

Looking to the Past: Cues for the Humanities from ancient Indian learned societies

Meenakshi Bharat

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Abstract:

Indian literate culture goes back to more than three millennia, establishing the credentials of India as a learned society with a rich back history. In the course of multiple literary examples of dramatized examples of give and take, of actual ‘student- teacher’ exchanges, of peer dialogue, a considerable amount of literary evidence submits itself as proof ours has long been a learned society. In the current global scenario of heightened learned exchange coming paradoxically and concurrently with a wilful subversion of the due processes of learned dissemination and exchange of knowledge, I propose that ‘new’ directions for the humanities may be found in the processes enshrined in India’s ancient learned texts. I will attempt a contemplation of what a return to older, classic methodology and exchange could mean for furthering and bettering current and future modes of enquiry; this rich legacy could well equip us to deal with the challenges of complex present and help pave the way for transformative changes.

Biographic note:

Meenakshi Bharat teaches in the University of Delhi and is a writer, translator, reviewer and critic. Her special interests include children's literature, women's fiction, film studies, postcolonial, English and cultural studies—areas which she has extensively researched. She has published *The Ultimate Colony: The Child in Postcolonial Fiction*, *Desert in Bloom: Indian Women Writers of Fiction in English*, *Filming the Line of Control: The Indo-Pak Relationship through the Cinematic Lens*, *Rushdie the Novelist*, three volumes of Indo-Australian short fiction entitled *Fear Factor: Terror Incognito* from Picador and *Alien Shores: Tales of Refugees and Asylum Seekers and Only Connect: Technology and Us*, and VS Naipaul’s *A House for Mr Biswas: Critical Perspectives*, and a children’s book, *Little Elephant throws a Party*. *Troubled Testimonies: Terrorism and the English Novel in India* (2016) came out from Routledge. A collection of short stories is on the anvil. She served as the President of the International Federation of Modern Languages and Literatures (FILLM, UNESCO) from 2014-2017 and continues to be a member of the Executive and as a bureau member of the International Council of Philosophy and the Human Sciences (CIPSH, UNESCO). She is an Executive member of the Indian Association for the Study of Australia (IASA) having served as the Treasurer from 2012-2016.

**Towards the development of Linguistics in West Africa:
The contribution of the West African Linguistic Society (WALS)**

Lendzemo Constantine Yuka and Adams Bodomo

University of Benin, Nigeria / University of Vienna, Austria

Abstract:

The 1881 “scramble for Africa” attracted European traders, colonisers, and missionaries to the African continent. Some of these Europeans began to study and classify the languages of Africa. At the dawn of independence, the ex-colonial languages had become the languages of governance, education, commerce in the new independent countries. The indigenous African languages were largely viewed as old-fashioned, non-prestigious, and as a catalyst to national disintegration within multilingual and multi-ethnic nation-states. Linguists drawn mainly from Universities within the West African sub-region and Africa-oriented European research institutions recognised that the sub-region contains a dense collection of structurally diverse languages. These linguists created *The Survey of West African Languages* as a forum responsible for sponsoring and funding research in specific West African languages. In 1965, this forum became the *West African Linguistic Society (WALS)*. In its 53 years of existence WALS has accelerated the development of linguistic studies through the formation of funded research groups, stimulated the creation of Departments of Linguistics in Universities within the sub-region, encouraged regional cooperation across the “Anglophone”/“Francophone” language divide, sustained the publication of the *Journal of West African Languages (JWAL)* and organised biennial *West African Language Congresses (WALC)* among other achievements. WALS’s major goal has been to foster and encourage research in the languages and literatures of West Africa by facilitating interactions and the exchange of ideas among scholars. This paper examines the motivations of the founding fathers of WALS; it explores its current structure, identifies its challenges and points out its achievements in the promotion of linguistic scholarship in West Africa.

Biographic note:

Lendzemo Constantine Yuka is professor at the Department of Linguistic Studies, University of Benin, Nigeria. He is secretary-Treasurer of the West African Linguistic Society.

Adams Bodomo is a professor of African Studies holding the chair of African Languages and Literatures at the Department of African Studies, University of Vienna, Austria.

Views non Translated and non-translated 'World Literature' since 1945

Case study China, Netherlands and Sweden

Petra Broomans

University of Groningen/Ghent University

Abstract:

Digital tools and methods are becoming more widely used for scholarly research in the arts, humanities and social sciences. However, to what extent are we taking into account diversity in the intercultural classroom in teaching? As an example I will present the outcomes of an international telecollaboration project about world literature, genres, cultural transfer and (non)translations. The project could serve as an example of how learned societies can benefit of new social media and the internet in intercultural education and communication. The project includes Chinese, Dutch and Swedish students. The main objectives of the project from the students' perspective to apply their knowledge of literary genres to world literature, to gain more knowledge on cultural transfer, to create learner autonomy and improve their analytical skills. Prior to the (online) meetings, students should think of a piece that they consider world literature (from their own language/area) and the teams discuss what contributes to that piece to make it world literature and to what genre it belongs. In the last part of the paper I will evaluate the reading experiences and views on 'world literature', the collaboration attitudes in the intercultural communication of the student groups involved in the telecollaboration project.

Biographic note:

Petra Broomans is Associate Professor of European Literatures and Cultures, University of Groningen and visiting professor at the Ghent University. Coordinator of the U4 (Ghent, Göttingen, Groningen, Uppsala) Cultural Transfer Studies network. She has published numerous articles on cultural transfer with a special focus on gender and minorities such as 'The Importance of Literature and Cultural Transfer - Redefining Minority and Migrant Cultures' in *Battles and Borders. Perspectives on Cultural Transmission and Literature in Minor Language Areas* (2015). Secretary of the board of the International Association for Scandinavian Studies (IASS), assistant-secretary general to the FILLM-committee. For more info see: www.petrabroomans.net

LEARNED SOCIETIES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH IN CHINA: A SURVEY AND SOME MODEST PROPOSALS

Geoff Hall & Li (Lily) Cai

University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Abstract:

It is proposed to report on how Humanities learned societies are viewed and operate in modern times in China and how they have interacted with academia and affected research communities to the present. Internationalisation of education, research enhancement, cultural co-operations and the like have proliferated in recent times with China's push to become a knowledge economy, but with the emphasis typically firmly on Science and Technology and from a sometimes narrowly instrumentalist position. Official Chinese policy increasingly emphasises creative and innovative thought and design. How Humanities learned societies fit in and function in the context is less clear. Necessarily referring to China's historical development, the development and relationships between learned societies and wider cultural and intellectual activity will be surveyed and reported.

Descriptive information is obtained from the existing literature, publicised materials, and in-depth interviews to reveal a) what kinds of resources learned societies offer to Chinese research communities; and b) in what ways these resources have contributed to humanistic activities of their host communities.

Two representative societies were identified for case studies after an overview of the history of learned societies in China, one national Chinese and one 'western'. The anticipated impact of the study is to find out how systems and dialogues have enhanced and promoted past research and related activity and therefore in future operations how to better fulfil the missions of learned societies in China. The role of FILLM as possible international facilitator and promoter of significant innovative research activity from a new 'third space' in China will be addressed in concluding recommendations.

Biographic note:

Geoff Hall is Professor of English and Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC), venue of FILLM Congress 2014. I gave a paper on stylisation of Chinese language and culture in the fiction of Ha Jin at the FILLM Delhi Congress 2017. At UNNC I lead teaching and research in Humanities and Liberal Arts areas which attempt to mediate the development of new cultural understandings and ways of working between East Asian and 'Western' perspectives and histories. My own interdisciplinary research looks at aspects of English uses in China, typically bringing together linguistic and literary perspectives.

Li (Lily) Cai did her PhD with School of Education, University of Nottingham in Internationalisation of Higher Education prior to taking up a lectureship in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) in Southern University of Science and Technology China. Apart from her PhD project focusing on higher education management and leadership she also participated in research projects investigating cultural studies, international schooling and special education. She is now working as the Manager for Researcher Training and Development/PhD Trainer at Graduate School of University of Nottingham Ningbo China.

Gender in the Structure and Intellectual Field of Two Learned Societies

(MLA and ICLA)

Margaret R Higonnet

University of Connecticut

Abstract:

First, the presentation will review the creation of committees focused on the “Status of Women” and “Gender Studies” in the MLA and the ICLA—two rather different issues, conceptually. The talk will then address some of the quite different reasons for these institutional efforts, the strategies of implementation, the diffuse impact on other learned societies, and the formation of analogous committees or forums to address other groups concerned with race, graduate student status, etc. The questions the presentation will pursue involve the extent to which the work of these groups over the years developed changes in institutional structures, on the one hand, and comparative approaches to conceptions of gender that affect the fields of literary study, on the other. Shifts in vocabulary, changes in the literary and social landscape, and economic changes affecting the academy and learned societies at large all have played roles in the changes we may observe, many of them shaped by national politics and other social forces. The essay will consider possible proposals in response to current conditions.

Biographic note:

Margaret R Higonnet, Professor Emerita at the University of Connecticut, is president of FILLM. She has also been president of the American Conference on Romanticism, the American Comparative Literature Association, the Gender Studies Committee of the ICLA, and the ICLA committee on comparative literary history (CHLEL). Higonnet has held fellowships from the Radcliffe Institute, the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis, the Rockefeller Foundation, Instituto Juan March, the Fulbright Scholar Program and the DAAD. She has worked on a range of topics including comparative literature, the literatures of World War I, feminist theory, suicide, and children’s literature

Horizontal + Vertical: My Activities in Two Learned Societies

Shin-chi Morimoto

Graduate School of Letters at Showa Women's University

Abstract:

I believe myself to have been a constantly devoted member of both Japan Comparative Literature Association and the Japan Society for Literature and Christianity for approximately forty years.

Comparative literature deals with the influence from one writer to another, or with similarities between two literary works. In contrast, Christian literature is mostly concerned with the relationship between God and man. Though there are good and poor writings, their authors must be equal as human beings. On the other hand, the Absolute can overawe us rather strictly. Therefore, committed believers not only look up to heaven to pray, but often hang their heads in grave introspection. Such upward and downward physical motions seem to indicate spiritual longings for something infinitely faraway or in the depths of their egos.

I suppose the primary role of comparative literature, within the broader realm of the humanities, as allowing us to grasp global trends of letters with a horizontal line of sight, thereby acquiring a well-balanced and relativistic vision of our own existence.

To become conscious of religious thought and godhood might bring an entirely new dimension of knowledge to proof-oriented comparatists: that is to say, a fascinating supernatural journey along an imaginary vertical line.

Biographic note:

Shin-chi Morimoto is a professor of Department of International Studies and Graduate School of Letters at Showa Women's University. But I am to retire in March. I am a member of Japan Comparative Literature Association and am now the treasurer for its Tokyo branch. I also belong to the Japan Society for Literature and Christianity in which I used to be the secretary-general and vice president. For nine years I was an assistant secretary-general of FILLM.

Beyond anxieties: challenges of the Humanities in face of uncertainty and how learned societies may serve them.

Luiz Oosterbeek

International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences

Abstract:

The field of the Humanities plays a key role in human adaptation processes, expanding time and space scales of assessment of processes, in allowing for foresight in face of uncertainty. Building from wider society's attempts to understand human patterns of behaviour, the Humanities frame those within specific sets of reasoning anchored on reproducible and transferrable methods of analysis and theoretical corpuses of interpretation. From the second half of the 19th century, Humanities strived to establish a scholarly scope, beyond the cultural humanist studies of the modern age, sharing a path with scientific disciplines focused on the study of non-anthropoc phenomena. In this process, learned societies played a major role in networking and lobbying for the recognition of the novel disciplines. The paper focuses on the contribution of global Humanities and Sciences organizations, on the roots and mission of CIPSH and its members in shaping new understandings of the human, on how present challenges are being dealt with by these societies and how a new agenda, also with a wider societal impact, may be designed.

Biographic note:

Secretary-General of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences. Main research: archaeology, heritage, landscape management in (Portugal, Africa, Southern America). Prizes and awards: European Commission, Brazilian Lawyers Bar, Portuguese Ministry of Culture, Gulbenkian Foundation, Foundation for Science and Technology and several private sponsors. Author of over 300 papers and 50 books. Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar. President of Instituto Terra e Memória (PT). Guest Professor in several European and Brazilian Universities. Vice-President of HERITY. Vice-Director of the Geosciences Centre of Coimbra University. Outgoing SG of UISPP.

Rhetoric's Duty

Philippe-Joseph Salazar

University of Cape Town, South Africa

Abstract:

Rhetoric Studies has moved in recent years from philology and composition to being reshaped into an intersectional discipline in the Humanities, that straddles anthropology, cultural studies, literature and politics, or rather the practical reason (or non reason) and mental forms at work in public deliberation. At the same time “rhetoricians” have been accepted, especially by the media, as public intellectuals, contributing to public debate from a learned angle. The first change is reflected in the affiliation of two rhetoric studies societies to FIILM. The second in the rapid development of rhetoric studies societies across the globe, that are challenging boundaries and active in redefining political engagement (as in Latin America). In this paper I will exemplify this assertion by referring first to my work on jihadist rhetoric and second to my forthcoming book on the “alt-right”, as prime terrains for what I have just described. My argument will be bound together by the concept of “the incomprehensible”, ie : how can we as scholars in rhetoric make popular perceptions about disruptive forms of politics and public life (such as jihadism and alt-rightism) move toward a better comprehension of these phenomena.

Biographic note:

Distinguished Professor in Rhetoric, Faculty of Law, University of Cape Town. Past Director in Rhetoric and Democracy at the Collège international de philosophie, Paris. Harry Oppenheimer Fellow. Bristol des Lumières prize laureate. Honorary Life President of the Association for Rhetoric and Communication in Southern Africa, Vice-President of the Chinese Global Society for Visual Communication, Founding and Honorary Member of the Sociedad Latinoamericana de Retórica. Most recent article in English: “Ways of Prediction, Ways of Rhetoric”, lead article of the jubilee issue of *Philosophy and Rhetoric* (2017, 50/4).

History and Prophecy: A Janus-Faced Account of FILLM from 1990 to 2050

Roger D. Sell

Åbo Akademi University

Abstract:

In this paper I shall partly look back on the challenges FILLM has faced during the nearly thirty years that I have been associated with it, and partly look another thirty years into the future. I shall be particularly concerned with the tensions between professionalistic specialization and generalist human wisdom, and also with the need to generate new kinds of scholarship and scholarly insight, plus (partly with the help of communications technology) new kinds of international collaboration. Throughout, I shall be trying to give some sense of the ideals which have guided my colleagues and me on the Committee over the years, and to suggest how, with practical modifications, these can still live on and inspire future generations. Some of what I suggest will be partly based on my knowledge of other scholarly organizations (Edmund Bolton's plans for an Academy Royal in the 1620s, the Royal Society, the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters). I shall also draw on my experience as Founding Series Editor of **FILLM Studies in Languages and Literatures**. And by way of conclusion, I shall re-tell the historical-cum-prophetic parable I gave as my presidential banquet speech at the Ningbo Congress.

Biographic note:

Roger D. Sell is Emeritus H.W. Donner Research Professor of Literary Communication at Åbo Akademi University. His other affiliations have been with Mansfield College and Keble College, Oxford, with Wolfson College, Cambridge, and with the University of Virginia, Uppsala University, Gotheburg University, and Helsinki University. He has written on a wide range of English and American literary authors, and has also developed an account of literary activity as one among other forms of communication. He has carried out teaching and other scholarly assignments all over the world, and has been made an OBE, a Member of the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, and a Knight First Class of the White Rose of Finland. He was first elected to the FILLM Committee at the Novi Sad Congress in 1990, and served as President from 2011 to 2014.

Associations and Academies: their roles in the contemporary world

Liliana Sikorska

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Abstract:

This paper discusses the role of associations and academies in contemporary communities. As the current president and a former member of the executive community of IAUPE and current member of the board of the Poznań Chapter of the Agder Akademii of Arts and Sciences, I have had a chance to observe how both organizations work on the international and local levels, addressing the issues of (inter)national cooperation and the stance of the humanities in relation to other disciplines. In what follows, I would like to draw on the initial idea of associations and academies as fora for asking difficult questions and their roles in furthering international communication across disciplines.

Biographic note:

Liliana Sikorska is professor, M.A. Ph.D., D. Litt Professor of English Literature. She has authored and edited a number of books and numerous papers on medieval and contemporary literature in English, primarily on medieval literature, e.g. *In a manner of Morall Playe. Social Ideologies in Medieval Morality Plays and Interludes 1350-1517* (2002), *Ironies of Art/Tragedies of Life: Essays on Irish Literature* (2005), *A Universe of (hi)stories: Essays on J.M. Coetzee* (2006). She has also authored *A Short History of English Literature* (fourth edition 2011). She is the general editor of *An Outline History of English Literature in Texts. Vol I - III* (2007) and general editor of *An Outline History of Irish Literature in Texts* (2011). She was a visiting scholar at the University of Florida (Gainesville), University of California Los Angeles, Brown University (Providence) and the American University (Washington DC), as well as Fulbright Professor at Cornell University (2010). She is member of Agder Akademi of Sciences and Letters (Norway), the European Academy of Arts and Sciences (France), and current President of the International Association of University Professors of English.