

Peer Review

Review of: "Towards a Definition of Small Literatures"

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This article offers a thoroughly researched and intellectually stimulating reflection on the concept of small literatures. It effectively demonstrates how, within contemporary criticism, the term remains without any widely agreed-upon definition. In doing so, it brings to light a compelling paradox at the heart of small literatures studies: the field is marked by the richness and diversity of the debates and perspectives that animate it, yet these very discussions also render the concept so flexible that its analytical precision and practical range of application become increasingly obscured.

The first part of the article offers a detailed and critical engagement with a range of studies devoted to small literatures and closely related concepts. This section is especially valuable in that it isolates, characterizes, and situates the major critical orientations that have shaped the field. It thus provides a rigorous state of the art on which future research on this notion can fruitfully build.

This section also makes an important epistemological contribution by advocating a form of critical decentering. It brings into consideration perspectives articulated from within small literatures themselves, thereby enabling a reflection on their status and distinctive features from a standpoint not exclusively anchored in the dominant centers of world literature.

The second part of the article aims to offer a definition of small literatures. This is a necessary endeavor to enable a systematic application of the term across a range of literatures. At the same time, it is a delicate task, as some of the criteria proposed may be open to debate. I have identified three principal points for discussion.

1) In the article, the definition of small literatures is linked to a geospatial unit. However, this unit remains somewhat fluid. The discussion invokes the notions of nation and state as measures of a literature's "smallness." Yet, taken strictly, these concepts fail to account for several small European or

global literatures, which are often regional rather than national. A more thorough examination of the geospatial unit underpinning the definition of small literatures would therefore be valuable.

2) The article provides an insightful discussion of multilingualism, but it stops short of offering a clear conclusion on the relationship between language and small literatures. The linguistic criterion can, in fact, conflict with a national definition of small literatures. For instance, in a small country like Belgium, there exist three distinct linguistic small literatures, each positioning itself differently within the global literary system. Should Belgian literature, therefore, be understood as a single multilingual small literature, or as three separate small literatures?

3) The European framing of this definition should be clearly stated at the outset. As it stands, the text does not examine the applicability of the definition in non-European contexts. In fact, some of the criteria might not hold in African, Asian, or American contexts. The article would be strengthened by explicitly clarifying that its focus is limited to Europe.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.