontiers, Initiatives in Literature and Culture / "À la marge" : bords, frontières, initiatives littéraires et culturelles
	2005	Venice, Italy	À partir de Venise : héritages, passages, horizons. Cinquante ans de l'AILC / It started in Venice: Legacies, Passages, Horizons. Fifty Years of ICLA
18	2007	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	General Theme: Beyond Binarisms: Discontinuities and Displacements in Comparative Literature

Table 1. Synopsis lists all ICLA congresses

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Corpus of ICLA Publications

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