Magical Realism, Dictator Novels, and “Booms”: Comparison with and through Latin America

‘Magical realism’ after the Latin American Boom,” Homi Bhabha declared in his introduction to Nation and Narration (1990) has become “the literary language of the post-colonial world.” Since then many critics have noted that, in widespread use, the term “magical realism” tends to occlude as much as it illuminates. Yet its currency in discussions of world literature persists. Indeed, even as it remained largely on the margins of postcolonial studies, concepts associated with Latin American literature have found new traction in the study of literatures of the Global South.

This talk considers what Latin American literary studies has brought and can bring to comparative work in the southern Atlantic and Global South more broadly. The argument will draw from three recent projects: the essay “Marvelous Autocrats: Disrupted Realisms in the Dictator Novel of the South Atlantic” (in The Global South Atlantic: Region, Vision, Method [Fordham, 2018]); my forthcoming book, The Dictator Novel: Writers and Politics in the Global South (Northwestern, 2019); and in-progress work on contemporary African literature, which is currently having a “moment,” “renaissance,” or (I propose) “boom.”

Tuesday, September 25 | 6pm | Music Room, Rochambeau House | 84 Prospect Street
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