# New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression: Crossing Borders, Crossing Genres

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**ABSTRACT**

Under the rapidly changing cultural conditions at the turn of the millennium, most scholars working in the field of literary and cultural studies have become increasingly mindful of the need to provide new ways to relate cultures—comparing, translating, and interfacing traditionally separate entities. Focusing on "cultural contacts" is even more important today than it was during the 1980s and 1990s: literary history must venture into new areas, acting as a corrective both to narrow ethnocentric treatments of culture, but also to the counter-theories of globalism that erase distinctions between individual cultures.

As Priscilla Wald argued in her comments on the *New Literary History of America*, published in 2009, "Literary history is not at all a dead activity. Genres, like disciplines, are dynamic, as is the concept of the literary" (1). The prismatic, multicultural and to some extent multimedia model of literary history that Wald attributed to the *New Literary History of America* has been illustrated more boldly in a few recent histories, including the 4-volume *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (2004-2010) edited by John Neubauer and Marcel Cornis-Pope; also in *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression: Crossing Borders, Crossing Genres*, edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and published at the end of 2014 by John Benhamins Publishing Company. The contributors to this volume recognize the global shift toward the visual and the virtual in all areas of textuality, as the printed, verbal text is increasingly joined with the visual, electronic, and performative text. They pursue a broad range of issues under four sets of questions that allow a larger conversation to emerge, both inside the volume's sections and between them. The four sections cover, 1) Multimedia Productions in Theoretical and Historical Perspective; 2) Regional and Intercultural Projects; 3) Forms and Genres; and, 4) Readers and Rewriters in Multimedia Environments.

One of the urgent tasks pursued by the contributors to this volume has been to integrate literature into the global informational environment where it can function as an imaginative partner, teaching its interpretive competencies to other components of the cultural landscape. In turn, the interplay between literature and other media (visual, performative, electronic) has produced innovative literary practices that challenge monologic concepts of culture, emphasizing cross-cultural interplay and translation.

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