

Solar Machines from Volodymyr Vynnychenko to Junot Díaz

In my talk, I will explore a saccharine aesthetic that goes beyond a realist style of representation. I will adopt the framework of world, or planetary, literature, consistent with the context of the global agricultural trade, without which the development of the sugar industries in two parts of the world I focus on, Ukraine (as part of the Russian Empire) and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, would not have been the same. I interpret two texts, Volodymyr Vynnychenko's *Sonyachna mashyna* (Solar Machine, 1928) and Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), as reconfigurations from within literature meant to revamp reading strategies in relation to the earlier social novel and its subtypes, such as the sugarcane novel (José Alcántara Almánzar) and the telluric novel. Its ruptures have recently sparked interest in decolonial studies and theories of world literature. I will show that this socially-centered cultural production can be approached from an ecocritical perspective. Methodologically, I will examine the idea of "commodity frontiers" used, among others, by Michael Niblett, which allows him to analyze the co-formation of global capitalism, world-ecology, and world-literature. Consequently, I will argue that Vynnychenko's and Díaz's creative projects complicate this analytical scheme in several ways.