Research Training Group "Globalization and Literature", LMU Munich

Tropes of Globalization

International Conference, June 27th-29th 2019

Keynote speaker: Alexander Beecroft

Textual (re)presentations or (discursive) 'constructions' of globalization cannot avoid operating via linguistic tropes – in literature as well as in other textual modes. The "rhétorique restreinte" (Gérard Genette) in contemporary literary and cultural studies tends to privilege metaphor, applying the term even for tropological relations obviously not based on similarity. As a countermove to this simplification, our conference proposes to revisit the rhetoric tradition in order to develop a more differentiated set of descriptions for the (re)presentations of an earth-encompassing world. Following the insights of Kenneth Burke (in his seminal article on "Four Master Tropes" (1941), better known, but not necessarily more graphic in its adaptation in Hayden White's *Metahistory* (1973)), these differences do not simply concern technical details, but are loaded with epistemological presuppositions or, in Paul de Man's paraphrase, aesthetic ideologies.

We invite submissions from scholars for **30-minute papers** on tropes of globalization. Presentations should be in English. We propose the following disposition as inspiration as well as a rough outline of our intended trajectory. The disposition is only meant to be taken as a heuristic device, as many tropes tend to be mutually intertwined.

1.   The most widespread and most seductive trope in the depiction of *the* (earth-encompassing) world is, arguably, the **synecdoche,** particularly in its subcategory of the **pars pro toto**. It is operative in what Burke calls the "noblest synecdoche", the micro-/macrocosm-relation, but also in the notion of a "Welt im Kleinen" (world in a nutshell). The *pars pro toto* serves to bridge oppositions, fraught with tension, and to relate very different, only structurally comparable, 'parts' and 'wholes' such as: local vs. global, particular vs. universal, individual vs. general, example vs. rule etc. Typical cases are the 'Dorfgeschichte' (village history or village novel), from Berthold Auerbach's Schwarzwald (1843) to García Márquez' Macondo (1976), or time capsules, which became increasingly popular in the US at the end of the 19th century.

Without ruling out the *totum pro parte* as a logical inversion of the *pars pro toto*, it might be even more pertinent to consider the possibility of a *pars contra totum*: as an *a-*trope or resistance to tropology, an insistence on the *singular* (to be distinguished from the *individual*), something not to be subsumed under any notion of a whole.

2.   Contemporary long novels, e.g. David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Roberto Bolaños *2666* (2004) or Michael Crichton's *State of Fear* (2004), movies such as *Babel* (2006) and series such as *Sense8* (2015-2018) set out to construct a 'world' via the concatenation of events in sufficiently remote locations, typically dispersed over distinct continents: a device that could be described as **metonymical**. Although this procedure can be traced back through the (Western) literary tradition – via Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) to 'archival novels' like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821) and even to Johann Gottfried Schnabel's *Insel Felsenburg* (1731) and 'object narratives' from the 18th century – its recent popularity is obviously connected to the master model of globalization as a 'network'. This model must, of course, be interrogated with particular

attention to the holes in the alleged whole: How much synecdoche, so to speak, can still, even if perhaps unavoidably, be found within the selected knots of the metonymic concatenation?

3. Further analyses of **other tropes** could, for example, include:

- **irony**: the fourth in the quadripartite set of Pierre Ramus, as adapted and made operative by Burke (along with metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche). Typical example: the inversion of 'North' and 'South' in Abdourahman A. Waberi's *Aux Ètats Unis d'Afrique* (2006).
- **catachresis** (not in the sense of a mixed metaphor or misused figure of speech, but in the sense of an indispensable, 'original' metaphor, as in 'table-leg'). E.g.: the very concept (if it is one) of 'globalization', as introduced in the late 20th century.
- **synonym**: The rhetoric tradition is wise enough to classify synonyms as tropes, thereby acknowledging that *any* synonym always also 'turns' (*trepein*) – if not the denotation ['Bedeutung', using Gottlob Frege's terms], then at least – the connotation ['Sinn'] of a word when it is paraphrased by its synonym. E.g.: intentional cases like the French substitution of *globalisation* by *mondialisation*; less intentional cases like the present tendency in discourses on globalization to not distinguish between *world* and *earth*.
- **allegory:** a notorious borderline case between tropes and figures, which therefore cannot entirely be excluded – even though the conference is deliberately *not* entitled 'figures of globalization'
- **symbol** (in the sense of a Goethean/Coleridgean aesthetic ideology forged around 1800): as a trope denying its own status as a trope, and therefore seductively used as a trope for 'globalization' denying its status as something constructed

4.   In aspects 1-3, the 'of' between 'tropes' and 'globalization' is, somewhat arbitrarily, taken for granted as designating tropes **for** globalization (as a tenor, using I.A. Richards' vocabulary, or 'Bildempfänger, speaking with Harald Weinrich). However, it might also be useful to consider globalization as a vehicle/'Bildspender' **of** a trope for something else.

We welcome papers on the above-suggested as well as related topics. Please send an abstract of max. 300 words to tropes@lrz.uni-muenchen.de by 31st January 2019. Proposals should include paper title, name, contact information, and institutional/departmental affiliation.

Funding for hotel and travel expenses may be available. Please notify us per e-mail, should you be interested.