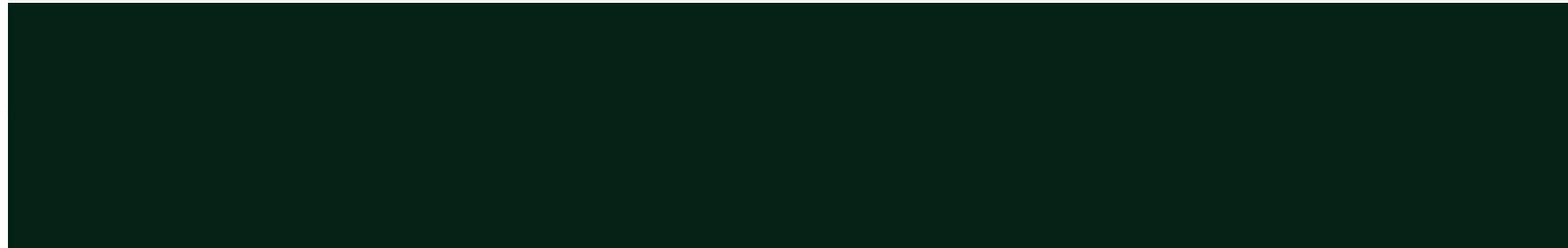
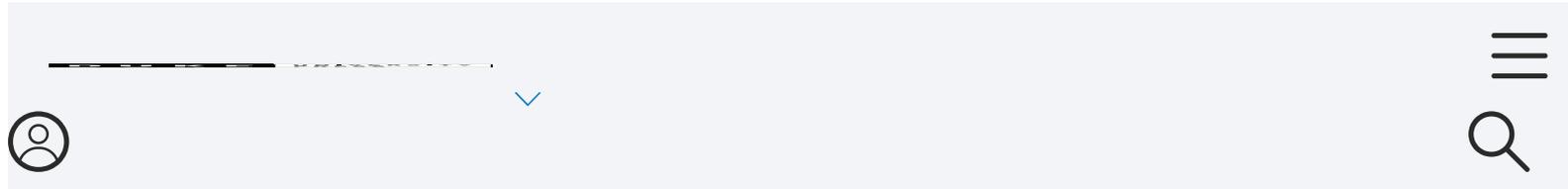


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Reference Guide to World Literature. Authors, the drift of the continent is categorically not included in its components, which is obvious in the force normal reactions relations, as well as the grace notes that mark such eminent scientists as Freud, Adler, Jung, Erickson, Fromm.

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Comparative Literature (2010) 62 (4): 315-335.



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In our era of ever accelerating globalization, scholars of Comparative Literature are increasingly required to study texts from cultures they do not know and written in languages in which they are not proficient. As a result more and more comparatists find themselves called upon to pass academic judgment on texts from literatures they are not sufficiently equipped to handle linguistically, culturally, and historically. Against the backdrop of the recent spate of publications on world literature, especially the monographs by David Damrosch and the various multi-volume anthologies of world literature in English translation now available for classroom use (Norton, Bedford, Longman), this essay explores the possible pitfalls comparatists face as general readers of world literature no less than as scholars when they study texts in languages they do not speak. The author, a professor of modern German literature, sets out to attempt a reading of a poem by the medieval Japanese writer Fujiwara no Teika, only to discover that what remains when linguistic barriers cannot be overcome and cultural specificity cannot be recognized is an interpretation that is constricted by the quality of the existing translations and that rests uncomfortably and problematically on thematic universals. This problem necessitates a critical examination of the fraught legacy of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Eurocentric critics who unthinkingly assigned universal value to their local parameters of interpretation. But in light of the fact that no future scholar will be able to escape reading texts of world literature in translation, this essay simultaneously calls for a renewed discussion of the contested status of so-called universals within the discourse of Comparative Literature today.

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