Transglobal Humanities

Meeting the Moment

Edited by
Mark K. Warford
SUNY Buffalo State University

Series in Education

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List of Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAS	Complex Adaptive Systems
ChatGPT	A particular Artificial Intelligence software. GPT stands for Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (OpenAI, 2023; see Chapter 7 for full reference)
DIM	Diffusion of Innovations Model (Everett Rogers)
GE	General Education
GIS	Geographic Information System
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
SAADA	Southeast Asian American Digital Archive
ST	Source Text
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

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Introduction

As suggested in the title of this volume, the chapters that follow seek to revitalize and expand the humanities from a global vantage point. As such, we acknowledge the current context in which the humanities face increasing pressure from the public, the forces driving economic and government policy, and consequently, from higher education administrations, to step aside, to make room for more technical, career-oriented areas in the academy. We likewise recognize the rise of cultural and commercial globalization. These realities are well-established, pervading every aspect of our daily life, from media technologies to the clothes we wear, requiring no further verification, and they compel us to recognize increasingly dynamic and interconnected transits of human thought and action. Indeed, the prefix trans-, which also guides this volume, connotes a frenzy of movement "across, through, over, to or on the other side of, beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing, or state to another" (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

The reader will notice that we have opted for the term *trans*global humanities, and it makes sense to clarify up front what that means. Firstly, to speak of global humanities reinforces the tendency to center on Anglo-American and European continental humanities as first-order. Challenges to the traditional "English" department concept and struggles of philosophy departments to expand from Continental Europe in order to embrace a greater diversity of philosophical thought attest to a growing sense of critical self-reflection in the humanities.

If we accept the prior sketch as "the moment" and what has led up to it, then how exactly should we, as humanities scholars and teachers, meet it? A good place to start is to listen critically to the resonances of the term "global." Among the various connotations of the term, we may discern the rhetoric of massive economic power. In current campus conversations, we may make out a buzzword with cache for the recruitment of students to whom we can sell the practical outcome of readiness for the twenty-first-century global economy. Ironically, this sort of marketing is carried out in the context of declining support for the disciplines that are arguably core to global competencies: second language study, world literatures, and yes, this overarching nascent area loosely referred to as global humanities. Generally speaking, global humanities upholds a more engaged approach that affirms the power of humanities study

to promote cultural change and social justice (see Sommer, 2014). However, as Eagleton (2015) remarks, commenting on higher education trends in Britain, humanities study is increasingly steered toward a very different sort of global engagement: feeding the economic engine of global capitalism. He argues: "As professors are transformed into managers, so students are converted into consumers."

In view of these trends, let's return to the morpheme "trans." A transglobal approach to the humanities, in addition to broadening cross-cultural conversations, pushes beyond the boundaries of hegemony in arts, literature, and languages. Likewise, we recognize the morpheme's longstanding relevance to the humanities, which, at the end of the day, owes its existence to empirical, literary, and linguistic transfers of knowledge, much of it sacked and appropriated from conquered civilizations. This is not to say that appropriation is necessarily an opprobrious act, as connoted in the current discourse circulating in the academy; the transglobal moment into which we are casting these chapters requires an expansion of transcultural crossings. In any case, to summarily denounce appropriation tacitly suggests that there is some baseline "purity" to one's language and culture of origin. Moreover, without transgressing the particularities of the local, it is important to reclaim some basic, "global" norms that affirm our common humanity. Additionally, as connoted in the catch phrase "glocal," the chapters you are about to read demonstrate the transglobal nature of the subject, from global to local. Thanks to cultural and commercial globalization, we are both here and "there" in a very basic sense of personal and collective identity, a throughline from local to global.

In matters of setting rules of the road, holding the tension between local and global is an important theme in exploring global perspectives of the humanities. One of the core tropes employed by Hans G. Kippenberg and Birgit Mersmann (2016) in a related volume is the analogy of local and global forces as centripetal and centrifugal, respectively. It is argued that the movement outward should not exacerbate the endangered status of local, non-majority arts and letters. On a related note, the University of North Carolina-Asheville's Humanities Program which has published several volumes on global humanities (Grusain, Maitra, & Zubko, 2022; Dunn, Perkins, Zubko, & Maitra, 2022; Hooks, Mills, Zubko, & Maitra, 2022), reminds us to recognize that such tensions arise not just cross-culturally but within the diversity that exists within given cultural perspectives (Dunn, Perkins, Zubko, & Maitra, 2022, p. xx). Accordingly, the present volume upholds the importance of affirming the particularities of the local and the global as mutually reinforcing, adding to this

conversation the important consideration of technological globalization in light of such trends. The program's other tenets center on open inquiry that upholds equity among a diverse array of disciplines and methodologies. Similarly, centering on various infusions of transformational, translational, transcendent, and transdisciplinary senses of global humanities, the current volume highlights the hybrid nature of the humanities, complicating binaries of Self-Other while resisting regressions into modernist essentialism and universality.

Additionally, the current volume, staying close to the trans- morpheme, seeks to expand movement not just between cultures but also between disciplines. As the reader will note in this volume and perhaps in their own institutional programs, there are several ways we put the disciplines into conversation with one another. Without imposing strict definitions, it may be helpful to set some basic guidelines up front. Firstly, the chapters that follow collectively set a *multi*disciplinary perspective, representing a diversity of disciplines (educational research, innovation studies, literature, philosophy, sociology, translation studies), offering the reader the opportunity for cross-chapter humanities inquiry. Additionally, and in varying degrees, we see within the chapters various attempts to connect disciplines. These connections may be interdisciplinary, centering, for example, on a more integrative approach to the humanities curriculum and pedagogies, or the study of translation. In varying degrees, many of the chapters offer *trans*disciplinary connections; rigid adherence to this or that discipline framework gives way to a radical hermeneutic that allows us a glimpse of something beyond the silos that surround us in the predominantly compartmentalized ecologies of today's institutions of higher education. Though Basrab Nicolescu (2010) deserves recognition as one of the major forces shaping transdisciplinary studies, it is worth bearing in mind the early origins of transdisciplinarity in the humanities. Concretely, I would point to the Classical Greek notion of *ekphrasis*, a methodology that mixes media in such a way that a painting might inspire a poem. Nicolescu (2014) would recognize this "transfer of methods from one discipline to another" p. 19" as *inter*disciplinarity. Taking it a step further, a poem might, likewise, find expression as a painting. Generally speaking, the humanities areas embrace a sort of paradigmatic promiscuity, *multi*disciplinary approaches that freely combine disciplines simultaneously. Though multidisciplinarity "overflows disciplinary boundaries," the classic discipline frameworks remain intact (p. 19). In the etymological richness of *trans-* , we do not privilege any particular orientation; we are content to simply shake up the silos and ivory towers that disciplinarity has arguably edified over the course of centuries. Without venturing too far into the weeds in matters of

distinguishing one way of connecting disciplines from another, it is enough to point out that transglobal humanities inquiry privileges expansive explorations of selfhood and societies over dogmatic fidelity to any one area.

As a contribution to the emergent global turn in the humanities, this volume presents a diversity of disciplinary and geographical perspectives both between and within the chapters, providing scholars, students, and higher education administrations with fresh, transglobal perspectives on the human subject. To some degree, all of the offerings herein challenge us to confront the forces that inform what is canon in humanities curriculum and pedagogy. Specifically, transglobal approaches to the humanities call for more resilient connections between Western and non-Western traditions and ways of knowing.

The first two chapters center on a translation studies perspective. Mark Warford, in Chapter 1, explores points of connection between innovation and translation Studies. Invoking the reflections of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gassett, Warford critically examines the origins and nature of innovation diffusion in ways that uncover the primary role played by language and translation. Additionally, Warford concludes with some concrete proposals for defining the nature and purpose of transglobal humanities.

Chapter 2, situated in translation studies' cultural turn, features Sobia Kiran's explorations of glocalization on a variety of levels in the context of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* series. The result is a unique case study that illustrates the complexities of the translational act. Related insights include a complication of the linear sense of source and target text transfer, an illustration of the ways in which the imperialist aspects of the works are moderated en route from English to Urdu, and, from the source side, how global market and sociopolitical forces increasingly nuanced imperialist and American exceptionalist stances in Burrough's literary production.

Perhaps one of the most consequential innovations in matters of transglobal humanities centers on digital technologies. In Chapter 3, Amanda Furiasse transcends binary senses of local and global as she highlights projects that utilize digital archives to reclaim and enrich Indigenous stories. More importantly, it demonstrates how the use of digital archives maximizes the manipulation of spatial and temporal exploration in ways that enhance the agency of under-represented groups. Using the tools of the conquerer, they are empowered to re-member fractured and incomplete narratives of colonization.

Transglobal humanities affirm the particularities of the local as possessing important lessons that transcend national boundaries, and it is certainly of

critical importance within the framework of transglobal humanities that emphasis is given to local to global (centrifugal) transference of non-hegemonic literatures. Chapters 4 and 5 offer two related profiles. In Chapter 4, Andrea Guiati lifts up the life and work of Grazia Deledda, whose life story's narrative scope highlights the transglobal possibilities of literature. Guiati explores how Deledda, a fully realized glocal author, explored her native Sardinian influences, integrating them with a range of European influences. Affirming a range of universal experiences and moral dilemmas, Deledda's work also illustrates the struggles of women searching for their independence during a time of gender inequity. In Chapter 5, Krishna Sinhamahapatra updates the social philosophy of B. R. Ambedkar, a compelling architect of post-colonial Indian society, highlighting his critique of the Indian caste system, alleged to be the root cause of social and racial inequities. Ambedkar's principles, as the author asserts, are of transglobal significance in matters of promoting social equity.

In Chapter 6 Tiffani Betts Razavi takes on a central question to address in opening globally engaged paths in the humanities: What is the greater common good? Challenging the dominant materialistic approaches to higher education, she asserts that we should not discard the spiritual in higher education curriculum, as it is specifically suited to answering such questions. Her holistic vision embraces the power of spiritual perspectives to un-other, re-opening the relevance of universal thinking in humane studies.

Meeting the moment calls us to confront declining support of the humanities, to loosen our moorings in specific disciplines, and to open more engaged ways of exploring humanities study. In Chapter 7, Cleve Wiese demonstrates a unique path toward transdisciplinarity in the college classroom, reframing writing pedagogy around the need for college writing students to be able to engage in formal argument "on the fly." Mixing Classical and Tibetan syllogism with a critical examination of ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2023) output, he demonstrates a practical path toward competencies that match global economic and technological shifts from information to insight. Beatrice Lok, in Chapter 8, shows us that engaged humanities do not necessarily privilege qualitative over quantitative values. She presents a mixed-method empirical study centered on employers' perceptions of the humanities. Results of her survey study underscore the value of holistic, interdisciplinary study- not just for the twentieth-first century global workforce but for facilitating more transformational learning experiences for students and faculty alike.

The mass transit of disciplines and perspectives represented in this volume is equal to the task of framing the emergent field of transglobal humanities. Adopting a glocal perspective, we affirm the particularities of each author's contribution, and we also embrace overarching themes that may be useful in further paving the paths. A final "Transitions" chapter will include some reflections on the core insights of this volume. Additionally, I pose some next steps in expanding the conversations regarding a more globally engaged perspective of the humanities.

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