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Glocalization Narratives in Indian Literature and Cinema: An Introduction

This special section presents a collection of essays that explore the interaction between global and local, investigating the transformation of cultural ideals and representations as they appear in literary, media and cinematic contexts, focusing mainly on texts produced in South Asian languages other than English. The essays describe a range of cases whose *fil rouge* is that they testify of the absorption and processing of cultural forms, images of practices from 'the global outside' in a dialogue with local elements. The transformation that is prompted by this dialogue affects the local, but not in the form of mere copying or domination, or its opposite – resistance or 'writing back', but rather as a starting point for a reformulation of the local in a new manner and with new perspectives.

These essays came about in the context of a workshop at the European Conference on South Asian Studies in Zurich in 2014, about "Glocalization and postmodern backdrops in South Asian literature and cinema." As a follow up, a group of scholars continued to investigate these issues focusing on India, with an interest in processes that show a form of telescoping global and local to make a blend. Each in their own right, the essays emphasize the international character of the most microcosmic practices, issues of hybridization and biopolitics and a deconstruction of ideas such as the 'nation-state' and 'national sovereignty.' Complex interconnections at a global level on the one side, and "localization" processes on the other side, imply drastic segmentations, such as the widening gap between the – transnational and extraterritorial – elites and the – 'localized' – common people.

The impact of globalization on the cultural production by South Asian artists has been amply documented in the research on South Asian literature and cinema. A dominant perspective has been that of the NRI looking at the

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Indian subcontinent from outside. This has obscured the intrusion of images from the 'world outside' in present day narratives in which local but globalized landscapes appear, replacing or modifying traditional sceneries. Concepts like 'development,' 'modernization' or 'globalization' are highly ideologically charged, and the term globalization is often used to refer to the economic integration through the increasing flow of capital and trade. In the discussion of glocalization, there is a tendency to cast the idea of locality as a form of opposition or resistance to the hegemonically global, creating a polarization as if there is a world of local assertions against globalizing trends.

Globalization is all too often associated with the worldwide spread of 'Westernization'. Particularly in postcolonial settings, this gave rise to a binary where 'good Westernization' came to be regarded as modernization while 'bad modernization' was designated as Westernization. Although this can be understood as a reaction against oppression in the colonial context, nationalism does play an important part in this, as well. Many of the cultural features and practices that spread worldwide originated in specific geographical regions, being transformed in the very process of being transplanted elsewhere. Therefore, Westernization can be seen as the beginning of a process, but as a category has limited conceptual value.

A common point of departure for the essays in this special section is that the relationship between the global and the local is not as unique to the second half of the twentieth century as many would have us believe. For example, no one can deny that the great Indian film maker Satyajit Ray was influenced by Italian films and by the European art of film making, but he did not replicate Western movies in Bengal. In his movies the local is an aspect of the global: they were modern films insofar as they captured local themes which the director projected with a modern art form and technology. This is why this form of art was truly global, or more appropriately, glocal.

The essays are not meant to depart from a rigid shared theoretical framework or concept of glocalization. They analyse specific cases from the fields of literature and cinema and reflect in a more or less explicit manner on the various theoretical conceptualizations of this term. Various authors in this section, such as Rituparna Roy and Nicola Pozza refer to Roland Robertson's coming of the term 'glocalization' in the early 1990s, as a critical evaluation of Giddens's notion of globalization as an "enlargement of modernity, from society to the world".[1] As we already stated, glocalization must include at least one element that addresses the local culture, system of values, practices, etcetera.

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1 See the works cited in the articles by Roy and Pozza below.

One of the areas in India where the evidence of glocalization is quite visible is mass communication, particularly in the area of television programs. Televised drama, sitcoms, reality shows are sometimes unabashed imitation of American programs, but such some attempts are not always successful. On the contrary, some instances of glocalization result appealing to a large audience. After an analysis of the specificities of the Hindi version of the TV game show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire", **Nicola Pozza**'s paper "Becoming a Crorepati: from a glocal game to a global success" examines the ways this worldwide phenomenon has been fictionalized and made 'local' in Swarup's novel "Q & A", and questions the relevance of the concept of 'glocalization'.

"Glocalization in Silent Cinema of India: a comparative analysis of the oeuvre of two film producers of early Indian Cinema – Himanshu Rai and Dadasaheb Phalke" shifts the focus on the first stage of Indian cinema. **Sadiq Rahman** analyses how Indian filmmakers Himanshu Rai and Dada Saheb Phalke were hugely impacted by the European style of film and succeeded in universalizing particular experiences on screen and transcend the local level to achieve global levels. Their combined vision of global ideas with local considerations had played a decisive role in shaping the early Indian film industry. Images of Jesus in films like *Life and Passion of the Christ* (1903, Dir: Nonguet and Zecca) helped Phalke conceive films on Indian gods like *Lanka Dahan*, *Kaliya Dahan* and *Shri Krishna Janma*. Phalke's internalizing the globalization process while working with Cecil Hepworth in England and his training in camera, developing, printing and publicity gave Indian Cinema an early boost.

Rituparna Roy's "'Charulata 2011': dramatizing the glocal" analyses Agnidev Chatterjee's Charulata 2011 – a Bengali film exploring cyber romance – as an example of a glocalized South Asian narrative, arguing that it shows the impact of global modes of communication (emails) on individuals and their personal relationships. A lonely wife in Kolkata and a bachelor in London have a virtual affair, but are forced to re-think their relationship when they discover he is her brother-in-law. *Charulata 2011* is an ingenious post-millennial adaptation of Tagore's novella, *Nashtanirh* (The Broken Nest), already immortalized by Satyajit Ray in his classic, *Charulata* (1964). This intertextuality, especially with Ray, lends an added dimension to the film, allowing Chatterjee to contrast two modernities in Bengal – the colonial and glocal – over the course of a century. The paper proposes to read *Charulata 2011* as a dramatization of a glocalized South Asian narrative, where the protagonist negotiates an uneasy juxtaposition of a globalized outlook on the world with the entrapment of age-old social obligations in herself.

Binayak Bhattacharya's contribution "Globalizing region, glocalizing rhetoric: the city of Calcutta and its narratives in two contemporary Indian films" engages with the question of an 'otherness' of the Bengali '*bhadralok*' culture in the available representative modes of Indian cinema within the 'post-global' scenario. The article studies the socio-cultural dynamics through which this 'otherness' is dissipated in a different direction in recent years. Two contradictory aspects of this dissipation are at play in films launched at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, "*Kahaani*" (2012) and "*Bhooter Bhobishyot*" (2012), in Hindi and Bengali respectively. The article aims to historicize the construction of a particular cultural pattern called 'Bengaliness' in Indian cinema by marking some of the significant junctures in the course of its development. Using the films as cases in point, this article attempts to envisage a possible framework where the changing landscape of the city of Calcutta, shifting codes of the cultural habits of the *bhadralok* and reconfigured ideas about the Bengali nation can be seen operating to develop a reconstructed complimentary relationship between the post-liberal West Bengal and the other India.

The last three articles in the section introduce some examples of glocalization referred to the literary field. In "A queer lack of success: discourses on same-sex love and neoliberalism in the Hindi novel Pankhvali nav by Pankaj Bisht" **Alessandra Consolaro** problematizes the discourse on gender and sexuality in India, and the emergence of a queer identity and literature corresponding to the neoliberal turn in Indian economy. The protagonist is a man having sex with men, and the novel, defined by the author as a "sensitive human tragedy," constructs a highly heterocentered discourse on queerness. Set in India just before the neoliberal turn, the story discusses sexual citizenship not only with reference to Indian society, but also in a global context. This paper analyzes the text problematizing the notion of gender and the emergence of a queer identity corresponding with the opening up of Indian economy to neoliberal capital. Politics of sexual identity in newly globalizing economies are linked to global discourses on HIV/AIDS prevention, sexual health, sexual rights, and reproductive health. Also the emergence of queer literature in India, and of 'khush' literature in the Hindi literary field, has to be investigated on the backdrop of global queer identity: after 1991, the process of 'coming out' has gained momentum, and has spread from creative writing to political action, assertion of one's own identity and demand for a queer-space. Nevertheless, heteronormative prejudices and homophobic discourses are still much entrenched in India. The paper argues that existing discourses on queer liberation are often based either on a regression to an ancient or

medieval cultural heritage, or on a reductive view of sex in non-Western contexts.

Stefania Cavaliere writes on "Modern Durgas fighting against the demons of globalization through the lens of ecofeminism." The article analyses some different perspectives on women claiming for the rule over their own resources, as the indigenous outlook of Maitreyī Puṣpā's novels challenging the globalized lexicon of films and advertisements. It introduces some reactions to the dynamics of globalization through the lens of ecofeminism in India. The claims for the management of local sources represent a response to the global trade policies disregarding any ethical and ecological commitment. The women protagonists embody the creative forces that resist the cultural flattening and the environmental destruction of globalization. Their expressive modalities often collide with the communication techniques of the global world, eluding any canonical categorizations – even those of conventional feminism. The management of local resources comes to epitomize women's claim for independence and self-determination.

The contribution by **Heinz Werner Wessler**, "From Topophilia to Despair: Kashinath Singh's novels on Banaras" focuses on the Banaras trilogy of Hindi writer Kashinath Singh. These novels relate to urban experiences connected to the town of Banaras and its complex, and changing, social and psychological layers. While *Apnā morcā* is confined much to the students' affairs and the university milieu of BHU, *Kāśī kā assī* can be read as a kind of nostalgic declaration of love for a traditional quarter in Banaras, its ways of living, communication and rhetoric. In *Rehan par Ragghū*, the third novel, the focus is on the betrayed hopes of a father in his children, the rift between the generations and the general decline of values. The 'others,' particularly in the first novel *Apnā morcā*, are the English-speaking elites. The second novel *Kāśī kā assī* is a kind of nostalgic epiphany of the quarter where the author used to live for decades. This was composed in a late phase of the author's life when he was moving out from the traditional quarter Assī and settle with his family in one of the new colonies. *Rehan par Ragghū*, the third in the trilogy, marks a return to a linear form of narration, and is no longer concerned with the eulogy of Banaras, but stresses the erosion of social relationships in the postmodern world, where what was once meaningful loses its relevance and the value system changes completely.

The articles in this section have the ambition to contribute to an understanding of glocalizing processes in South Asian culture. They convincingly demonstrate that globalization does not mean a global homogenization, nor does it stand in the way of localization. Their major contribution is that they attempt to observe culture in the globalizing world from a dynamic perspective,

analyzing glocalization not only as a recent phenomenon, but also as a series of processes in earlier periods, and reflect on the interpenetration of 'global' and 'local' in various institutions and everyday life.

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